

MANIFESTOS:  
AESTHETICS AND POLITICS IN QUEER TIMES

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AESTHETICS AND POLITICS IN QUEER TIMES

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## **Abstract**

How have manifestos circulating in queer social movements articulated desires for futures in the present? How might the temporalities of the manifesto form offer possibilities for writing alternative histories of queer struggle? This thesis turns to the manifestos produced in the context of queer social movements growing out of New York from the late 1960s onward. Considering the aesthetic dimensions of the form alongside the material characteristics of print ephemera, it needles at the way that accounts of queer politics appear through manifestos. In order to do so, the thesis is constructed from a series of discrete studies that are organised around the historic claims to self-determination made through manifestos associated with the Gay Liberation Front New York (1969-1972); the numerous instances that Valerie Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto' has been invoked to disturb mechanisms of social reproduction in art since she self-published the text in 1967; the meshing of art and politics, grief and urgency, in manifestos written by artists associated with ACT UP in the context of the AIDS crisis; and a series of collective reading of Zoe Leonard's 'I want a president' manifesto that remakes a claim to political legitimacy from 1992 for contemporary political struggles. Occupied with the way that each of these examples invests in the manifesto form for its disruptive force, the study presents a shifting terrain of queer identity that comes into focus here alongside histories of feminist and, to a lesser degree, Marxist and anti-racist politics. Negotiating the wishes of manifestos to eschew the conditions of the present, this thesis considers the worlds produced through manifestos and the queer lives they sustain. Writing at a time when manifesto writing appears renewed within contemporary queer struggle, I consider what it is that we risk if we neglect the ephemeral, but no less material, claims of manifestos in accounts of queer history and what demands they might make of us in the present.

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## Note

Papers based on material from Chapter Three were presented at ‘Debout! Feminist Activism and Video in France and Beyond’, Queen Mary, University of London, 31 May 2014 and ‘NOWGenNOW SALT. Feminist Manifestos Symposium’ held at The White Building, London, 22 November 2014. An interview with Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, ‘Scene Unseen’, appeared in *Frieze D/E*, November 2015 – January 2016.

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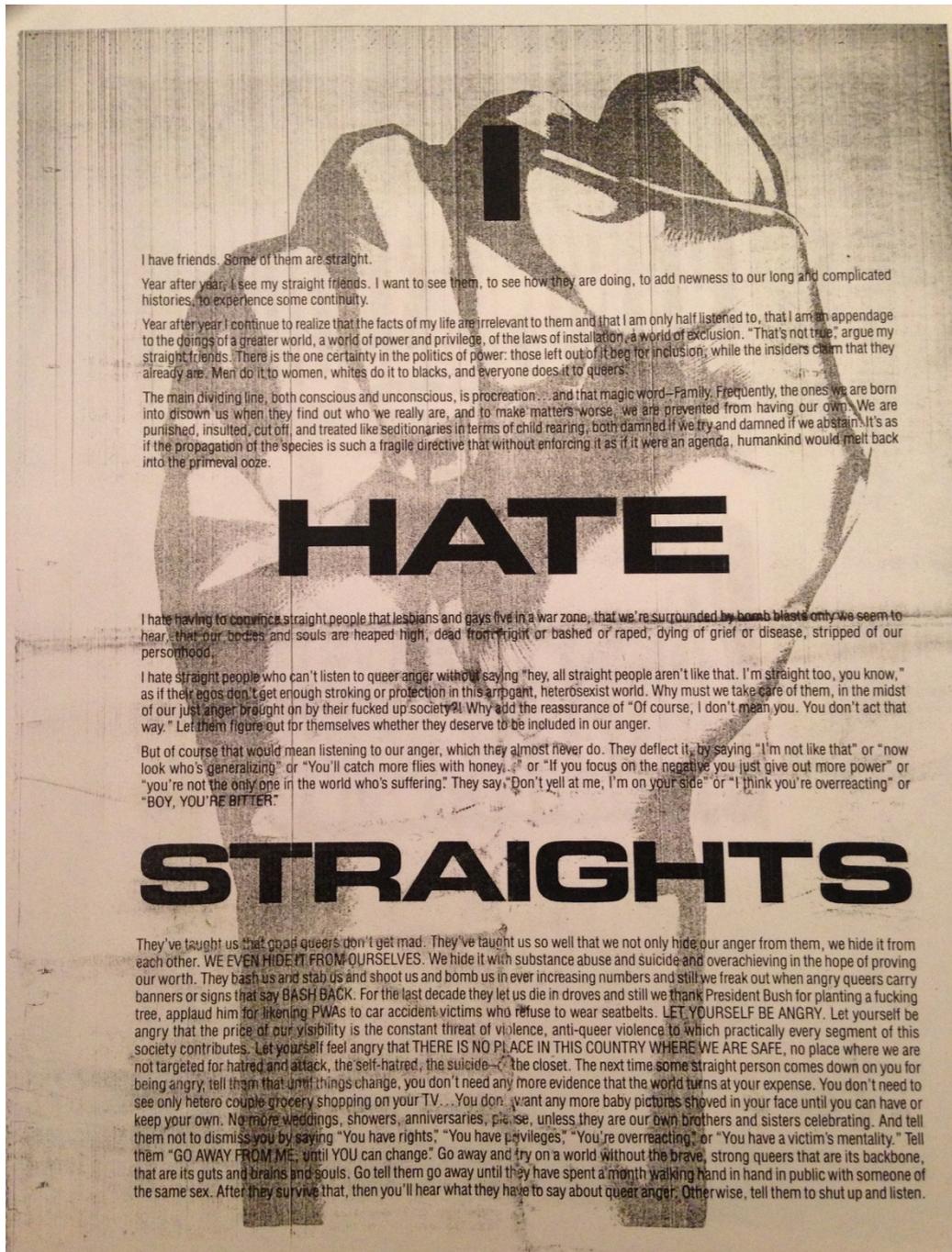


Figure 1.1. 'Queers Read This' [Newspaper]. (1990).  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION: MANIFESTOS ARE MATERIAL

### West 4th St to 15th St Prospect Park

A subway journey from West 4th St to 15th St Prospect Park offers a route into this thesis and the way that it approaches the subject of manifestos within histories of queer social movements. The journey takes me from the library at New York University (NYU) that faces onto Washington Square Park, to the Park Slope brownstone that houses the Lesbian Herstory Archive. At NYU, I sort through the many pamphlets and papers held within the archive of Rosalyn Baxandall, a founder, with Shulamith Firestone and Robin Morgan, of the New York Radical Women in 1967. Stored there are the manifestos that Baxandall gathered for *Dear Sisters*, an anthology of writings from the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) that she edited with the feminist historian Linda Gordon.<sup>1</sup> An exercise in collective feminist history writing when they were gathered together by Baxandall and Gordon, these texts from the early years of the WLM, including the manifesto of the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (W.I.T.C.H.) (1968) and the 'Fourth World Manifesto' (1971), written by a group of women in Detroit to emphasize the idea of female culture, tell of futures imagined and desires unmet. Their ephemeral forms and idiosyncratic arguments compare to the neat archival storage within which they are now organised as well as to the versions that I have read abridged and uniformly typeset in *Dear Sisters* and similar anthologies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dear Sisters: Dispatches From The Women's Liberation Movement*, ed. by Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, Basic Books (New York, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Anthologies are one way that writing from liberation movements was gathered and circulated in the 1960s and 1970s. As well as more recent anthologies such as *Dear Sisters*, edited volumes like



Figure 1.2. Nina Wakeford, Still from *484 14th Street*, 11'7", (2014).

Walking from NYU to catch the subway to Brooklyn, I pass the unlit neon sign in the window of the Stonewall Inn, where, on the 28 June 1969, the clientele resisted one of the police raids that frequently took place at known homosexual establishments during the 1960s. I peer at the posters advertising upcoming drag shows and look up at the rows of small rainbow flags fluttering in the breeze. Setting off from West 4th, I turn up in Brooklyn and follow the sidewalk to the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), making a pilgrimage that artist Nina Wakeford memorialises in a video that frames an intimate encounter with the ephemeral traces of feminism's queer past (*Fig. 1.2*). *484 14th Street* (2014) shows Wakeford's hands flicking through a pile of photographs against a non-descript metallic surface that might stand as an ambiguous placeholder for the present. The snaps record her approach to the LHA and then zero in on items she finds within. Upon entering the building that houses the archive, the images that turn through Wakeford's hands show various details from inside: a souvenir tote bag that you can purchase to commemorate your visit, a small appliqué square that reads 'Dyke

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*Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970) and *Out of the Closet: Voices of Gay Liberation* (1972), both of which were consulted for this thesis, are important examples of collections that contributed to a sharing of ideas within and without the movement. Throughout this thesis I touch on issues of reproduction relating to anthologies and collections of writing but a full study of the anthology is beyond the scope of my argument. See Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, ed. by Robin Morgan (New York: Random House, 1970) and *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, ed. by Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York: Douglas Book Corp., 1972).

Pride 612 BC – 1976 AD’ (612 BC is the recorded birthdate of Sappho of Lesbos), and a shelf of books including a number by the author Anna Livia who died in 2007. (Pointing to the spines of Livia’s books, Wakeford speaks as though to the author, who was a close friend, alluding to the personal registers through which instances of collective remembrance can often take place). Throughout the video, Wakeford plays a singing game as though serenading the archive. I recognise one song that was recorded by lesbian folk singer Meg Christian. Written by Sue Fink and Joelyn Grippo, Christian’s version of ‘Leaping Lesbians’ was included on an anthology released by the lesbian feminist label Olivia Records in 1977.<sup>3</sup> The record was a censorious response by the label to Anita Bryant’s Save Our Children campaign. Founded in the same year, SOC successfully campaigned to repeal legislation in Florida that had sought to reduce discrimination based on sexual orientation. “The leaping lesbians, the leaping lesbians, the leaping lesbians”, Wakeford repeats in soft, high tones. As one half-remembered instance of lesbian feminist struggle sounds out in the present time of moving image, Wakeford foregrounds the genealogical encounters that shape experiences of personal and political identity.

What interests me about *484 14th Street*, is not only that it allows me to retrace my own journeys to the archive or even to lesbian identity more generally. The video offers consideration of the central role that print ephemera has historically played in queer political struggle as well as in queer historiography. Toward the end of the video, Wakeford’s finger hovers over a sign attached to a set of filing cabinets that has on it: “OVERFLOW FOR SUBJECT FILES”. “These are all the excessive materials”,

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<sup>3</sup> The idea of the leaping lesbians was meant as a joke. It poked fun at the characterisation of the lesbian, by people like Bryant, as a predatory figure that posed a threat to society. The song goes: “ah ah ah/ Don’t look in the closet/ ah ah ah/ Who’s creeping down the stairs/ ah ah ah/ Whos’s slipping up behind you/ ah ah ah/ Watch out, Better beware”. There is a short introduction to the song by Terry Grant, along with a performance by the members of GoldenRod Music, available to view online at: Goldenrod Music, ‘Leaping Lesbians’, 2010 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTTC8UgDP90>> [accessed 9 April 2016].

Wakeford explains to the viewer from off screen, “all of these have overflow files... it includes Women’s Liberation Movement at the end, so that’s got an excessive file”. Reading the labels aloud, Wakeford recites: “African Ancestral Lesbians, AIDS, Archives, Art, Asian American Lesbians, Bars, Books and bookstores, Businesses, Censorship”. Along with information pamphlets, programmes for screenings, galas and political meetings, invitations to openings and support groups, manifestos make up the material of this excessive collection that cannot be accommodated elsewhere. Not given a category of their own, the ephemeral forms and excessive desires of manifestos are dispersed across these cabinets.

If, as *484 14th Street* seems to suggest, archives are spaces where we might take an affective leap through the material remnants of the past, they are also places where fragments of the past manifest in our own time. Like other kinds of print ephemera, manifestos have been circulated and dispersed, reproduced and recollected both within and without queer social movements.<sup>4</sup> Of all the documents and paraphernalia that one encounters in archives and collections such as those at the LHA or NYU, manifestos have a particularly intimate relationship to the time in which they were produced. Attempting to break open the conditions of their own production, manifestos often employ the future tense from the place of the present. Approaching them as historic

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term ‘queer social movement’ throughout this thesis to describe a number of groups and activist histories that have organised collectively around a broad spectrum of political issues relating to sexuality but also gender, homophobia and trans identity (these sometimes, but not always, connecting). I follow Mary Bernstein’s argument that social movements are as much joined by shared goals as they are shared identities. Though not explicitly a contribution to social movement theory, this study is interested in how both goals and identities contribute to the shifting meanings of queer politics as well as how this contributes to an understanding of a contemporary field of queer studies, which is in part where this study is situated. I talk about this in more detail later in this chapter. Queer is a tricky term to work with, one that was rejected by many individuals and groups who came into gay political consciousness. This is something I discuss throughout this thesis, particularly in Chapter Two and later in this chapter. There are groups and individuals discussed throughout this thesis who do not identify themselves as queer. Nonetheless, all of the histories that appear below have found meaning within a contemporary imaginary of queer politics. See for example: Mary Bernstein, ‘Celebration and Suppression: The Strategic Uses of Identity by the Lesbian and Gay Movement’, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 103.3 (1997), pp. 531–65, *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*, ed. by Manon Tremblay, David Paternotte, and Carol Johnson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) and *Queer Mobilizations: Social Movement Activism and Canadian Public Policy*, ed. by Manon Tremblay (Vancouver, BC: The University of British Columbia, 2015).

materials for doing queer history means attempting the peculiar task of excavating the proposals for the future made in the past. Returning to their futures, these manifestos became a kind of measure for history (the things that did happen and those that did not). More crucially, they became a way for thinking about the complex temporal registers that have underpinned articulations of queer politics.

Why use the spatial metaphor of a journey through New York City in order to introduce the idea of time in relation to a history of queer social movements told through their manifestos? After all, the genesis of broad social movements is as impossible to attribute to a single place as it is to any particular event. Like archives, cities also perform a vital role in acts of cultural remembrance. Several of the manifestos discussed in what follows were originally distributed on the streets of Greenwich Village that I navigated over the past four years. In the early 1970s, The Red Butterfly, a Marxist reading group formed by members of the Gay Liberation Front New York, sold their pamphlets on tables at the Christopher Street Liberation Day March, now known as NYC Pride. These mimeographed papers were also available at the nearby Oscar Wilde Bookshop, the first gay and lesbian bookstore in the city, which resided at 291 Mercer Street between 1967 and 1973 then moved to the corner of Christopher and Gay until its closure in 2009.<sup>5</sup> Valerie Solanas, author of the infamous ‘SCUM Manifesto’ (1967), in which she outlined a programme to do away with the male sex and eventually the whole of the human race, wrote some of her earlier works whilst staying at the Hotel Earle and then the Village Plaza Hotel near Washington Square Park.<sup>6</sup> Years later, in June 1990, the anonymously authored manifesto ‘Queers Read This’, a two page fold-out newspaper, was issued, also at the Christopher Street

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<sup>5</sup> For accounts of the Oscar Wilde Bookshop see Sewell Chan, ‘Venerable Bookstore to Close in Village’, *New York Times* (New York, February 2009), p. A27 and Jim Downs ‘The Biography of a Bookstore’ in *Stand By Me: The Forgotten History of Gay Liberation* (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> A rich account of Solanas’s life can be found in Breanne Fahs, *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2014).

Liberation Day March. Queer Nation, the group to which the manifesto is commonly attributed, held meetings at the Lesbian and Gay Community Centre a few blocks northwest on W 13th. It was there that the first caucus of ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) was formed in 1987. The geographic proximity of these groups alludes to the various ways they are linked even if separated, sometimes by decades. The rhythms, encounters and missed connections experienced within cities offer a useful conceit for the constellation of objects, actions and actors that intersect throughout this thesis. Here they are framed against a backdrop of ideas relating to manifestos, the aesthetic dimensions of politics and the non-linear temporalities of queer history, an idea which I will go on to explore further in this introduction.

The manifestos that are explored in this study make alternate proposals for the future, proposals that were as impossible in their own time as perhaps they seem now. This might seem a strange thing to say. Many of the manifestos listed above have contributed to the extended rights that certain queer subjects now enjoy in the U.S. Yet traversing New York (or any other city for that matter) in 2016, one quickly concludes that this is not the queer nation, anti-capitalist gay utopia or society rid of the male sex that 'Queers Read This', the pamphlets of The Red Butterfly or the 'SCUM Manifesto' once sought. Whether or not we agree that these futures are still (or indeed, perhaps in the case of Solanas's stated wish to do away with the human race, were ever) desirable, the various promises of these texts, spoken outside of the condition of possibility in their own time, remain unfulfilled. Many of the spaces – social and political – within which their ideas circulated are now similarly diminished. Of these, certain practices associated with queer spaces such as bookstores, cruising spots or social centres have variously migrated online, transforming as users see fit and technologies allow. Yet even the most optimistic view of these changes cannot elide the marked impact of gentrification that is written across New York. Tangible as one navigates the spaces of

the city in the present, the effects of gentrification also bear critically upon our relationship to the past.

It is against this contested backdrop of political transformation, the roots of which one can find in the 1960s along with the early murmurings of gay liberation, that I turn to the manifestos produced in the context of queer social movements growing out of New York from the late 1960s until present. The story that unfolds below is underwritten with Janet Lyon's observation that by 'shifting the cultural position of a marginalized group, the manifesto yields an alternative historical narrative'.<sup>7</sup> Speaking to the way that manifestos have facilitated historic claims to self-determination often from the position of the illegitimate or marginalised, Lyon signals toward the possibility that study of these textual forms might permit alternate histories to appear. Often the temporalities that manifestos employ show political visibility to be as much about the past as it is about the future. This complex idea is examined through a series of discrete studies that attend to the playful temporalities of gay, lesbian and trans<sup>+</sup> liberation; to the numerous instances that Valerie Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto' has been invoked to disturb mechanisms of social reproduction in art and culture since she self-published the text in 1967; to the meshing of art and politics, grief and urgency, in manifestos written by artists associated with ACT UP New York in the context of the first decade of the AIDS epidemic; and to a series of recent collective readings of Zoe Leonard's 1992 'I want a president' manifesto that remake her claim to political legitimacy in light of contemporary political struggles. Exploring the ways that manifestos make visible a

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<sup>7</sup> Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>+</sup> Here and in Chapter Two of this thesis, 'Radical Aesthetics: Gay, Lesbian and Trans liberation manifestos in the 1970s', I use the term "trans" to refer to groups such as S.T.A.R. (the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries). Ehn Nothing has problematized the use of this terminology in relation to S.T.A.R. since individuals associated with them initially identified as transvestite. However, S.T.A.R. latterly adopted the term transgender. Although imperfect, I use trans here to signal both the terminology used in the 1970s but also that transvestite has since fallen out of common usage. See Sylvia Rivera, *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*, ed. by Ehn Nothing (Untorelli Press, 2012). For a useful glossary of terms see 'Glossary of Terms', *Trans What?* <<http://transwhat.org/glossary/>> [accessed 16 May 2014].

shifting ground of queer political identity, one that here is often adjacent to feminist, and to a lesser extent Marxist and anti-racist struggles, I engage with the alternate histories of queer struggle that these objects continue to make possible. Extending Lyon's suggestion in what follows, the tenses and times of the manifestos are shown to challenge teleological accounts of history in order to make visible subjects who have been historically denied political legitimacy.

### **material is ephemeral**

Manifestos have shaped queer politics since the gay, lesbian and trans movements that began to surface in the last years of the 1960s. They have also shaped accounts of queer history. Yet, despite the numerous manifestos encountered whilst researching histories of queer social movements in New York, little attention has been paid in queer studies to the form. Of those studies that have taken as subject the manifesto in relation to queer culture Erin Rand's *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance* (2014) is the most comprehensive. Setting out to understand the close association between queer academic and queer activist rhetorics, Rand considers the political manifestos that are held in the imaginary of queer scholarship. The tendency, however, for scholarship to emphasise language has often meant that the material qualities of print, for example how political texts circulate and are transformed through readership within queer social movements, have been neglected. Through consideration of both the rhetorical claims *and* material characteristics of manifestos – even the indivisibility of the two – this thesis addresses itself to this absence.

One manifesto often cited in queer studies is 'Queers Read This' (*Fig. 1.1*).<sup>8</sup> The manifesto was distributed on the streets of New York in 1990 and offers up an

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<sup>8</sup> This is something Rand comments on in her book, writing that 'it was Queer Nation, in particular, that was often taken up in queer scholarship as the most prominent—even if not the most successful or representative—example of innovative queer activism'. See for example Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth

important intersection of a self-consciously queer politics with the manifesto form. Attributed only to “anonymous queers”, the eponymous words of the manifesto are marked out on the front page of the two-sheet fold out newspaper in large, black type on the front page. Filling both the right and top margins of the page, the bold title frames the text behind which is set the outline of a pink triangle. As the 1980s turned into the 1990s, the symbol of the pink triangle was well established as part of an iconography of AIDS cultural activism. The symbol that homosexuals were forced to wear in concentration camps during the period of Nazi rule in Germany, the pink triangle was reappropriated by the Silence = Death project initiated by members of ACT UP in 1987.<sup>9</sup> Reproduced on the front page of ‘Queers Read This’, the shape is offset with the capitalised words “DON’T TREAD ON ME” and these mirrored on the return side of the sheet by the statement “I HATE STRAIGHTS”. The latter declaration is paired with the outline of a raised fist, as though punching the air and at the same time punctuating the short, stark sentiment. The text in ‘Queers Read This’, a manifesto ‘of rage and its politics’, is as straightforwardly bold, irreverent and angry as the typography and design of the pamphlet.<sup>10</sup> ‘How can I tell you. How can I convince you, brother, sister that your life is in danger’ the manifesto begins.<sup>11</sup> ‘That everyday you wake up alive, relatively happy, and a functioning human being, you are committing a rebellious act. You as an alive and functioning queer are a revolutionary’.<sup>12</sup> Addressed directly to the reader, the manifesto positions them as a queer, and consequently a revolutionary, whoever they might be.

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Freeman, ‘Queer Nationality’, *Boundary 2*, 19.1 (1992), pp. 149–80; Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Benjamin Shepard, *Queer Political Performance and Protest* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010) and Rand, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> See Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDS Demographics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, p. 152.

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, ‘Queers Read This’ (New York: Self Published, 1990). Lesbian Herstory Archives. No accession number, n.p.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. n.p.

Emerging from a context of AIDS activism that responded to government neglect surrounding the epidemic in the U.S., the manifesto reacted to a broader context of heightened censorship and silence, violence and policing, surrounding queer life. Although various groups began to adopt the term “queer” as a collective political identity in the 1980s, ‘Queers Read This’ is a notable touchstone for anyone interested in how queer identities have been forged through the manifesto form.<sup>13</sup> The manifesto speaks to the reclaiming of the word directly. Under the subtitle ‘reuuQ yhW / Queer!’ the authors write:

Ah, do we really have to use that word? It's trouble. Every gay person has his or her own take on it. For some it means strange and eccentric and kind of mysterious. That's okay, we like that. But some gay girls and boys don't. They think they're more normal than strange. And for others "queer" conjures up those awful memories of adolescent suffering. Queer. It's forcibly bittersweet and quaint at best --- weakening and painful at worst. Couldn't we just use "gay" instead? It's a much brighter word and isn't it synonymous with "happy?" When will you militants grow up and get over the novelty of being different?<sup>14</sup>

At a time when the use of “queer” by activist groups was highly contested within the community, ‘Queers Read This’ announces that it is precisely the trouble that the word causes from which it accumulates power. Writing on ‘Queers Read This’, Rand, following after Judith Butler’s writing on performativity and political speech, discusses how the act of reclamation returns a term of hate speech to the speaker in different form.<sup>15</sup> Doing so, she describes how ‘Queers Read This’, ‘made a blatant and daring call to queers to make a stand against homophobic and heterosexist institutions, reclaiming the word “queer” as a form of resistance and encouraging its audience to join

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<sup>13</sup> For a useful overview of the term in relation to cultural production see Catherine Lord’s introduction to *Art and Queer Culture*, ed. by Catherine Lord and Richard Meyer (London: Phaidon Press, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> ‘Queers Read This’. n.p.

<sup>15</sup> Rand follows Butler’s writing on the speech act and its relation to her idea of “injurious language” and its effects. In her book *Excitable Speech*, Butler writes that ‘the revaluation of terms such as "queer" suggest that speech can be "returned" to its speaker in a different form, that it can be cited against its ordinary purposes, and perform a reversal of effects’. In this repetition of language, like the repetitions that she writes underpin performances of gender, Butler sees the possibility for transformation. See Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 15.

forces under its banner'.<sup>16</sup> The manifesto was integral to this act that sought to carve out a collective political identity.

Utilising language and the print media, 'Queers Read This' is an important touchstone for the way that 'the emergent category "queer"' appeared at a time of explicit crisis.<sup>17</sup> Distributed in its hundreds, I imagine people who participated in the 1990 Christopher Street Liberation March holding copies of the manifesto so that its titular words were reproduced across one pocket of the city. Against the backdrop of ongoing struggle against government silence surrounding HIV/AIDS and increased instances of homophobic violence, 'Queers Read This' claims visibility for queer subjects on its own terms. 'Being queer is not about a right to privacy; it is about the freedom to be public, to just be who we are'.<sup>18</sup> The terms upon which visibility is sought are established through the text and through the material qualities of the manifesto. Addressed directly to "queers" and utilising alternative media networks through self-publishing and distribution of the street, 'Queers Read This' is a rude, loud and excessive declaration, one that positions the reader as a queer revolutionary within the ephemeral time and space of the manifesto form.

Perhaps the first example of a manifesto to explicitly adopt the term "queer" as a collective sign, 'Queers Read This' is one of numerous manifestos that have connected individuals and groups associated with queer struggles since the 1960s. Printed cheaply on newsprint, at radical print shops, or illicitly Xeroxed at places of work, passed between bodies on streets and in bookshops, read to camera or shared on social media, all of the manifestos addressed here have appeared at moments when crisis is

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<sup>16</sup> Erin J Rand, *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2014), p. 1. Rand's writing on rhetoric in relation to queer social movements also explores how 'Queers Read This' became a key reference in Queer Studies, referenced to lend political weight to discourses developing within the academy.

<sup>17</sup> This crisis was the AIDS epidemic. See Simon Watney, 'On Outing', *Artforum* (New York, November 1991), p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> 'Queers Read This', n.p.

perceptible. Here Lauren Berlant's definition of crisis seems to hold, as that which 'exemplifies the affective experience not of a break or a traumatic present, but of crisis lived within ordinariness'.<sup>19</sup> At these moments, manifestos are calls to disrupt an interminable historical present. Thinking about how manifestos have been invested with such disruptive force, this thesis considers the ways that they have sought recognition within and without traditional spheres of politics. Used to facilitate political speech from a position of illegitimacy, manifestos define the very terms through which visibility might be achieved. Both disruptive and ephemeral, manifestos have been as central to queer struggles as they have to many of the liberation movements of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup>

The manifestos discussed in this study cover a time period from the late 1960s to the present. Although little attention has been paid until recently to the role of print ephemera in queer social movements, a broader concern with the subject of the ephemeral is written through accounts of queer life. Since it surfaced within the academy in the late 1980s, queer studies and associated fields have often attended to ephemeral traces, foregrounding the informal or undocumented quality of materials that make up the stuff of queer history. Of these histories, a number written at the intersections of queer theory, performance studies and art history have been important to the development of my own research. Gavin Butt's valuable scholarship on gossip within the queer New York art worlds of the 1950s and 1960s, for example, asks us to

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<sup>19</sup> Lauren Berlant, 'Thinking about Feeling Historical', *Emotion, Space and Society*, 1 (2008), p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Of these, it is perhaps feminist manifestos that have been most extensively attended to. In what follows, I refer to scholarship by Felicity Colman, Katy Deepwell, Janet Lyon, Helena Reckitt and others, all of whom have considered the role that manifestos have played in feminist struggle. See Felicity Colman, 'Notes on the Feminist Manifesto: The Strategic Use of Hope', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 4.14 (2010), pp. 375–92; Katy Deepwell, *Feminist Art Manifestos: An Anthology* (London: KT Press, 2014); Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*; Helena Reckitt, '---Infesto: Feminist Art's Shifting Ground', *C Magazine*, 2006, pp. 30–38; Michelle Moravec, "'Looking for Lyotard, Beyond the Genre of Feminist Manifestos'", *Trespassing Journal*, 2, pp. 70–84 and Natalya Lusty, 'The Manifesto: From Surrealism to the Present', *Photographic Cultures*, 2016 <<http://www.photographiccultures.com/research2/1462016the-manifesto-from-surrealism-to-the-present-by-natalya-lusty-1>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

consider the reasons why recourse to ephemeral forms is necessary for those engaged in writing accounts of queer art practice and queer history more generally. In his introduction to *Between You and Me: Queer disclosures in the New York art world, 1948-1963*, Butt references the epistemological quality of something as fleeting as gossip. Suggesting that consideration of such cultural forms challenges the validity of certain sources, Butt seeks instead to produce a ‘history which works against the very logic of conventional, archivally sanctioned historical practice’.<sup>21</sup> Emphasising that ephemera is the effect of lives lived on the margins, Butt considers the way that the study of ephemeral forms such as gossip extend the very limits of what can be uttered within the academy.<sup>22</sup>

A passing mention in José Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) explicitly links queerness, the manifesto and the idea of ephemera in order to disrupt empirical narratives in history writing. Addressing the manifesto of the Third World Gay Liberation in New York, ‘What we want, what we believe’, with reference to J. L. Austin’s concept of the speech act, his well-known theory of the conditions that govern speech’s relationship to action that has been a key text in queer studies, Muñoz writes:

To “read” the performative, along the lines of thought first inaugurated by J. L. Austin, is implicitly to critique the epistemological. Performativity and utopia both call into question what is epistemologically there and signal a highly

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<sup>21</sup> Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> For other studies and publications that are situated at the intersection between the disciplines of Art History and Queer Studies see for example *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History*, ed. by Whitney Davis (New York and London: Routledge, 1994); Jonathan D. Katz, ‘John Cage’s Queer Silence; Or, How to Avoid Making Matters Worse’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 5.2 (1999), pp. 231–52; Jennifer Doyle ‘Queer Wallpaper’, *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*, ed. by Amelia Jones (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 344–55; Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); *Art and Queer Culture*, ed. by Catherine Lord and Richard Meyer (London: Phaidon Press, 2013) and ‘Forum: Conversations on Queer Affect and Queer Archives’, *Art Journal*, 72.2 (2013), pp. 24–113.

ephemeral ontological field that can be characterised as doing in futurity. Thus, a manifesto is a call to a doing in and for the future<sup>23</sup>

This brief note on manifestos, connecting them to the future-facing project that Muñoz is engaged with in the book, attempts to mark out the dual investments in queerness and manifestos through a shared desire to disrupt epistemology.<sup>24</sup> Linked to the ephemeral forms of queer life and practice – both a material consequence of marginalisation and an horizon that Muñoz focuses on – manifestos light up as a cultural objects particularly invested with potentialities for queer futures. Like gossip in Butt’s studies of the New York art world, Muñoz’s comments allow us to think about the ways that manifestos work to challenge accepted epistemologies. Orbiting such an idea, media theorist Felicity Colman has written on the use of manifestos by historians, suggesting that:

manifestos forms are used as signals of a time, a place and an attitude. Narrative histories and historical research for all mediums engage manifestos as historical registers of the time of their production; they are epistemic catalysts that mark specific events and compose temporal registers of political and social moods<sup>25</sup>

Despite their prevalence in narrative accounts of history, Colman suggests that, whilst manifestos offer “accessible epistemologies”, they also work to throw open the very terms that history is written on. The relationship of the manifesto to history, which Colman signals toward, is something that I explore through this thesis, introducing these ephemeral forms of political print culture to the field of queer studies. Although it is not my wish to restate, as Lyon, Rand and others have done before more, the relationship of manifestos to performative speech, I do turn to the ways that, through speaking to a

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<sup>23</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009), p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> Following Michel Foucault’s writings, the historian Jonathan Ned Katz uses the category of heterosexuality in order to debunk the privileging of normative sexualities in studies of sexuality and gender. See ‘The Invention of Heterosexuality’, *Socialist Review*, 20 (1990), 7–34 and *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Felicity Colman, ‘Notes on the Feminist Manifesto: The Strategic Use of Hope’, *Journal for Cultural Research*, 4.14 (2010), p. 375.

future that is open to change, manifestos challenge acceptable (and accepted) epistemologies upon which rest accounts of the past.<sup>26</sup>

A more prosaic, but no less important, consideration of the ephemeral traces of queer history is discernable in the recent ‘archival turn’ in queer and feminist studies, which explores the recent emphasis on cataloguing and preserving histories within movements. This gives a broader context for the way that encounters with histories of queer life have necessarily had to deal with the issue of ephemera. Where Butt and Muñoz have considered ephemera as much as a conceptual category for queer theory as a material one, scholars including Martin Meeker, Alison Piepmeier, Kate Eichhorn, and Julia Downes have all turned to considerations of material culture in order to understand the ways that print ephemera circulates in relation to queer movements.<sup>27</sup> Whilst Meeker explores systems of communication that underpin individual and collective expressions of homosexual identity, Piepmeier’s foregrounds feminist girl (grrrl) zines produced since the early 1990s as much as material objects as instances as political rhetoric. Eichhorn’s writing, representing a broad engagement in print culture in relation to feminist and queer political movements, lately considers the effects on language – namely its standardisation – occasioned through the rise of the Xerox machine, in turn reflecting upon the opportunities print produces for disturbing such

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<sup>26</sup> Indeed Martin Puchner points out that Austin can only be applied to the manifesto form ‘against his will’. For Austin the performative is only successful, or “happy,” when it functions in felicitous union with the conditions, i.e. laws, that validate it. Puchner notes that Austin ‘would have recognized in this genre [of the manifesto] a form of speech yearning for performative authority without fully possessing it.’ A manifesto attempts to perform outside of the conditions of its production and in doing so elides the laws that govern it, even as historic codes produce a manifesto as such within a particular time. In this way the manifesto form’s use of the future anterior tense is rather like Austin’s description of this non-serious or citational utterance. The citational utterance for Austin is one that occurs for example on a stage or in literature and which enacts the performative without validating the action. These Austin characterizes as “sick”. See Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> See Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s - 1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009); Julia Downes, ‘DIY Queer Feminist (Sub)cultural Resistance in the UK’ (University of Leeds, 2009); Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013) and Kate Eichhorn, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century*.

mechanisms of standardisation. Thinking about how print both mirrors and engenders embodied manifestations of queer communities, for example hook-ups, meetings or marches, these authors all turn to the subject of archives as spaces through which histories of queer social movements (and indeed new formations of queer community) become available. In this respect, much is owed to the work of Ann Cvetkovich who has probed at the affective registers that encircle collections of ephemera in order to ‘better recognize the significance and value’ of community archives.<sup>28</sup> In Cvetkovich’s writing on the Lesbian Herstory Archive, as well as the other scholarship referred to above, a challenge is posed by ephemera to the archive, in which historic categories of gender and sexuality have been produced and managed. Like Eichhorn’s consideration that the mechanisms of linguistic standardisation might also give rise to its other, archives offer up a kind of dialectical image through which alternate histories of queer life appear in the present.

This recent turn to material culture might be viewed in light of shifts from print to digital processes though, as Frances Robertson notes, new technologies have done little to stem the flow of print ephemera from the mouths of copy machines.<sup>29</sup> Eichhorn discusses the effect of digital technologies on archival practices, recognising the consequences of the fact that ‘archives are now housed in the same machines used to produce documents’.<sup>30</sup> This statement illuminates the way that traces of political activity are now subject to different forms of surveillance and data collection than they once were, expedited through digitally networked technologies. Similarly, Cvetkovich’s emphasis on archives has also shifted since she published her book *An Archive of*

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<sup>28</sup> *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*, ed. by Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), p. 41. See also Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Frances Robertson, *Print Culture: From Steam Press to Ebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Kate Eichhorn, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century*, p. 116.

*Feelings* in 2003, to reflect the ways that collections of queer ephemera are increasingly prevalent in more formal institutional settings.<sup>31</sup> For example, collections such as The Riot Grrrl Collection held in the Fales Library at NYU are now as significant to researchers of queer and feminist counter-cultures as the more informal atmosphere Lesbian Herstory Archives.

Of the studies of print ephemera within queer and feminist social movements listed above, none have attended in any depth to the role of manifestos in queer politics. In her most recent book *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century* (2016), Eichhorn provides an important overview of the relationship of the Xerox machine to politics. Whilst this concern allows Eichhorn to foreground print ephemera in relation the political struggle, she only signals to the numerous manifestos run off Xerox copieres since they were first invented in 1959.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Lisa Gitelman's *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (2014) does not mention manifestos in its consideration of the production and effects of various kinds of documents including, again, those reproduced on the Xerox machine alongside less overtly politicised materials such as library cards. Beyond the purvue of scholarship on twentieth century social movement histories, Kevin D. Murphy and Sally O'Driscoll's edited volume, *Studies in Ephemera: Text and Image in Eighteenth-Century Print* (2013), only one article, by Tara Burk, attends to execution ephemera in the seventeenth century, pays passing attention to the polemic within the book's useful reorientation of the meanings of ephemera in historic research.<sup>33</sup> In her extensive doctoral study of the role of print ephemera in cultural activism surrounding the AIDS

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<sup>31</sup> Stone and Jaime Cantrell.

<sup>32</sup> Kate Eichhorn, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century*.

<sup>33</sup> In the introduction to the book the authors reference Samuel Pepys's writing on what he called 'fugitive Pieces'. Though this feels a step too far – even under the auspices of an intergenerational focus – the idea of ephemera as a kind of fugitive form chimes with recent scholarship in queer studies and recent practice in queer art. See *Studies in Ephemera: Text and Image in Eighteenth-Century Print*, ed. by Kevin D. Murphy and Sally O'Driscoll (Lanham, Maryland: Bucknell University Press, 2013).

crisis, 'Let The Record Show: Mapping Queer Art and Activism in New York City, 1986-1995' (2015), Burk again briefly alludes to the manifesto form in relation to those practices but its central consideration lies elsewhere. Of all those cited above, Downes is the only one to recognise the possibilities for manifestos, this time in the context of Riot Grrrl activism. Referencing Colman's conception of the affective registers put into motion by feminist manifestos, Downes writes that manifestos are 'a way for individuals to conjure strong affect and memories, and define and redefine the ideological, aesthetic and political goals of riot grrrl'.<sup>34</sup> Although providing us with no dedicated discussion of the manifesto form in relation to print ephemera and queer politics, the consideration of political urgency, reproduction and queer history making discussed by these authors parallel some of my own concerns. Building on this scholarship, this thesis considers the manifesto as one particular kind of print ephemera in order to recognise the significant role that these texts have been assigned within queer social movements.

Turning to the ephemeral detritus of queer and feminist struggle, all of the authors cited above explore – albeit in different ways – issues of time. Eichhorn signals the temporalities that encircle the production of ephemera within political movements. In a discussion of zine cultures associated with riot grrrl, she suggests that women associated with that movement, valued 'expediency over posterity [...] their hastily produced publications rarely pointed beyond the moment of production'.<sup>35</sup> The desire to archive or catalogue the traces of feminist and queer political activity might then seem to be at odds with the urgency that characterised these struggles. Yet, as I have engaged with manifestos during this research, it has become clear that their desire to speak within moments of political necessity does not entirely undo the slower temporalities

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<sup>34</sup> Downes in *Litpop: Writing and Popular Music*, ed. by Rachel Carroll and Adam Hansen (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order*, p. VII.

associated with collecting and preserving items within archives. The desire of manifesto writers to take up the form in order to disrupt the reproduction of history – and of historic subjectivities – often means that they speak not only to the present and future but also that they attempt to challenge received knowledge relating to the past.

During my research, I have encountered hundreds of texts that, because of their declarative quality, use of the future tense, or laying out of programmes, would qualify as manifestos even if they are not named as such by their authors. Archives such as the LHA turned up hundreds of texts in the overflow files, with even more to be found in periodicals and journals held in their collections. The selection surveyed is only a snapshot of the manifestos associated with the fairly long period, of the 1960s to the present, that this thesis attends to. Although chosen with care, this selection is also liable (as choices so often are) to be at times idiosyncratic. It reflects what is accessible in the archives I visited. Because it is neither possible, nor as I go on to discuss later in this chapter preferable, to produce a catalogue of all the manifestos I encountered while undertaking this project, the texts that I discuss have been chosen for their particular relevance to my interest in the ways that manifestos allow us to think about history. Some, such as Carl Wittman's 'A Gay Manifesto' (1970) and 'Woman-Identified-Woman' by the Radicalesbians (1971), in which lesbians found a voice within both gay liberation and the GLM, defined struggles for visibility that were central to the political claims of gay, lesbian, and trans movements. Others, such as those produced by artists associated with ACT UP New York, employ multiple tenses in order to link grief to political fury. Like 'Queers Read This', many of the texts considered here have been central to the construction of queer imaginaries in activism and in scholarship.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The genealogy of this term, cultural imaginary, can be traced to Cornelius Castoriadis and his definition of a social imaginary as 'the unceasing and essentially undetermined (social historical and psychical) creation of figures/forms/images, on the basis of which alone there can ever be a question of 'something''.

Researching the many manifestos that were written in the context of historic queer struggles in New York since the late 1960s took me to the LHA and the collections at New York University as well as to the special collections at the New York Public Library (NYPL) that hold materials relating to ACT UP New York. I also visited the activist run Interference Archive in Brooklyn where redistributing material into the street is an integral part of the preservation policy. On another occasion I viewed copies of Valerie Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto' (1967) and related correspondence in the flashy Manhattan penthouse that accommodates the collections of New York bookseller Glenn Horowitz. In addition to these spaces that could be visited – and the material from historic struggles riffled through – there were also the numerous personal collections that people like John Lauritsen, a member of the Gay Liberation Front New York, a founder of The Red Butterfly, have carefully uploaded to blogs and webpages. In spite of their virtual nature, access to these resources has also been characterised by the kinds of conversations that Cvetkovich describes of our interactions in archives. The words of Lauritsen, Zoe Leonard and others who I was able to interview for this project are threaded throughout the discussion.

Sifting through manifestos, usually in the miscellany files of archives, or reproduced (often partially) in books, or online, one is immediately faced with a contradiction between the broad and impressive claims to universality that the polemic has traditionally sought and the rather more ephemeral qualities of these objects. The difficulties of organising print ephemera within historic accounts is particularly pertinent when addressing manifestos.<sup>37</sup> Their claim to a time and a space is ephemeral

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To emphasize the imaginary in its cultural rather than social sense is to indicate toward the belonging of these figures, forms and images to a particular group and, in turn, working to constitute that group. See Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 3 and Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

<sup>37</sup> This was a central concern of an exhibition that I organised with my sister Nicola Guy at Archive Kabinett in 2014. The curatorial concerns of *Inessential Fathers: An invitation to read together*, which attempted to map feminist genealogies through the idea of the manifesto, are adjacent to this thesis but are

in the sense that what it desires is change. This wish to speak from within the present but simultaneously to disrupt their conditions of production mean that one risks flattening the urgent claims of the manifesto form when treating them as historic sources. The problems that one encounters when assembling manifestos into anthologies is touched upon in the introduction *BAMN: Outlaw manifestos and ephemera 1965 – 70* (1971), a collection of manifestos reprinted from various counter-cultural and revolutionary movements of the late-1960s such as The Black Panthers and the Yippies. ‘This book is by its nature incomplete and out of date’ – the editors write in 1971 of manifestos produced at most only a few years preceding its publication – ‘we have compiled it from every available channel, but many pieces we would like to are simply unobtainable or, more, likely destroyed’.<sup>38</sup> Katy Deepwell reflects upon similar issues in her introduction to a recent edited anthology of feminist art manifestos published in 2014. She diverges from earlier discussion in the introduction to *BAMN* when she suggests that by placing feminist polemics in chronological order we are able to register the on-going significance of the form for feminist practices, from the second-wave through the net-based cyber-feminist interventions of the 1990s to the post-internet practices of artists in the 2000s.<sup>39</sup> Deepwell’s anthology reveals that manifestos have and continue to be produced by artists beyond the avant-garde period to which they have so often been consigned in art historical accounts.<sup>40</sup> Contrary to suggestions that the manifesto has become history, along with all the other recorded failures of the avant-garde, Deepwell presses an alternative narrative. This thesis too follows, albeit more loosely, a chronological order, taking the reader from the manifestos produced in the feminist art movement of the 1970s, through the polemical forms of AIDS cultural

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not explored here. In part, this was because this thesis started life as a practice-based project but became solely a thesis submission as the project began to take shape.

<sup>38</sup> *BAMN: Outlaw Manifestos and Ephemera 1965 - 70*, ed. by Peter Stansill and David Zane Mairowitz (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Deepwell.

<sup>40</sup> See for example Luca Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885– 1915* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

activism in the 1980s and early 1990s to a series of collective readings that continue to occur in public city spaces internationally. With different ambitions to the form of an anthology, this thesis attempts to explain how manifestos succour less linear accounts of social movements. Through the manifestos discussed here, the various historic returns that characterise queer political struggles since the late 1960s become legible.

This project has involved raking through print and online ephemera, often trying to track down ‘originals’ that are sometimes impossible to locate. Manifestos lend themselves to reproduction and are often reprinted, and latterly shared digitally, numerous times. The idea of an original is not necessarily then useful, since it elides the ways that manifestos have been disseminated through networks of exchange and the readers that have as well shaped their meanings.<sup>41</sup> Although it is essential to understand how manifestos operate within their own time of production, over-emphasis on the value of original copies risks neglecting the ways that manifestos are also given to reproduction in ways that challenge idea of authorship. A focus on print ephemera, rather than purely on rhetoric, necessitates that we examine reading as a practice through which manifestos finds public resonance and fulfil their desire to address audiences. For anyone researching materials produced by marginalised groups, issues of authorship and distribution are difficult to navigate. The sometime peripheral nature of the material is often a consequence of the lives of those who produced it. The claims to self-determination made through manifestos risk being undermined in the production of historic accounts especially where emphasis is placed on readership and circulation. By way of an example of this potentially fraught territory of intention and meaning, in Chapter Three I touch briefly on the copy of Solanas’s ‘SCUM Manifesto’ held in the

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<sup>41</sup> In theories of post-structuralism, which have been foundational to queer scholarship, acts of reading are privileged over and beyond authorship. See Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978). Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’ *Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books); J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) and Jacques Derrida, ‘Signature/Event/Context. Or, “Why Meaning Can Never Be Guaranteed”’, in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

New York Public Library (NYPL). Although there are many copies of this manifesto available, the one held at NYPL is of particular interest since it has been vandalised by its author. Literally inscribed with Solanas's personal struggle to control the meaning of the text, the vandalised copy raises explicit issues relating to authorship, but also archives and libraries, as a peculiar temporal place holder for texts that can revisited by readers.<sup>42</sup>

Just as existing histories of queer social movements that focus on manifestos neglect the material qualities of print ephemera, so too have studies of the manifesto form typically privileged rhetoric. Significant monographs by Martin Puchner and Janet Lyon have tended to focus on the rhetorical qualities of texts rather than on their material qualities that in many ways facilitate the circulation of political writing.<sup>43</sup> Theorists of the manifesto form often foreground performativity of language. But without consideration of the material qualities of texts fail to address the ways that production, circulation and readership enable words to be heard. Although theories of queer identity and manifestos alike have tended to privilege considerations of language over material, contemporary scholarship is increasingly turning to consider materiality to think about how matter as well as language is active in the production of meaning.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> There is also a question here about what manifestos are doing when they aren't being read. Some like 'SCUM Manifesto' are held so strongly in the imaginary of queer politics, that one might argue that they do not need to literally read to continue to have meaning in the world or contribute to our sense as historic political subjects. I discuss this more in relation to Zoe Leonard's 'I want a president' in Chapter Five, paying attention to the different kinds of readership and audience the text has had since it was produced.

<sup>43</sup> Studies that foreground rhetoric in relation to the manifesto form include: Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*; Mary Ann Caws, *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Martin Puchner, 'Manifesto = Theatre', *Theatre Journal*, 54.3 (2002), pp. 449–65; Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Laura Winkiel, *Modernism, Race and Manifestos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Galia Yanoshevsky, 'The Literary Manifesto and Related Notions: A Selected Annotated Bibliography', *Poetics Today*, 30.2 (2009), pp. 287–315; Galia Yanoshevsky, 'Three Decades of Writing on Manifesto: The Making of a Genre', *Poetics Today*, 30.2 (2009), pp. 257–86; Anne Sinkey, 'The Rhetoric of the Manifesto' (Emory University, 2009) and Kathi Weeks, 'The Critical Manifesto: Marx and Engels, Haraway, and Utopian Politics', *Utopian Studies*, 24.2 (2013), pp. 216–31.

<sup>44</sup> The 'New Materialism' is one of the most prominent areas of contemporary thought to foreground the role of matter in the reproduction of social life. Karen Barad's foundational work in this area has critiqued the primacy given to language in the shift from representationalism to performativity in discursive practices such as post-structuralist theories of gender. See 'Posthuman Performativity: Toward an

Thinking of material qualities of manifestos allows consideration of the spatial as well as temporal dynamics of ephemera, since ephemera suggests an appearance, however fleeting it might be. Understanding texts as taking up space is crucial to the examination of print cultures and latterly digital ones. The materiality of these forms allows for the existence, persistence and repetition of texts (as well as the loss of them!) permitting one to think of manifestos not only in terms of rhetoric but also as I go on to consider other aesthetic dimensions of politics.<sup>45</sup> In this research, encounters with manifestos produced within queer social movements are richly suggestive of the lives that these documents have had and the meanings that they continue to produce for queer historiography.

In what follows, manifestos are grouped under the term queer, linking queerness, though not in any essential way, to ephemera. There cannot be said to be anything essentially queer about manifestos. Nor are all the manifestos considered by this thesis adequately addressed under the banner of 'queer manifestos'. To do this would be to retroactively assign the term to manifestos produced within the context of gay liberation, some of whose foremost members rejected outright the term when it was reappropriated by a younger generation of activists in the late 1980s and early 1990s. If there is a problem in naming manifestos as somehow queer in and of themselves, there is equal danger in fetishizing both ephemera and latterly its appearance within archives as somehow queer in and of itself. All history relies to some degree on traces for defining its subject. That the material of the past returns to us in the present seems barely worth stating or that the conditions of that return are dependent on those of the present. Yet as I have outlined above, the ephemeral is also a material consequence of

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Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28.3 (2003), p. 801–31. For new materialist approaches to manifestos see Helen Palmer, *Deleuze and Futurism: A Manifesto for Nonsense* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014) and Colman.

<sup>45</sup> With more time, a greater overview of the ways that manifestos were distributed outside of New York would be possible. I signal to this occlusion in the Epilogue to this thesis. It is something that I would like to further focus on as I turn this thesis into a book project.

those queer lives that have been lived peripheral to the dominant historic narratives. My argument sets out to foreground the material qualities of the manifesto form, which are often neglected in favour of the rhetorical devices they employ. I do so to shed light on the ways that the form might contribute to the writing histories of queer social histories, allowing for a shifting investments in political identities to become legible over time.

### **aesthetics and politics**

Manifestos produced in the context of queer social movements contributed to contemporaneous shifts in the constitution of the public sphere from the 1960s onward. This proposal is tied to longer histories in which the appearance of manifestos can be tracked within Enlightenment shifts from ruling power to bourgeois democracy, as signalled by modernity. Janet Lyon writes about the ways that manifestos circulated within the evolving print cultures of the Enlightenment. She emphasises the historic ties that bind manifestos to the public sphere and, relatedly, to emergent forms of political democracy. Tracing a history of the manifesto form, one that has its genesis in these early print cultures of the Enlightenment, Lyon describes the ways that manifestos constituted publics in early modernity through forms of address, particularly invoking “we the people”. Defining the manifesto as a genre of text that change over time, Lyon demonstrates the ways that manifestos have also been deployed to make and remake the public sphere over time. With reference to Jürgen Habermas’s idea of the ‘bourgeois public sphere’, which he set out in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Lyon argues that manifestos not only tell us about the changing formation of that sphere but also present us with histories of dissent from dominant modes of thought and action. She suggests that ‘with its challenges and threats and impatience, [the manifesto] may be a persistent mode of modernity’s inevitable counterdiscourse’.<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>46</sup> Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*, pp. 33-34.

inevitable “counterdiscourse” that she refers to, is the one that Habermas claims is written through modernity. Through manifestos, Lyon suggests, particular counternarratives or alternative histories emerge, ones that are embedded in the contradictory process of modernity itself.

In the 1960s, manifestos contributed to the awakening of consciousness that characterised gay, lesbian and trans liberation movements in the U.S. Influenced by the new Black politics, the Women’s Liberation Movement and anti-imperialist Left movements, the overlapping struggles of gay, lesbian and trans activists contributed to a substantial transformation in the public sphere.<sup>47</sup> Manifestos, historically tied to the idea of a public sphere, were invested with imaginary promise within all of these movements. They aided the circulation of ideas, helped to shape developing networks and worked to carve out a space within which new formations of identity would emerge. One of the most prominent theorists to write about the shifting character of the public sphere in relation to new configurations of identity-based groups is Fredric Jameson. In ‘Periodizing the 60s’ (1981), Jameson considers the emergence of various groups in the context of the New Left and lists amongst them ‘blacks, students, third world peoples’.<sup>48</sup> These new collective “identities” or “subjects of history” were embedded in the broader cultural and historic shifts occurring at that time, for example post-war decolonisation processes. Jameson frames these movements within the Foucauldian notion ‘of the conquest of the right to speak in a new collective voice’.<sup>49</sup> The new social movements of the 1960s emerged in the U.S., at least partly, in response to the shifting relations between state and unions during which ‘a crisis in the institutions

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<sup>47</sup> Juliet Mitchell’s writing on women and the New Left is another important touchstone here, emphasizing that equality between sexes rather than the abolition of the family need to be the central force of liberation for it will work to separate reproduction from the condition of oppression. In this text she writes that, ‘the legalization of homosexuality—which is one of the forms of non-reproductive sexuality—should be supported for just the same reason’. See Juliet Mitchell, ‘Women: The Longest Revolution’, *New Left Review*, 1.40 (1966), p. 36.

<sup>48</sup> Fredric Jameson, ‘Periodizing the 60s’, *Social Text*, 9/10 (1984), p. 181

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

through which a real class politics had however imperfectly been able to express itself [...] can be seen as a fundamental “condition of possibility” for the unleashing of the new social and political dynamics of the 60s’.<sup>50</sup> Though crucially Jameson does not recognise the role of gay, lesbian and trans groups, nor indeed the role of manifestos, in this process, homosexual movements contributed to these transformations. Along with other collective formations, they represented a new social class coming into political visibility, perhaps best exemplified by the onus placed in the movement on the idea of “coming out”.<sup>51</sup> Domenico Rizzo summarises this point in an essay, ‘Public Spheres and Gay Politics since the Second World War’ (2006), ‘the closet was an emblem of oppression, an interiorization of homophobia that could only be overturned by coming out and speaking out.’<sup>52</sup> Here Foucault’s notion of a collective voice is made possible through the act of coming out, permitting recognition upon which shared identities might be forged.

One way that these new articulations of identity can be tracked as historic instances is through forms of printed matter that, in part, gave rise to them. Manifestos contributed to transformations in the public sphere that can be mapped through queer struggles. They can also be read through other social movements emerging in the liberatory atmosphere of the late 1960s such as Women’s Liberation Movement. These movements, as with the earlier liberation struggles that made them possible, for example, National Liberation and the Civil Rights movements, challenged the authorship of history solely to the imperialist states. In histories of queer social movements, the circulation of print culture in the street, for example those distributed at rallies, liberation marches and pickets allows underscores the public dimensions of

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> The Second Chapter of this thesis considers “coming out” in relation to this claim for visibility and how the imperative spoken through the manifesto form gave rise new configurations of identity.

<sup>52</sup> Domenico Rizzo, ‘Public Spheres and Gay Politics Since the Second World War’ in *Gay Life and Culture: A World History*, ed. by Robert Aldrich (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006).

manifestos. Likewise, these material configurations, of bodies in space, can be read through the ways that texts circulated.<sup>53</sup> Ideas relating to the public sphere tend to exceed spatial coordinates however, reaching beyond the material appearances of bodies in space, located instead in the imagination of groups or societies. Through manifestos, something like the world-making project that Warner and Lauren Berlant signal to becomes legible, where “world,” like “public,” differs from community or group because it necessarily includes more people than can be identified, more spaces than can be mapped’.<sup>54</sup>

During the 1980s, gay, lesbian and trans activism would again come to intersect antagonistically with the state. Through manifestos, graphic art, protests, marches, sit-ins, kiss-ins and video, international AIDS activism challenged homophobic and racialised practices in law, media and the media.<sup>55</sup> Characterised by experimentation, the cultural activism surrounding the early years of the AIDS crisis broadened definitions of the public. As I explore in Chapter Four, these cultural interventions challenged the absence of queer people within the representational frameworks, including constitutional democracy but also media, through which the very idea of the public is constituted. The claims of access to and visibility within the public sphere made through AIDS cultural activism, occurred against a backdrop of political transformations that can be understood as representing a crisis in post-war welfare legislation. Overseen in the U.S. and the U.K. by the Bush-Thatcher governments, this

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<sup>53</sup> In the 1990s, as the field of queer theory grew within the academy, emphasised spatial concepts in relation to community. See *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. by Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997) and *Making Worlds: Gender, Metaphor, Materiality*, ed. by Susan Hardy Aiken and others (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, ‘Sex in Public’, *Critical Inquiry*, 24 (1998), p. 558.

<sup>55</sup> There are important intersections between visual representation and the idea of public sex that, lie beyond the scope of this thesis. For example a burgeoning photographic culture enabled lesbian S/M communities to challenge issues of visibility and access to the public sphere. Magazines like *Bad Attitude* and *On Our Backs* provide a useful record of this period, something that I explore this in an article about the photography in *On Our Backs* between 1984 and the mid-1990s. See Laura Guy, ‘Sex Wars Revisited’ in *Aperture* 225, Winter 2016.

process undertook to privatise institutions through which post-war definitions of the public sphere had initially been configured. Although, as Stuart Hall and others have written, this crisis can be attributed to longer political, social and cultural shifts, began in the 1960s in reaction to the liberatory atmosphere of 1968, the 1980s saw the dismantling of various Left political networks alongside a massive scaling back of state welfare.<sup>56</sup> Warner emphasises that radical queer identities, ones which resisted assimilation into state legal frameworks and were emergent within the late 1980s and 1990s, were not only a reaction to this situation. Writing that ‘the state [...] contributes more directly to the intelligibility of queerness’, Warner shows anti-state queer politics to be in part an outcome of the process undertaken by governments to dismantle existing forms of democratic representation in the service of private capital that occurred in this period.<sup>57</sup> He identifies how the seeming tensions between lesbian and gay campaigns for state recognition and anti-state lesbian, gay and queer struggles, represent not entirely separate agendas in political organising but rather responded to different contexts, working alongside one another. Taking place in a number of spheres, including scholarship, community activism, and medical and legal frameworks, this differentiated notion of public life has had significant consequences in the past thirty years, allowing for increased, albeit limited, visibility for certain queer subjects within educational curriculums, the military and prison, and through the same-sex marriage campaigns In the U.S., especially, the radical queer activism associated with the early

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<sup>56</sup> Stuart Hall, ‘The Great Moving Right Show’, *Marxism Today*, January (1979), pp. 14–20.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Massachusetts: Zone Books, MIT Press, 2005). This transformation can be understood in economic terms but not only. It also necessitates that we account for the uneven ways that subjects are granted access to public life. Analysis that focuses solely on issues of economic access neglects those subjects considered disposable within capitalist economies, lives which Judith Butler, Jackie Wang, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten and others have described as lying beyond the limits of recognition (and thus, to borrow from Butler, also of grievability). I address this issue in more detail in the Epilogue. See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004); Jackie Wang, ‘Against Innocence: Race, Gender and the Politics of Safety’, *Lies*, 1 (2012) <<http://www.liesjournal.net/volume1-10-againstinocence.html>> and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, New York and Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013).

years of the AIDS crisis contributed to the increased, albeit limited, legal recognition now afforded to LGBT subjects.

The shifting terrain of the social in the 1980s coincided with the contemporaneous debates on the subject of the public sphere in the English speaking academy. This was influenced by the translation of Habermas's *Public Sphere* into English in 1989 but also the emergence of queer theory and feminist perspectives in the academy. Historic and critical accounts of publics to emerge in the 1990s sought to upend the claims to the public sphere of certain rights based politics such as those of mainstream gay and lesbian rights organisation. Instead, the rewriting of public cultures at this time, in the 1990s, was particularly predicated upon feminist and queer conceptions of difference. Lyon's writing on lesbian feminist manifestos addresses feminist critiques of the idea of the public sphere, specifically in relation to Habermas's elision of gender within his own writing. Turning to the claims made by various feminist manifestos, including Valerie Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto' and The Lesbian Avenger's 'Dyke Manifesto', she shows how these absolutely resist fascistic and neo-fascistic claims to universal narratives. This reconsideration of manifestos allows for Lyon to consider gender, which was occluded from Habermas's conception of the public sphere.<sup>58</sup> Lyon addresses the way that feminism has shifted the conception of the public, turning to various examples of a number feminist manifestos produced in the twentieth century in ways that are connected to thinking about the relationship of postmodern theory to feminism.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Others exploring a similar critique include the feminist scholars such as Joan Landes, Nancy Fraser, and Mary Ryan, whose writing on the public sphere rethought it through feminist theory in the early 1990s. Joan B Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1992) and Mary Ryan, 'Gender and Public Access: Women's politics in nineteenth-century America', also in Calhoun.

<sup>59</sup> This has been explored by various fields of feminist thought but particularly skilfully in Sara Ahmed. Both Kathi Weeks and Natalya Lusty, link these ideas to the manifesto form. For example, Lusty's recent

It is useful for this thesis to spend some time unpacking Lyon's writing on lesbian feminist manifestos and transformations of the sphere in the early 1990s. With reference to the 'Dyke Manifesto' (Fig. 1.3), produced in 1993 by the Lesbian Avengers, a group of lesbians that came together in the early-1990s, Lyon foregrounds lesbian issues in relation to AIDS activism. Doing so, she explicitly challenges issues relating to rights based political activism. Foregrounding, with humour, the separation of the private and public spheres, the manifesto begins 'it's time to get out of the beds out of the bars and into the streets'.<sup>60</sup> Lyon shows instead how, rather than reinvesting in the "we" of the people attached to the bourgeois public sphere, the 'Dyke Manifesto' is shaped by a claim to visibility that is predicated as much on difference. Under the organising sign that 'dyke' provided at a moment when AIDS activism was making a renewed claim to the public sphere, the manifesto decries the universalist terms of the public political sphere that has historically been shaped around the Western construction of man. As Lyon writes, it 'operates by lighting up a polemical field scorched by the failed promises of an incomplete or incompetent political order, and by challenging the status of the "universal subject" on which that order is implicitly based'.<sup>61</sup> Thus the manifesto offers a riposte to the claim that identity politics limits the historic claims of Left politics, foregrounding sectarian views over and above historic claims for solidarity.<sup>62</sup>

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project 'Radical Speech: Feminist Manifestos and the Shaping of Political Modernity' foregrounds the ways the feminists have contributed to the transformation of the manifesto form at moments of political crisis Sara Ahmed, *Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>60</sup> The Lesbian Avengers, 'Dyke Manifesto' (New York: Self published, 1993). Lesbian Herstory Archives. No accession number.

<sup>61</sup> Lyon, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> Without reference to manifestos, others have challenged at length the deeply concerning repercussions of such thinking. For a particularly electrifying example see Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). With particular consideration of this question as it relates to queer identities and political communities, Paul Lichterman unpacks similar tensions though his argument risks reasserting the idea that identity-based groups are culpable for the failures of the Left in the 1980s. See Paul Lichterman, 'Talking Identity in the Public Sphere: Broad Visions and Small Spaces in Sexual Identity Politics', *Theory and Society*, 1999, pp. 101–41. Alan McKee also raises a similar problematic when he address Queer Nation in his book *The Public Sphere: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005). I explore this in more detail in my Epilogue.

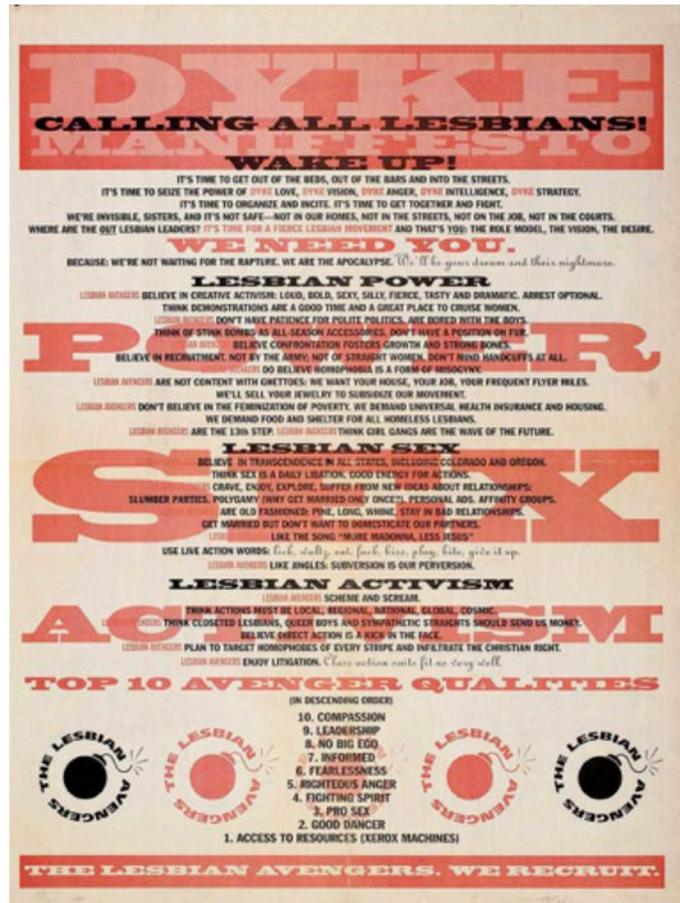


Figure 1.3. The Lesbian Avengers, 'Dyke Manifesto' [Newspaper]. (1993).  
 Lesbian Herstory Archive, New York. No accession number.

The relationship of those print cultures to the public sphere signals not only the way that print was produced but also the spaces of dissemination and to 'creative activism', central to the Lesbian Avenger's emphasis on lesbian visibility. Lyon's suggestion that the 'Dyke Manifesto' produces a differentiated claim to lesbian as a political sign, like 'Queers Read This' did for queer, is linked to the multiple voices that become apparent through it. 'The amalgamated subjects of the Dyke Manifesto represent something quite different from a choral voice seeking access to the rights and privileges of the liberal bourgeois sphere'.<sup>63</sup>

This thesis develops Lyon's line of thinking in order to consider the manifestos produced within queer social movements between the 1960s and the present. One way

<sup>63</sup> Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*, p. 38.

that I do this is to foreground the aesthetic dimensions of politics that these manifestos make legible. Visibility within the public sphere is linked to both to temporal and to spatial registers that manifestos attempt to harness. The idea that the aesthetic dimension of politics becomes available to us through manifestos, challenges distinctions that have been made between aesthetic manifestos and political ones. In his book *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos and the Avant-gardes* (2006), the literary scholar Martin Puchner considers the relationship between aesthetics and politics, configuring a relationship through what he terms ‘an insistence on reading avant-garde manifestos alongside political ones’.<sup>64</sup> Puchner establishes these two categories, in part to witness the interplay of the two through avant-garde manifestos and what he refers to, borrowing from Marx, as the “poetry of the revolution”. Turning to the poetic dynamics of political rhetoric, Puchner finds in the manifesto form the ‘political dimensions of modernism’.<sup>65</sup> Though rich, Puchner’s book includes little consideration of how the aesthetic qualities of the manifesto form itself might offer up a more explicit account of the complex relationships between form and politics.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, Lyon refers us to important intersections between the political and aesthetic dimensions of the manifesto form whilst still maintaining a separation of artistic production from the politic sphere. Only in the conclusion does Lyon point toward other possibilities for the form when she references Étienne Balibar’s ‘right to politics’ in a discussion of the polemic character of Jenny Holzer’s image-text work. Departing from

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<sup>64</sup> Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos and the Avant-Gardes*, p. 4

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 124.

<sup>66</sup> Gavin Grindon points to Puchner's lack of engagement with the manifestos produced by counter-cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s in a short review of the book. See Gavin Grindon, ‘Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos and the Avant-Gardes by Martin Puchner’, *Papers of Surrealism*, 5 (2007) <<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~puchner/surrealismreview.pdf>>.

these studies, my own research turns to manifestos in order that different stories about the aesthetic registers of politics might emerge.<sup>67</sup>

As with other political movements, manifestos produced in the context of queer struggle have often sought recognition either within existing legal frameworks or on their own terms. Manifestos have been key to the claim for political recognition sought by queer movements. This claim is tied to the idea of visibility as a means of seeking transformation within the public sphere. One way that queer social movements have sought visibility is through the manifesto form. Foregrounding the aesthetic dimensions of politics, manifestos seek visibility for those typically occluded from the public sphere and, by extension, work to show us the limit of democratic politics. Put simply, manifestos needle at the limits of what can be seen. They do so against the very conditions that govern marginalisation, for example mechanisms of cultural representation, criminalisation or censorship surrounding queer lives and practice.<sup>68</sup> Many of the manifestos discussed here seek recognition but unlike gay and lesbian rights discourse, which has sought greater visibility within traditional spheres of political action, these texts seek recognition for subjects on their own terms. They do so by articulating an illegitimate claim to the spaces and languages of politics. This claim is facilitated by material qualities of printed texts. The idea that the manifestos have significantly contributed to the shaping of new subjects of history, which Jameson identifies in his discussion of political formations of the 1960s, requires reflection on the conditions of possibility that govern statements. But it also requires an understanding of how manifestos produce alternative annunciations from within the very conditions that limit such statements. Through simultaneous investments in aesthetics and politics, manifestos have spoken outside of the very conditions that

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<sup>67</sup> See Mary Ann Caws, *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Laura Winkiel, *Modernism, Race and Manifestos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

constrain what can be thought or seen. Doing so, they have contributed to transformations in the public political sphere.

### **futures past**

From the place of the present, manifestos speak from within their conditions of production in the future tense. Doing so, they are invested with the desire that they might disrupt those conditions. The worlds that they imagine, belonging as they do to the future, are necessarily deferred. They are, to borrow a few words from José Esteban Muñoz's writing on queerness and futurity, 'not yet here'.<sup>69</sup> The claims that manifestos make to a future are strongly attached to a sense of history. Employing the future tense they work hard to counter mechanisms of social reproduction in the present and make a historic claim to visibility within the public sphere. Not only does this work to transform what is available to us in the present, but also what is available to us in the past. This is no rescue fantasy that wishes to work back into history and return, somehow, those subjects who have historically been elided. Rather it lets us see the cultural and political work that is done to produce historical narratives that threaten to – or worse willingly – leave certain subjects behind.

In her essay 'Feminist Futural: Five Kinds of Time' (2007), Lyon argues that time is the character that separates manifestos from other kinds of texts.<sup>70</sup> Considering various feminist manifestos associated with the Women's Liberation Movement, Lyon identifies five kinds of time that manifesto represent. These she names "public time", "manifesto time", "utopian time", "the time of unfolding" (that is, the time of the historical present) and "non-teleological" temporalities. Framing a discussion of rhetoric through these multiple times, Lyon identifies the ways that manifestos are not

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<sup>69</sup> Muñoz, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Janet Lyon, 'Feminist Futural: Five Kinds of Time', *Rett Kopi: A Journal of Art and Aesthetics*, 2007, pp. 144–51.

only bound to the future but rather exhibit much more complex temporal registers. Lyon's emphasis on rhetoric risks not acknowledging the ways manifestos have been produced, circulated, reproduced, read and disseminated. However, an encounter she recalls between students and texts signals toward readership as introducing a further temporal complexity. Approached as materials for studies of history, or in Lyon's case of literature, manifestos continue to address readers outside of their time. Considering readers in relation to manifesto, a suggestion unfulfilled in Lyon's writing, this thesis undertakes to understand how manifestos function themselves as historic materials. With the complex temporal registers employed in their own present, might manifestos also work to upend linear accounts of history?

Turned toward some other future, manifestos have nonetheless proved functional objects of study for historians. Used to align new political positions or to otherwise track the intentions of groups, manifestos have been put to work in ways that reinforce the generational logic underpinning political movements (for example, Lyon identifies shifts between "second wave" and "third wave" feminists through manifestos). Linked to epistemology, that is to the emergence of political ideas or political subjects, manifestos seek to enact breaks with what has gone before as well as with the material conditions of their production. At the same time, their rhetorical and material qualities offer up more complex relationships to history. Turning to manifestos in order to write accounts of queer social movements, as this study does, is to think about ways that manifestos offer alternatives to the kind of linearity that underpins thinking of politics in terms of generations.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Crucially, the new collective identities that Jameson suggests threw the public sphere into crisis in the 1960s engendered a related crisis in the writing of narrative history. The renewed claims of feminism, for example, to self-determination, precipitated the emergence of the women's history movement. Corresponding developments can be seen to emerge from gay, lesbian and trans liberation, which occasioned self-conscious acts archiving and recording histories within communities. The Lesbian

Manifestos offer a way to engage, as Puchner and others have suggested, with a history of the future. But this future is not the one from which this author casts her backward glance; rather manifestos allow us to glimpse the edges of the past's unrealised futures. The idea that manifestos have something to do with the way history is told, not only refers to the historic claims to self-determination made by those who have been marginalised within the public sphere. It also refers to the mobilisation of the past within texts. Many of the manifestos discussed here mine the past for its radical possibilities. This is not quite the same as Jameson's idea 'Utopian visions that include those of the past and modify or correct them'.<sup>72</sup> The peculiar temporalities of manifestos discussed in what follows register history as something that is both open to change and which might be invoked to disrupt the terms of the present. Such reference to the political efficacy of the past in the present is indebted to Walter Benjamin's dialectical image of history, most clear sketched in his essay 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940).<sup>73</sup> There, Benjamin describes an approach to articulating the past that does not 'recognise it "the way it really was"' but allows ones 'to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger'.<sup>74</sup>

Benjamin's powerful invocation of the dialectical function of historical materialism, which recognises that '*even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins', has recently been taken in queer and feminist scholarship relating to time.<sup>75</sup> For

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Herstory Archives is one example amongst others of collections, archives or historical writing to have roots in the 1970s..

<sup>72</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, p. xv.

<sup>73</sup> Various approaches to the politics of time fall out of the remit of this thesis. Peter Osborne sets out to consider the times of modernity within his writing. Connecting to practice, Patrick Greaney has thought through the way that time returns us to think about identity. Griselda Pollock's writing on the avant-garde is written through with the notion of 'women's time', an idea that she develops from Julia Kristeva's essay of the same name. See Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London and New York: Verso, 1995); Patrick Greaney, *Quotational Practices: Repeating the Future in Contemporary Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Griselda Pollock, 'Moments and Temporalities of the Avant-Garde "in, Of, and from the Feminine"', *New Literary History*, 41.4 (2010), 795–820 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2010.0030>> and Kristeva.

<sup>74</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 255.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

example scholars in the field of queer studies, including Dianne Chisholm, Jack Halberstam, Claire Hemmings and Elizabeth Freeman, have approaches accounts of queer history through a Benjaminian dialectic image. Although Benjamin's writing on history is particularly singular, and significant, scholarship attending to the idea of queer temporality has paid particular attention to individual and group identities organised around sexual and political identities in ways that speak to this study. These writers all consider the ways that time within capitalist societies has been, and continues to be, deployed to organise subjects in relation to linear accounts of history. In doing so, they suggest that, constructing in this way, time works to marginalise those who are out of step with the rhythms of progress. They do in order to think how we might (recognise those who) live out time differently. Building on these accounts, developed under the banner of queer temporality, my own study focuses on the ways that time has been harnessed within queer social movements through consideration of manifestos. Speaking to the future, manifestos explicitly challenge dominant historical narratives. The multiple temporalities that they utilise show linear accounts of history to have worked pejoratively on subjects marginalised by the state. Considering the way that manifestos produce non-linear accounts of time, this thesis engages with them as means to think about what they might offer to practices of queer history in the present.

In her book *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011), Claire Hemmings outlines the ways that narratives of progress and loss in feminist history writing 'refute the possibilities for other versions' to be told.<sup>76</sup> Hemmings identifies this dominant character of feminist history writing in order to critique the failure of Western feminism 'to see agency in unfamiliar others'.<sup>77</sup> Hemmings characterises this as 'a failure to see resistance in unfamiliar modes and an

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<sup>76</sup> Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 62.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208

insistence that independent resistance is agency's primary sign'.<sup>78</sup> I reference Hemmings here to draw attention to the ways that manifestos have not been given the status that other cultural forms such as film or literature have in studies of queer cultural production. But also to signal the way that my own concern is with collective forms of agency, ones that are influenced by longstanding connections between queer and feminist politics. The failure of queer studies to properly attend to the already queer dynamics of feminist politics is something that Hemmings writing puts forward.<sup>79</sup> This important point, that the intersections between queer and feminist politics are obscured both by the subjects we choose but also the ways that we tell histories, offers up a point of departure for my own concern for manifestos. Explicitly challenging historic narratives, and putting forward alternative ones, manifestos demand attention within a project to expand what is available to us within the rubric of queer studies.

There are significant connections, in epistemological terms, between the way that manifestos and queerness have each been imagined. In particular, both are invested in for their disruptive capacity, either in terms of the historical alternatives they produce or the ways in which they challenge accepted knowledges established around subjects. These two things are intimately linked. Often, manifestos have been written, distributed and read by people who have been historically marginalised. Attempting to claim visibility through their disturbing temporalities, manifestos have reimagined historic subjectivities in their own present. The challenge of working with manifestos is related both to the way the form is held in the imaginary of politics and to the materiality of the form. The shifting terrain of identity that appears to us through manifestos produced within queer social movements is written through with the disruptive force of any claim

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> One thread that runs throughout this thesis is the intimate relationship between feminist and queer politics. In queer theory, this relationship has at times been a fraught one. One writer to develop an account of this relationship is Annemarie Jagose. In 'Feminism's Queer Theory', she writes an account of the often elided activist traditions (of feminism) from which queer theory emerged. See Annemarie Jagose, 'Feminism's Queer Theory', *Feminism and Psychology*, 2009, 157–74.

to politics made by those subjects who has not historically had access to the public sphere. Although, as Jameson points out, such claims to a collective voice might not always be fulfilled, since the 1960s the desires and demands that can be traced through manifestos absolutely have not left the public sphere in tact.<sup>80</sup> In what follows, manifestos are approached as documents through which queer accounts of history might be approached. This is not to reassert the epistemological status of these materials, but rather to suggest that as forms they are explicitly given to challenge accepted epistemologies. In doing so, they allow alternative stories of queer social movements to emerge. In particular, these stories tell of the feminist genealogies of queer political thought and action.

Approaching history writing through the aesthetic dimensions of the manifesto form requires criticality in relation to self-conscious attempts to name or locate methods for “doing” queer history. In her studies of queer identity between the wars, historian Laura Doan has differentiated between what she refers to as the ‘historical past’ and the ‘practical past’.<sup>81</sup> She uses this distinction to understand the ways that, for historians, ‘the queer characterization of historical practices, protocols, or methods maps only unevenly onto the ways historians understand their work’.<sup>82</sup> Though attending to a different period to this study, Doan engages methodologically with the ways that history has been imagined in the field of queer theory, as a discipline overly tied to the problematic scientific fields in which fact and knowledge are privileged. This, the ‘historical past’, is pitted against ‘the practical past’ expounded within queer historiography, in which the pursuit of history is ‘available to anyone’ and often deployed by queer social movements ‘determined by specific political investments, informed by the modern organization of sexuality that predetermines and over-

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<sup>80</sup> Fredric Jameson, ‘Periodizing the 60s’, *Social Text*, 9/10 (1984), 178–209.

<sup>81</sup> Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women’s Experience of Modern War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

determines what can be said, asked, thought or written about the past'.<sup>83</sup> As historic documents manifestos allow narratives about political identities and aesthetics to unfold, ones that permit consideration of the aesthetic dimensions of politics especially in relation to the writing of histories. To take up the desires that underpin manifestos, namely the ways that they have sought to challenge history, challenges accounts that establish queerness in a binary relation to the normative. Rather, reading investments in the disruptive qualities of manifesto allows us also to approach the mechanisms and material conditions through which dominant narratives and historical knowledges are reproduced.

### **manifestos: queer clutter**

Interested in the challenges that the manifestos might pose to historical narrative, this thesis turns to manifestos produced by groups associated with queer struggles in New York from the late 1960s onward. Looking at the way that manifestos make legible the aesthetic dimensions of politics, it follows investments in the manifesto form through various moments of struggle in order to think about what they do to dominant understandings of history. Considering the aesthetic dimensions of the form alongside the material characteristics of print ephemera, it needles at the way that accounts of queer politics appear through manifestos. Occupied with the way that each of these examples invests in the manifesto form for its disruptive potential, the study presents a shifting terrain of collective identities that comes into focus alongside feminism. Negotiating the wishes of manifestos to eschew the conditions of the present, this thesis considers the worlds that manifestos produce and the queer lives they sustain. Writing at a time when the manifesto form seems once again an available category in contemporary queer struggles, I consider what it is that we risk if we neglect the

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

ephemeral, but no less material, claims of manifestos in accounts of queer history. In turn I consider how they might continue to speak to the present.

Chapter Two, 'Radical Aesthetics: Manifestos of the Gay Liberation Front in New York', examines the manifestos produced by groups associated with the New York Gay Liberation Front (GLF) between 1969-1972. Through manifestos it seeks to understand the way that gay liberation represented a claim to public life for gay, lesbian and trans groups. Taking time as one component central to the claims of visibility made by the GLF and associated groups, I unpack the ways that a number of manifestos reimagined not only the future but also the past, through the radical political analysis and proposals that they constructed. Thinking of the way that analysis was central to liberation, I argue that manifestos presents a paradigmatic example of disruptive public speech. Taking disruption as a key aspect of the form, I frame manifestos against the way that programmatic articulations of homosexuality or queerness have often been treated with suspicion. With reference to Foucault's reservations relating to the form and in more recent expressions of queer theory, instead allowing us to account for the aesthetic dimensions of politics. The chapter develops this line of inquiry through a focus on the activities of *Come Out!*, the journal of the Gay Liberation Front, the manifestos of the Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries and publications produced by Red Butterfly, the Marxist faction of the group as well as the playful temporalities legible within manifestos by Carl Wittman's 'A Gay Manifesto' (1970) and Martha Shelley's 'Gay is Good' (1970). Considering the way that these manifestos foregrounded creativity, I investigate the radical transformation of aesthetics that these manifestos make legible.

Rather than look at one moment of political unrest, Chapter Three, 'Scummy Scores: Unsettling Solanas, 1967-infinity', takes a longer view in order to consider the

ways in which one manifesto – Valerie Solanas’s ‘SCUM Manifesto’ – has circulated outside of the context within which it was produced. As I explore Solanas, has been a tricky figure for feminist and queer theory, not being quite in time with either Women’s Liberation Movement or Gay Liberation. Understanding Solanas’s ‘SCUM Manifesto’ to hold, like other manifestos, an already peculiar relationship to its own time, the chapter tracks the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ out of time, as it has been read and reproduced since it was first written. Plotting this trajectory from 1967, I re-examine the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ through a video produced by radical feminists in France in 1976; by lesbian artists in New York in the early 1990s and through two contemporary queer artists’ moving image works. Touching upon these distinct projects, and the readings of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ that they produce, this chapter considers the manifesto only through various acts of repetition and reproduction. This occurs against a backdrop of Solanas’s own worries about how her text might be read, a fact of Solanas’s biography that each reproduction discussed here indicates toward. This chapter argues that each investment in the manifesto, as one example of lesbian feminist writing that never quite belonged to its own time, works to reinvest the form with disruptive potential.

Chapter Four, ‘Chronic Interventions: Art history in the time of AIDS polemics’, turns to manifestos produced by artists associated with ACT UP in the context of cultural activism surrounding the early years of the AIDS epidemic. Beginning with the exhibition *Read My Lips: New York AIDS polemics*, at Tramway, Glasgow, in 1992, the chapter takes up the invitation of the exhibition to frame cultural activism surrounding the AIDS crisis through the polemic. First considering the role of language in AIDS cultural activism it goes on to examine the seemingly conflicting temporalities that surrounded the crisis at that time, for example of urgency and grief, chronicity and anger. Looking at Gregg Bordowitz’s ode to Charles Ludlum’s ‘Manifesto of the Ridiculous’; Zoe Leonard’s manifesto ‘I want a president’ and Gran Fury’s ‘GOOD

LUCK... Miss you', this chapter thinks about the why the manifesto form became a useful category of text at this time. Through consideration of these manifestos, I discuss how manifestos were used by artists against the backdrop of the struggle for visibility that characterised this period of activism. Turning finally to a series of recent exhibitions of AIDS ephemera, I wonder how the manifestos produced within AIDS cultural activism of the early 1990s might hint at a relationship to the past that resists the potentially devastating effects of nostalgia.

These three case studies are concluded by an epilogue, 'Zoe Leonard's 'I want a president' in the future tense'. Here I arrive in the present and return to the subject of reading. Looking at a series of collective readings of Leonard's 'I want a president' (1992), the chapter looks at the potential for manifestos to take on new meanings in the present. Through a discussion of the appearance of Leonard's text across various platforms, including the artist's fridge, a feminist genderqueer artist journal and a series of exhibitions organised by the collaborative practice of Ridykeulous, I look at the way that one instance of print ephemera produced with queer political struggle accumulates cultural value within the art world. Foregrounding the way that the collective readings each enact a form of translation, one that occurs between one time and another and also between different geographies, I consider the values of queer and feminist politics that they attempt to uphold. Departing from generational models of political struggle, and from ideas of repetition, nostalgia or obsolescence, I consider the re-emergence of Leonard's text against a backdrop of increased visibility of certain queer subjects within the public sphere; the 2008 financial crisis and recent activism organised around issues of social justice. Examining the way that this reading responds to a moment of political crisis, this chapter turns to reflect on the broader aims and desires that underpin this study.

Chronologically, the earliest manifesto to appear in this thesis is the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ and the latest is Zoe Leonard’s ‘I Want a President’, in its changed form as a collective reading. Although bookending the discussion, these are not beginnings or ends in themselves. Instead I explore how these manifestos articulate their own returns and how they return in ways that their authors could not have imagined. The repetitions of Zoe Leonard’s manifesto as it is read in a public square in 2015 or of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ as it is read by members of the public for video offer ways for thinking about the relation that exists between manifestos and history. Similarly, the returns of the manifesto suggest what the form might offer to the writing of histories of queer social movements.

Throughout this discussion, New York is a city that occasionally comes into sharp focus and at other times remains a background texture for the story that I tell of, but also through, manifestos. Cities can help us to understand the ways that different groups move alongside one another, sometimes impacting one another, other times not. As the public and private spaces of New York City have facilitated the distribution and circulation of manifestos, so manifestos have been vital to the expansion of public visibility for queer lives since the earliest moments of gay liberation. This expression of visibility is attached nominally, but not only, to the ways that cities have shaped post-war politics.<sup>84</sup> Diane Chisholm considers the idea of “queer constellations” as “fictions of space” in order to identify how spatial experiences might lead us also to think about time. The queer constellations that Chisholm engages with are not only spatial, they also have a temporal quality. In order to approach this idea, Chisholm uses Benjamin’s writing on the city to frame works by numerous queer authors including Sarah

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<sup>84</sup> New York is also a place that has maintained a particularly singular significance for its importance in histories of art production. See for example Butt; *Alternative Art, New York: 1965-1985*, ed. by Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) and Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

Schulman, Samuel R. Delany, Gary Indiana, David Wojnarowicz, and Eileen Myles. Benjamin's attendance to the modern city in flux is as a dialectic image. Concerned particularly with ruins and other traces, he shows how these fragments allude to the uneven development of modern societies. Chisholm figures the idea of queer constellations similarly as a means to understand the ways that:

the writing of space [...] returns to the historic (queer) city that capitalism colonizes but not with the aim of recuperating queer landmarks [...] Smashing dominant narrative and dominated space into montage, it reveals with shock the devastation and suspension of the city's revolutionary past<sup>85</sup>

What Chisholm allows, which is important to this study, is consideration of the ways that time and space intersect in acts of collective history making. In both Chisholm's study and the one that follows below, these collective investments are as much imaginative, underpinned by shared desires, but nonetheless have, at points, contributed to a radical reorganisation of social relations.

In the weeks before handing in this thesis my friend Catherine reminds me that constellations have the potential to light up like stars, but then we talk about Benjamin's other suggestion that we look to the debris left behind by progress. Going through the ephemera files in archives often feels like the latter yet the potential for those documents to light up in the present remains. Standing by a building site and trying to find the entrance to the High Line in New York, an elevated public park that runs the length of a former freight line, in March 2013, I come across a gigantic advertisement for self-storage, hanging on the corner of W 17th and 10th Ave (Fig. 1.3). Reading 'Gay Marriage = Gay Registry = Gay Clutter', it is attached to a building that houses both the headquarters of the New York Drug Enforcement Administration and a series of mini-storage units. Struck, if also somewhat perturbed, by an instance of mainstream

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<sup>85</sup> Dianne Chisholm, *Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 30.



Figure 1.4. 'Gay Marriage = Gay Registry = Gay Clutter', an advertisement for self-storage in the Meatpacking District, New York. Author photograph.

advertising addressed toward an explicitly gay consumer, I take a photo to add to my own digital clutter that is spiralling as a consequence of the research trip. The slogan, seemingly showing the company to be tolerant toward homosexuals and the legislation that legalised same-sex marriage in New York State in 2011, makes an equation in which equality is exactly equivalent to property. Self-storage is a phenomenon that can perhaps, at least as the advertisement suggests, be linked to a taste for de-cluttered interiors. More than likely, it also represents a lack of space resulting from either having too much stuff, too little room or too precarious a life to commit to laying out all of one's possessions for any length of time. The sign hangs in the Meatpacking District of New York, once an industrial centre and cruising ground.<sup>86</sup> The area experienced significant industrial decline in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, its waterfront

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<sup>86</sup> For historical accounts of cruising in New York City, including its sexual, fictive, historic and political potential see Samuel Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion, 2003) and Fiona Anderson, 'Cruising the Queer Ruins of New York's Abandoned Waterfront', *Performance Research*, 20 (2015), pp. 135–44.

became a canvas for artists like David Wojnarnowicz. In the 1990s, it was home to queer clubs like the Clit Club, a pro-sex dyke venue. Though schematically outlined here, the changing uses and meanings of this area show how industry, street art and gay sex, are now replaced by gentrified residential and shopping areas. If cruising still occurs, it is facilitated by apps like Grindr, more likely to be a meeting in the Whitney Museum of American Art newly opened in the district than sex on the piers. (Some of their dishevelled forms still jut into the Hudson River but are now closed off.) In New York, inner city redevelopment has not only eroded queer spaces and the lives they sustained. For property developers and landlords in New York, the AIDS crisis that took hold in the early 1980s conveniently intersected with rampant urban regeneration.<sup>87</sup> High numbers of vacated tenancies, a consequence of the crisis, and opportunistic clean up programmes of areas once populated by sex clubs, drug addicts and artists intersect with expanding corporate wealth (as much contributed to by new museums as it is by bloated university campuses such as NYU).

Gentrification affects our relationship to the past as much it does our relationship to cities in the present. At the end of Marshall Berman's renowned inquiry into the conflicted relationship between modernity and modernism, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (1982), the author takes the reader on a journey on the Cross Bronx Expressway, a freeway developed by the city planner Robert Moses that was completed in 1972. The development contributed to the ruination of part of the South Bronx as well as to a radical reorganisation of public space post-war. A native to the Bronx, Berman writes about the relationship of art to these inner-city urban renewal programmes. With reference to Richard Serra's TWU, a vast sculpture constructed out of Corten steel located near Canal Street in the area of SoHo, he suggests that 'modern art is active in

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<sup>87</sup> For a first hand account of this see Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

this work of renewal'.<sup>88</sup> The piece was dedicated to the New York Travel Workers Union, on strike at the time it was erected. Bermann uses this example of minimalist sculpture in order 'to generate a dialogue with [his] own past, [his] own lost home, [his] own ghosts'.<sup>89</sup> Being modernist, Berman argues, is to be in time with the rhythms of 'perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contraction'.<sup>90</sup> Modernisation and gentrification, complicit with the capitalist project, erase the signs of the past. Traversing the city, Berman attempts to read the ruins in order to render another narrative visible. Similar to Susan Buck-Morss's writing on Benjamin and the mass dreamworlds that he used as an analytical framework to investigate modernity, Berman finds that there is always something of the past to return to, however completely urban redevelopment has attempted to clear its way.<sup>91</sup> Returning to manifestos as relics of the past here, one sees the shape of history's futures as well as what has historically limited them. Unlike the artists that Berman refers to, the story that emerges is not one about those who are in time with the modern city. Instead, it is about marginalised individuals and groups who are out of step with the pace and mechanisms of progress. In this sense, manifestos have been invested in to forge times and spaces, however ephemeral, within which queer politics are allowed to appear.

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<sup>88</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), p. 344.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* p. 340.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* p. 346.

<sup>91</sup> See Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002), pp. x-xi.



COME OUT FOR FREEDOM! COME OUT NOW!  
POWER TO THE PEOPLE! GAY POWER TO GAY  
PEOPLE! COME OUT OF THE CLOSET BEFORE THE  
DOOR IS NAILED SHUT!

COME-OUT, A NEWSPAPER FOR THE HOMO-  
SEXUAL COMMUNITY, dedicates itself to the joy, the  
humor, and the dignity of the homosexual male and  
female. COME-OUT has COME OUT to fight for the  
freedom of the homosexual: to give voice to the rapidly  
growing militancy within our community; to provide a  
public forum for the discussion and clarification of  
methods and actions necessary to end our oppression.  
COME-OUT has COME OUT indeed for "life, liberty  
and the pursuit of happiness."

Make no mistake about our oppression: It is real,  
it is visible, it is demonstrable. IN NEW YORK A HOMO-  
SEXUAL IS LEGITIMATE AS AN INDIVIDUAL BUT  
ILLEGITIMATE AS A PARTICIPANT IN A HOMO-  
SEXUAL ACT. Hell, every homosexual and lesbian in  
this country survives solely by sufferance, not by law or  
even that cold state of grace known as tolerance. Our  
humanity is questioned, our choice of housing is circumscribed,  
our employment is tenuous, OUR FRIENDLY  
NEIGHBORHOOD TAVERN IS A MAFIOSO-ON-THE-  
JOB TRAINING SCHOOL FOR DUM-DUM HOODS. It  
is just such grievances as these which have sparked the  
revolutionary movements of history.

COME-OUT salutes militant oppressed groups, of-  
fers aid, but realizes that very often other oppressed  
people are also our own oppressors. THROUGH MUTU-  
AL RESPECT, ACTION, AND EDUCATION COME-  
OUT HOPES TO UNIFY BOTH THE HOMOSEXUAL

COMMUNITY AND OTHER OPPRESSED GROUPS  
INTO A COHESIVE BODY OF PEOPLE WHO DO NOT  
FIND THE ENEMY IN EACH OTHER.

COME-OUT will hasten the day when it becomes  
not only passe, but actual political suicide to speak of  
further repression of the homosexual. WE ARE COMING  
OUT IN COMMUNITY, A COMMUNITY THAT NUM-  
BERS IN THE MILLIONS. We shall aggressively promote  
the use of the very real and potent economic power of  
Gay people throughout this land in order to further  
the interests of the homosexual community. We shall  
convince society at large of the reality of homosexual  
political power by the active use thereof.

We will not be gay bourgeois, searching for the  
sterile "American dream" of the ivy-covered cottage and  
the good corporation job, but neither will we tolerate the  
exclusion of homosexuals from any area of American  
life.

Because our oppression is based on sex and the sex  
roles which oppress us from infancy, we must explore  
these roles and their meanings. We must recognize and  
make others recognize that BEING HOMOSEXUAL  
SAYS ONLY ONE THING: EMOTIONALLY YOU  
PREFER YOUR OWN SEX. IT SAYS NOTHING  
ABOUT YOUR WORTH, YOUR VALUE AS A HUMAN  
BEING. Does society make a place for us... as a man?  
A woman? A homosexual or lesbian? How does the  
family structure affect us? What is sex, and what does it  
mean? What is love? As homosexuals, we are in a unique  
position to examine these questions from a fresh point  
of view. You'd better believe we are going to do so —  
that we are going to transform the society at large  
through the open realization of our own consciousness.

Figure 2.1. Cover of *Come Out!* A newspaper by and for the gay community.  
Volume 1., Issue 1., November 14 [Photocopied newspaper]. (1969).  
From the personal collection of John Lauritsen.

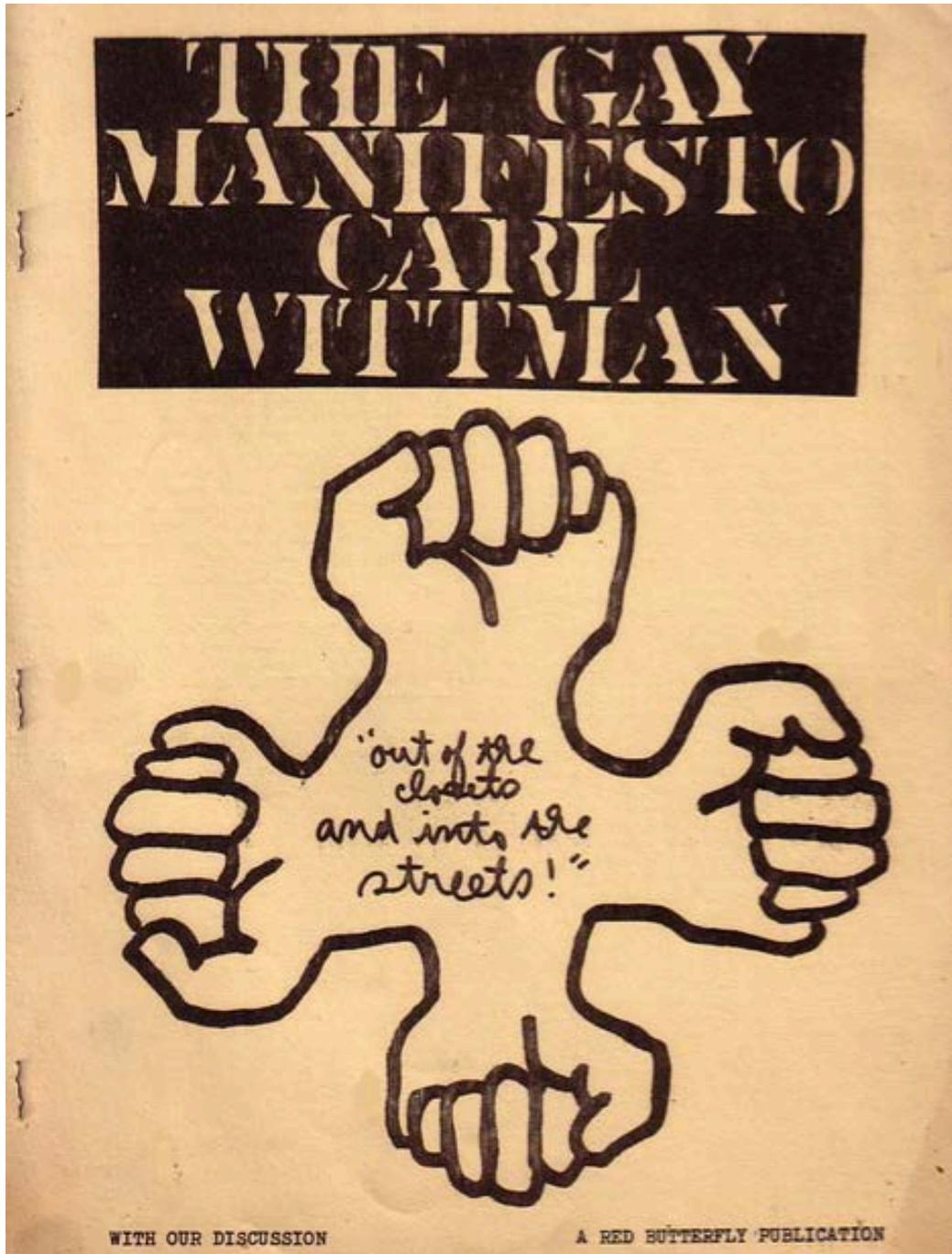


Figure 2.2. Cover of Carl Wittman's 'The Gay Manifesto'.  
Published by Red Butterfly. [Stapled pamphlet]. (1970).  
From the personal collection of John Lauritsen.

# the woman identified woman

WOMENS LIBERATION  
BOX 13078  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20009  
A 32-5745

What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society--perhaps then, but certainly later--cares to allow her. These needs and actions, over a period of years, bring her into painful conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, until she is in a state of continual war with everything around her, and usually with her self. She may not be fully conscious of the political implications of what for her began as personal necessity, but on some level she has not been able to accept the limitations and oppression laid on her by the most basic role of her society--the female role. The turmoil she experiences tends to induce guilt proportional to the degree to which she feels she is not meeting social expectations, and/or eventually drives her to question and analyse what the rest of her society more or less accepts. She is forced to evolve her own life pattern, often living much of her life alone, learning usually much earlier than her "straight" (heterosexual) sisters about the essential aloneness of life (which the myth of marriage obscures) and about the reality of illusions. To the extent that she cannot expel the heavy socialization that goes with being female, she can never truly find peace with herself. For she is caught somewhere between accepting society's view of her--in which case she cannot accept herself, and coming to understand what this sexist society has done to her and why it is functional and necessary for it to do so. Those of us who work that through find ourselves on the other side of a tortuous journey through a night that may have been decades long. The perspective gained from that journey, the liberation of self, the inner peace, the real love of self and of all women, is something to be shared with all women--because we are all women.

It should first be understood that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behaviour possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy. Those sex roles dehumanize women by defining us as a supportive/serving caste in relation to the master caste of men, and emotionally cripple men by demanding that they be alienated from their own bodies and emotions in order to perform their economic/political/military functions effectively. Homosexuality is a by-product of a particular way of setting up roles (or approved patterns of behaviour) on the basis of sex; as such it is an inauthentic (not consonant with "reality") category. In a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear.

But lesbianism is also different from male homosexuality, and serves a different function in the society. "Dyke" is a different kind of put-down from "faggot", although both imply you are not playing your socially assigned sex role. . . are not therefore a "real woman" or a "real man". The grudging admiration felt for the tomboy, and the queasiness felt

around a sissy boy point to the same thing: the contempt in which women--or those who play a female role --are held. And the investment in keeping women in that contemptuous role is very great. Lesbian is the word, the label, the condition that holds women in line. When a woman hears this word tossed her way, she knows she is stepping out of line. She knows that she has crossed the terrible boundary of her sex role. She recoils, she protests, she reshapes her actions to gain approval. Lesbian is a label invented by the Man to throw at any woman who dares to be his equal, who dares to challenge his prerogatives (including that of all women as part of the exchange medium among men), who dares to assert the primacy of her own needs. To have the label applied to people active in women's liberation is just the most recent instance of a long history; older women will recall that not so long ago, any woman who was successful, independent, not orienting her whole life about a man, would hear this word. For in this sexist society, for a woman to be independent means she *can't be* a woman -- she must be a dyke. That in itself should tell us where women are at. It says as clearly as can be said: women and person are contradictory terms. For a lesbian is not considered a "real woman." And yet, in popular thinking, there is really only one essential difference between a lesbian and other women: that of sexual orientation--which is to say, when you strip off all the packaging, you must finally realize that the essence of being a "woman" is to get fucked by men.

"Lesbian" is one of the sexual categories by which men have divided up humanity. While all women are dehumanized as sex objects, as the objects of men they are given certain compensations: identification with his power, his ego, his status, his protection (from other males), feeling like a "real woman," finding social acceptance by adhering to her role, etc. Should a woman confront herself by confronting another woman, there are fewer rationalizations, fewer buffers by which to avoid the stark horror of her dehumanized condition. Herein we find the overriding fear of many women towards being used as a sexual object by a woman, which not only will bring her no male-connected compensations, but also will reveal the void which is woman's real situation. This dehumanization is expressed when a straight woman learns that a sister is a lesbian; she begins to relate to her lesbian sister as her potential sex object, laying a surrogate male role on the lesbian. This reveals her heterosexual conditioning to make herself into an object when sex is potentially involved in a relationship, and it denies the lesbian her full humanity. For women, especially those in the movement, to perceive their lesbian sisters through this male grid of role definitions is to accept this male cultural conditioning and to oppress their sisters much as they themselves have been oppressed by men. Are we going to continue the male classification system of defining all females in sexual relation to some other category of people? Affixing the label lesbian not only to a woman who aspires to be a person, but also to any situation of real love, real solidarity, real primacy among women is a primary form of divisiveness among women; it is the condition which keeps women within the confines of the feminine role, and it is the

Figure 2.3. Radicalesbians, 'The Woman Identified Woman'. Reprinted by Womens Liberation, Washington D.C. [Mimeographed flyer]. (c. 1970) Lesbian Herstory Archive, New York. No accession number.

## **2. RADICAL AESTHETICS: MANIFESTOS OF THE GAY LIBERATION FRONT IN NEW YORK**

### **Liberation manifestos**

Manifestos associated with the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in New York (formed 1969-disbanded 1972), signal to the central role of the form in histories of gay, lesbian and trans liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The examples are numerous. Carl Wittman's 'A Gay Manifesto' (1969-70), an early and important text for the movement, was reprinted and distributed by The Red Butterfly, the Marxist wing of the GLF, after initially appearing in the underground newspaper *Chicago Seed*. The group Radicalesbians, formed by members of the GLF along with others in order to address the erasures of lesbian existence within both the gay and women's liberation movements, circulated 'The Woman-Identified-Woman' (1970) during a zap organised to interrupt the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York. Sylvia Rivera, one of the founders of the Street Action Transvestite Revolutionaries, published 'Transvestites: Your half sisters and half brothers of the revolution', a tract in which she emphasised the contribution of transvestites to gay liberation struggle, in *Come Out!*, the periodical of the GLF. These polemics are only a few examples of the numerous manifestos produced by members of gay, lesbian and trans liberation movements in New York from 1969 onward.<sup>1</sup> Many of these texts circulated beyond the city through a

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<sup>1</sup> Still more were circulated and known from other individuals and groups, both nationally and internationally. For example, Rita Mae Brown, a lesbian feminist who came to a GLF New York meeting only once to proclaim that a separate lesbian space was necessary, published 'A Manifesto for the Feminist Artist' (1972) in the newsletter of the Washington D.C.-based group *The Furies*. Elandria V. Henderson's 'The Black Lesbian', was reproduced alongside others in the second edition of the Chicago-based *Lavender Woman* in 1971. The 'Gay Liberation Front Manifesto' (1971) published by GLF members who met at London School of Economics announced the spread of the movement to the U.K. In

burgeoning alternative gay press as well as through more mainstream platforms. For example, Allen Young, who lived in the Seventieth Street Collective, a key centre for GLF organising in New York, published his 'Out of the Closet: A gay manifesto' (1971) in *Ramparts*. The national politics and culture magazine had a recorded readership of 150,000 people in 1970.<sup>2</sup> Utilising both the material qualities of manifestos, each of these texts sought greater public visibility for gay, lesbian and/or trans identities.

As alluded to above, manifestos circulated through networks that were beginning to be established to connect gay men, lesbians and members of the trans community in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Manifestos were distributed as mimeographed pamphlets at meetings, conferences and marches and disseminated in magazines and newsletters such as *Come Out!* in New York, *The Furies* in Washington D.C. and *Lavender Woman* in Chicago. Manifestos are not, however, simply one manifestation of such exercises in collective organising. Rather, manifestos contribute to this moment of consciousness-raising (CR) that allowed such spaces, and the shared political identities that constituted them, to come into being. Turning to manifestos in the context of gay, lesbian and trans liberation, a field of cultural production comes into view through which identities were carved, programmes were mapped and demands were made. They engaged in the production of critical analysis that Fredric Jameson, recalls (though

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France, Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* (1969) and Guy Hocquenghem's book *Le Désir homosexuel* (1972), galvanised the homosexual liberation movement in that country. *Le Désir homosexuel* included Hocquenghem's ideas on polymorphous perversity, influenced by both Lacanian psychoanalysis and the ideas that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were developing for *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which was published the same year. When *Les Guérillères* and *Homosexual Desire* translated and published in the U.S. in the mid-1970s they helped to shaped gay liberation as it continued in that decade. Others from adjacent and intersecting movements within the U.S. would also inform the movement: Valerie Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto' (1967), which I discuss in Chapter Three; Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex* (1970) and Judy Freespirit and Vivian Mayer (now Sara Fishman), two activists closely associated with lesbian feminism, published the 'Fat Liberation Manifesto' (1973) in the paper of the group the Fat Underground, refusing to be "subjugated to the interests of our enemies". Charlotte Cooper, a fat activist and one of the founders of the discipline of Fat Studies, charts the history of the Fat Underground as well as other fat activists groups in her book *Fat Activism: A Radical social movement* (Bristol: HammerOn, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Peter Richardson, *A Bomb in Every Issue: How the Short, Unruly Life of Ramparts Magazine Changed America* (New York: The New Press, 2009).

without mention of homosexual groups) as essential to the new collective identities coming into being in the 1960s. Consequently, liberation manifestos represent a significant, yet overlooked, history within queer print cultures. Published in the context of a movement that no longer wanted only to survive, manifestos disrupted mechanisms of social reproduction in order to make gay, lesbian and trans subjects visible.

Considering manifestos produced by members of the GLF, along with those whose ideas were important to the development of the group, this chapter addresses the idea of time within histories of liberation politics. Speaking in the future tense from the present, manifestos make demands and feel out new futures. Linked to a movement that named its politics liberationist, one might suppose that the futurity of the manifesto suggests a model of transformation that is linear, seeking greater rights in the future from the place of the present. Yet, it is not a positivist account of history that emerges through the manifestos examined here. Rather more complex temporalities do. In the atmosphere of ludic protest in the 1960s, manifestos associated with gay, lesbian and trans liberation playfully engage multiple tenses, create ruptures with existing homosexual movements or else call upon historic figures to pursue radical agendas. Sometimes they do all these things simultaneously. What we might think of as the time of manifestos allowed for experiential gay, lesbian and trans identities to *come out* during a period of hostility and oppression.

Whilst the idea of “coming out” might invoke a personal narrative, for example a conversation with a parent or a friend, or an encounter in a workplace, in the context of gay, lesbian and trans liberation it alludes to both a personal and public act. A feature of the movement, “coming out” into gay identity was an important gesture for a politics that was organised around achieving greater visibility for gay, lesbian and trans people. Constituting a claim to a political identity, “coming out” is closely aligned with a

coming into of political consciousness, a concept that is crucial to Marxist philosophy having engendered the emphasis of his work on the material conditions of social life.<sup>3</sup> To identify openly as gay, lesbian or trans in the context of the liberation movement is to have come into self-awareness within an emergent political class, not one tied to traditional Marxist politics but to the newly emergent collective formations that Jameson describes. Texts like Wittman's 'A Gay Manifesto' took up the manifesto form, so associated in the Left imaginary with the history of class struggle, in order to make public articulations of gay identity. Bound to a radical reworking of political consciousness in the 1960s, manifestos that produced gay as a collective sign also invoked critical intersections with the WLM, the new Black (or 'third world') politics and anti-imperialist struggle. At once reinvesting in historic conceptions of class struggle, many manifestos produced within gay, lesbian and trans politics represent a significant reevaluation of Marxist concepts of solidarity. Turning to some of the manifestos produced by groups associated with the GLF in New York, this chapter goes on to explore how the aesthetic registers of manifestos, relating to visibility and time, were deployed to disrupt existing social conditions.

In her unpublished doctoral thesis, 'The Rhetoric of the Manifesto', Anne Sinkey considers Wittman's manifesto within the tradition of the genre in order to understand the radical claim it made for and through gay sexuality in relation to longer histories of liberation struggle. Likewise, in her book *Reclaiming Queer*, Erin Rand, in a discussion of Charles Shively's 'Indiscriminate Promiscuity as an Act of Revolution', foregrounds the "insistently coalitional" demands of gay liberation and their ties to other movements. The focus of both these authors on rhetoric, however, restricts consideration of how texts circulated between individuals and groups contributing to the

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<sup>3</sup> See Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843)* (Oxon: Oxford University Press, 1970), in particular Marx's discussion of self-consciousness in relation to his critique of Hegel's writing on sovereignty and crown.

extension of collective identities. At the same time, reading is not ever only an affirmative process, and consideration of readership in relation to manifestos enables that we recognise forms of critique and dissent that occurred within the movement. Through a discussion of manifestos as material culture, it is possible to think of not only the spread of certain ideas but also the ways that ideas were disputed and resisted, evolved and dispatched with, in the context of this (or indeed any) movement.

Whereas consideration of the spread of manifestos through queer networks is substantially lacking, a number of studies have focused on the way that manifestos circulated within the emerging feminist movement. These include Jacqueline Rhodes's *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modem* (2005), in which the author explores the efficacy of the manifesto form in feminist community building. She discusses various texts, including a number produced by radical feminist groups in New York in the 1960s such as *The Redstockings Manifesto* and the manifesto of W.I.T.C.H., the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (both 1969). Though touching on a number of texts where parallels might be drawn to gay and lesbian liberation, Rhodes's discussion makes only passing mention of the manifestos produced by lesbian feminist groups. This elision of lesbian feminism within broader histories of feminist dissent, is examined by Victoria Hesford in her *Feeling Women's Liberation* (2013). In her discussion of manifestos by groups like the Radicalesbians and individuals like Valerie Solanas, she attends usefully to the way that such texts frame important sympathies *and* antagonisms between lesbian political identities and feminist politics in and around 1970. Manifestos figure alongside other materials, for example "happenings" and "position papers", so that the particular characteristics of the form remain unexplored. Nor does her argument include consideration of potentially enlightening overlaps between lesbian feminism and gay liberation.

Examining how gay liberation manifestos contributed to broader critiques of social reproduction in the 1970s also requires us to consider the literal reproduction and circulation of print ephemera, and the ways these processes contributed to broader political goals. This is connected to political print culture in the 1970s as well as to the numerous gay and lesbian periodicals, pamphlets and newspapers that were in circulation during this decade. Counter-culture print in the 1960s and 1970s flourished. The use of printed ephemera by social movements is discussed by Nigel Fountain, Frances Robertson and John McMillian.<sup>4</sup> Alongside forms of alternative media for example open access television and new video technologies, liberation presses contributed to a raising of consciousness amongst many groups associated with emerging class configurations in the 1960s.

Perhaps one reason that manifestos associated with gay, lesbian and trans liberation remain untreated relative to their feminist counterparts, is that queer studies has tended to favour unprogrammable articulations of identity. Both Sinkey and Rand come to a similar conclusion, with Sinkey asking in relation to the emphasis on “non-traditional” strategies within queer activist groups in the early 1990s: ‘how did the movement of 1970s gay liberation [...] come to be seen as assimilationist?’.<sup>5</sup> (Think back to ‘Queers Read This’ equating gay with “happy”). Likewise, Rand considers how rhetorical agency always already arises from an ‘essentializing gesture’ that works to position ‘a text as an identifiable form’.<sup>6</sup> Yet she goes on to suggest that the unattended effects, ‘the risks of iterability’, render any such positioning as queer inasmuch as ‘queerness is both the condition of possibility for agency *and* that which can never be

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<sup>4</sup> See Nigel Fountain, *Underground: The London Alternative Press, 1966-74* (London: Comedia, 1988); John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Robertson.

<sup>5</sup> Sinkey, p. 269.

<sup>6</sup> Rand, p. 164.

expressed through form'.<sup>7</sup> This idea that queerness is somehow antithetical to form can be traced back to the earliest incarnations of queer theory within the academy where 'Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire'.<sup>8</sup> This investment in queerness as an always already destabilising force has opposed queerness to forms of cultural homogenization.<sup>9</sup> What Rand alludes to, but does not say, is that investments in the manifesto form also privilege, as with the term queer, its potential to disrupt or disturb, returning to the potential similarities in imaginative investments in queerness and those in manifestos that I discussed in the previous chapter.

That gay liberation has become a foil to such open articulations of identity as queer promises need be explored. Here reflection on Michel Foucault's writing in the early 1980s is useful, laying somewhere between the emergence of gay liberation (or homosexual liberation in France) and the emergence of queer theory in the late 1980s, on which Foucault's writings have been of perhaps incomparable influence.<sup>10</sup> Foucault was suspicious of what he referred to as polemics, strongly connected to the idea of a programme. Speaking in 1981 to René de Ceccatty, Jean Danet and Jean Le Bitoux, the editors of French gay magazine *Gai pied*, Foucault answered a series of questions relating to this idea of what he named 'homosexual culture'.<sup>11</sup> Under the title 'Friendship was a Way of Life', the interview touches upon many of the themes that

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Original emphasis.

<sup>8</sup> Annamarie Jagose, 'Queer Theory', *Australian Humanities Review*, 1996 <<http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-Dec-1996/jagose.html>> [accessed 2 February 2014].

<sup>9</sup> Teresa de Lauretis, 'Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities, An Introduction', *differences*, 3.2 (1991), p. iii.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of the influence of Foucault in queer studies see David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxon and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Tamsin Spargo, *Foucault and Queer Theory* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1999) and, more recently, April S. Callis, 'Playing with Butler and Foucault: Bisexuality and Queer Theory', *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9.3–4 (2009), pp. 213–33 and Lynne Huffer, 'Foucault and Sedgwick: The Repressive Hypothesis Revisited', *Foucault Studies*, 14 (2012), 20–30.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, p. 139.

percolate the projects Foucault worked on toward the end of his life.<sup>12</sup> Focusing on homosocial encounters between gay men, the interview describes the opportunity that Foucault saw for homosexuality to make possible a radical reorganisation of social relations.<sup>13</sup> This demand, for what Foucault referred to as more “capacious” understandings of sexuality and sexual freedom, was taken up in queer theory in ways that have defined the field. Foucault contrasted this idea of more expansive, more accommodating, articulations of sexual selves with the programmes that he saw as synonymous with the project of homosexual liberation in France in the early 1980s. He worried that programmatic forms of politics, ones that set out concrete agendas for the future, were danger of being ‘played’, that is, to be open to being mobilised within mainstream politics.<sup>14</sup> Opening up homosexual politics to this danger, the programmatic is equally incompatible with the promise homosocial relationships held for Foucault, to unfurl into ‘polymorphic, varied, and individually modulated relationships’.<sup>15</sup>

In order to understand what Foucault might have meant by programmatic, in contrast to polymorphic, articulations of homosexuality one needs to return to his better-known writings on sexuality. These he was exploring, most famously in the three-volume *The History of Sexuality*, as the *Gai Pied* interview was published. Foucault’s resistance to programmatic politics is tied to his writing on the emergence of categories around sexuality in these books. Published between 1976 and 1984, *The History of Sexuality* represents an unparalleled genealogy of the historically contingent categories that surround sexuality. This genealogical method, alike to that he sets out in

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<sup>12</sup> The interview first appeared in its English-language addition in a collection published by Semiotext(e), established by the philosopher Sylvère Lotringer and famous for introducing French post-structuralist theory to the US.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, p. 139.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Rabinow has written of Foucault’s intellectual output as representing a ‘politics without a program’. This follows Foucault’s expressed desire to move beyond what he called the ‘normal or ordinary program’ of mainstream party politics in order that creativity might thrive. See Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: The New York Press, 1997), pp. xxxviii and 172.

the earlier *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), shows the emergence of categories such as heterosexuality and homosexuality to always already limit possibilities for annunciation.

In an earlier interview with Le Bitoux, 'The Gay Science' (1978), Foucault also voices concerns about the gay liberation struggle more generally, ones that are only hinted to in 'Friendship as a Way of Life'.<sup>16</sup> Discussing the reception of *History of Sexuality*, Le Bitoux mentions 'homosexual militants' and how they might themselves reject Foucault's resistance to mobilising the category of homosexuality as an emancipatory term. Foucault responds that we need instead to liberate ourselves from the 'notion of sexuality' altogether.<sup>17</sup> Cautious of organising under such limiting categories, as gay liberation had in France, most significantly through the Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire (F.H.A.R.), Foucault links programmes to his distaste for polemics more generally. Speaking to Paul Rabinow in 1984, Foucault acknowledged that programs weren't 'his way of doing things'.<sup>18</sup> Instead dialogue was the only way to enter into a discussion on equal terms. 'The rights of each person are in some sense immanent in the discussion'.<sup>19</sup> The polemicist, instead, 'proceeds encased in privileges that he possesses in advance'.<sup>20</sup> Extending this, the polemic becomes an

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<sup>16</sup> The interview was initially scheduled for the first issue of *Gai pied* in 1979 but was eventually published posthumously, another short text by Foucault titled 'Un Plaisir si simple' ('Such a Simple Pleasure') on the subject of suicide, replaced it. When 'The Gay Science' was published in English in 2011, the text was marked by the critical conjuncture within which it took place, bookended at one end by the emergence of the gay liberation movement in the late 1960s and at the other by the onset of the AIDS crisis that began in the early 1980s. Foucault (1926-1984) died of an AIDS-related illness in 1984 and was the first public figure to contract the disease in France. The devastating effect that AIDS would have on the whole of homosexual culture in France is legible in the history of *Gai pied*, which, as Duyvendak and Duyves write, had found itself on the front line when the AIDS crisis began. The magazine ceased activity in 1999. Its closure was due in part to loss of income resulting from Government attempts to prohibit chat lines/sex services in France as a response of the AIDS crisis. See Duyvendak and Duyves and the entry for *Gai pied* in Alexandra Hughes and Keith A Reader, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary French Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 263-64.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Le Bitoux and Michel Foucault, 'The Gay Science', *Critical Inquiry*, 37.3 (2011). p. 388.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

immutable form, although, returning to Rand, such a statement can only be true if we ignore the character of iterability that post-structuralism ascribes to any text.

Although expressing criticism of gay liberation in France in both ‘The Gay Science’ and ‘Friendship as a Way of Life’, Foucault speaks favourably on the idea of “coming out”. Referencing the very early years of gay liberation in the U.S. and the demand that was made to “come out”, he discusses this idea of ‘showing oneself’ to another and ties his idea of a homosexual culture to an issue of visibility.<sup>21</sup> He does so in order to define a historically contingent assertion of homosexual culture, one that, unlike programmatic articulations of sexual identity categories, resists mobilisation by non-liberatory forces.<sup>22</sup> If not polemics, Foucault certainly saw a role for magazines in the homosexual culture that he envisaged, saying to the editors of *Gai Pied* that ‘something well considered and voluntary like a magazine [could] make possible’ such a culture.<sup>23</sup> Taking up Foucault’s invitation to consider “coming out” in relation to print culture, this chapter turns to manifestos produced in the context of the Gay Liberation Front New York. Attuned to the aesthetic registers of the form, this chapter discusses manifestos that appeared the pages of *Come Out!*, pamphlets produced by The Red Butterfly as well as manifestos by Carl Wittman, Sue Wittman, Martha Shelley and Third World Gay Liberation. Looking at the way that these manifestos make legible intersections between gay and lesbian politics with that of feminism, trans, Marxist and anti-racist groups, this chapter considers the vehemently anti-assimilationist politics that comes to us through these forms. Engaging with the looping temporalities that these examples put into motion, this chapter looks at the way that manifestos have resisted linear accounts of history and by extension of traditional rights discourse. Rather, through the historic returns they enact, these manifestos have potential to reshape

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<sup>21</sup> Foucault, p. 139.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, p. 139.

genealogical encounters between queer politics and gay liberation and between gay liberation and other liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **coming out in print**

The Gay Liberation Front formed in New York following a police raid on the Stonewall Bar on the 28 June 1969. A routine occurrence at known homosexual establishments, Stonewall is significant in the imaginary of queer political history since its clientele resisted the raid, confronting police in what has come to be known as the Stonewall riots.<sup>24</sup> This event, as Terrance Kissack writes in an essay dedicated to the GLF in New York, ‘has become enshrined within political and historical discourses as the birthplace of the lesbian and gay rights movement’.<sup>25</sup> Despite Stonewall representing what Kissack describes as a kind of origin myth for the movement, the GLF grew out of, and away from, existing organisations dedicated to supporting the lives of gay men and lesbians within the U.S. These homophile groups The Mattachine Society (founded 1950) and Daughters of Bilitis (founded 1955) are considered to have been largely assimilationist in their politics – Kissack, for example, calls our attention to members of both organisations being required to “‘dress appropriately” (women in skirts and men in dress shirts and ties) and to refrain from public displays of affection’ during a silent protest organised annually.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, these homophile organisations responded to the events at Stonewall, establishing a small committee to organise a march in the following weeks yet did so with a degree of apprehension. The caution with which the existing homophile groups responded to the riots precipitated the events that led to the GLF being formed at the Alternative U., an alternative space at 530 6th Avenue founded

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<sup>24</sup> The events at Stonewall were preceded by the so-called Compton's Cafeteria riot in San Francisco's Tenderloin district in August 1966, which is the focus of a 2005 documentary film *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria* made by trans historian and activist Susan Stryker.

<sup>25</sup> Terence Kissack, ‘Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York's Gay Liberation Front, 1969 - 1971’, *Radical History Review*, 62 (1995), p. 104.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 2.4. *Come Out!* Volume 1, Issue 7, Dec – Jan [Scanned newspaper]. (1970)

by students of New York University to challenge the existing curriculum.<sup>27</sup> The newly founded GLF not only advocated a more radical approach to securing rights for gay men and lesbians but also sought a radical lesbian and gay agenda within the broader context of the New Left.

The name of the group, a nod to the Vietnamese Viet-Cong National Liberation Front that adopted the contested “gay” rather than the accepted homophile, indicates the radical agenda that emerged from the split.<sup>28</sup> At the centre of the new “movement” was an evolving analysis of the oppressive forces, at work in society, through which

<sup>27</sup> Stuart Feather, ‘A Brief History of the Gay Liberation Front, 1970-73’, *Libcom*, 2007 <<https://libcom.org/library/brief-history-gay-liberation-front-1970-73>> [accessed 6 March 2014].

<sup>28</sup> Warren Blumenfeld, ‘The Gay Liberation Front and Moving Beyond Assimilation’, 2014 <<http://www.warrenblumenfeld.com/2014/05/20/the-gay-liberation-moving-beyond-assimilation/>> [accessed 5 August 2015].

homosexual subjects were policed and criminalised. An early statement by the group emphasised, in the language of Left resistance, that they did not want to ‘be gay bourgeoisie, searching for the sterile “American dream” of the ivy-covered cottage and the good corporation job, but neither will we tolerate the exclusion of homosexuals from any area of American life’.<sup>29</sup> Like other groups, the GLF in New York invested in manifestos to explicitly rupture from existing political thought. Yet, by emphasising a rupture with existing groups in writing the history of the GLF, the split threatens to omit the role played by members of homophile organisations, in the founding of the GLF. Bill Cattingberg, Jerry Hoose, John O’Brien and Martha Shelley, who were instrumental in the new group, had been central figures in The Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis.<sup>30</sup> The tenses and temporalities in the manifestos discussed as follow present a far more complex relation to history that complicates the emphasis that has been placed on political generations in the writing of histories of gay liberation.

Stonewall is an important touchstone in the history of the GLF, and more generally in histories of queer social movements, not least for the place it has been awarded in the imaginary of gay and lesbian politics. But the beginnings of gay and lesbian liberation are more accurately, if less easily, located in the broader political landscape of the decade.<sup>31</sup> Political unrest amongst transvestite communities can be traced in the years preceding 1969. Trans activists of colour such as Sylvia Rivera, one of the founders of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.) played a significant role in the earliest articulations of gay liberation, including at Stonewall.<sup>32</sup> More broadly, the political unrest that shaped the New Left in the 1960s occurred

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<sup>29</sup> Gay Liberation Front New York, *Come Out!*, 1 (1970), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Kissack.

<sup>31</sup> John O’Brien, ‘John O’Brien Interview, Los Angeles’, *USC Digital Library* <<http://cdm15799.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll4/id/1506>> [accessed 13 May 2015].

<sup>32</sup> See Ehn Nothing, ‘Introduction: Queens Against Society’ in Sylvia Rivera, *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*, ed. by Ehn Nothing (Untorelli Press, 2012), pp. 3-11.

through numerous interconnected struggles. These included as the name of GLF implies, anti-imperialist resistance to the Vietnam war, the connected activities of the Students for Democratic Society (SDS), the Civil Rights Movement and Black political consciousness, and the Women's Liberation Movement. Parallel to these a more general counter-cultural scene was burgeoning, partly underpinned by ideals such as free love and the re-eroticising of social relations. Emerging within, and as a result of this context, gay liberation, organised around the issue of homosexuality that had been actively ignored – or worse, were actively maligned - by traditional strongholds of Left politics such as the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). The complexity of the political terrain that GLF emerged into in the late 1960s, as remarked upon by Fredric Jameson in 'Periodizing the 60s', established the conditions that facilitated its coming out into public life in the 1970s.<sup>33</sup> The articulations of identity that were shaped through gay, lesbian and trans liberation manifestos are explicitly tied to this broad-based moment of political consciousness amongst numerous groups and the claims they made to visibility.

The first issue of *Come Out!*, the journal of the GLF in New York, invites reflection on the way that manifestos shaped the public dynamics of coming out within the movement. The first edition of the magazine opened with a short co-authored manifesto, announcing the aims of the paper and the group that it was attached to (fig. 2.1). The short text began 'COME OUT FOR FREEDOM! COME OUT NOW! POWER TO THE PEOPLE! GAY POWER TO THE GAY PEOPLE! COME OUT OF THE CLOSET BEFORE THE DOOR IS NAILED SHUT!'.<sup>34</sup> The text is coupled with a collaged image of the members of the collective, appearing in force over the title of the magazine, and framed by three interlocking symbols, one each for female and male and a central one representing both. The short manifesto outlines the central aim of the

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<sup>33</sup> Aldrich.

<sup>34</sup> *Come Out!*, 1, p. 1.

paper to ‘give voice’ to the ‘homosexual community’, a sentiment that makes clear the character that the idea of coming out had in the climate of liberation.<sup>35</sup> Organised around the ‘real and potent power of Gay people throughout this land in order to further the interests of the homosexual community’, the GLF emphasised that coming out was a collective strategy. Whereas homophile organisations had sought to advance acceptance for homosexual lifestyles, here a gay identity was taken up as a political sign for the movement, one that sought to ‘convince society at large of the reality of homosexual political power by the active use thereof’.<sup>36</sup> The emphasis on visibility made by gay, lesbian and trans liberation movements, which is tangible in the manifestos of *Come Out!*, which, through their emphasis on visibility, foreground the aesthetic dimensions of politics.

The production of *Come Out!* spans the years of 1969 to 1972 that the GLF was active in New York. A total of eight editions were published from the Alternative U. and edited by a shifting editorial group comprised from members of GLF. Throughout the pages of the magazine, numerous manifestos can be found. The first edition included, alongside the opening manifesto and other texts, Martha Shelley’s ‘Stepin Fetchit Woman’, a one-page tract that called upon lesbians to seek freedom from the oppression of men. In later issues manifestos such as Martha Shelley’s ‘More Radical Than You’ (1969), Kathy Wakeman’s ‘Lesbian Oppression’, and the Radicalesbian’s ‘The Woman-Identified-Woman’ (both 1970) foreground lesbian identity within gay liberation struggle. Transvestite experience was also discussed through the pages of the periodical, in texts such as ‘The Transvestitite in America’ by Laura McAliste; ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’ by Pat Maxwell; and ‘Transvestite & transsexual liberation’ by Angela Douglas (all 1970). In 1971, a reproduction of the ‘Third World Gay Revolution’ manifesto appeared in the sixth issue of *Come Out!* whilst a polemical analysis called

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

'Gay Prison Liberation' was included in the seventh. Through these texts the broad political ambitions of gay liberation become legible, foregrounding the various social and political contexts that the movement was operating across.

The manifestos and other text, such as interviews, news bulletins and reflections on GLF meetings, included in *Come Out!* are typeset in columns of uniform width that wriggle haphazardly across the pages. The magazine was printed cheaply in black and white and assembled by the printer. Photographs by Ellen Bedoz (later Shumsky) appear throughout the eight editions, sometimes collaged together (apparently against her own intentions). They are interwoven with a mixture of erotic poetry, simple line drawings, hastily sketched comics, advertisements and letters. Its content was a mixture of new content and material appropriated from elsewhere. For example, illustrations by Suzanne BeVier, a member of the Radicalesbians, first appeared in the underground paper *RAT* were reproduced in its pages. A short article titled the 'N. Y. Bombings: Another View' was also reprinted from *RAT* and a short article 'Coming Out and Getting Busted', from the Chicago Gay Alliance Newsletter. As materials from the movement were reproduced in its pages, the magazine reveals a developing network that was enabled through the circulation of print ephemera. Shelley recalls that the newspaper was distributed 'on the streets of New York. Some newsstands carried it. And it went to other cities as well [...] When the paper came back [from the printer], I'd grab a bunch of copies and go out onto the streets of Greenwich Village and hawk them'.<sup>37</sup> Describing the informal methods of distribution employed by members of the GLF who put the newspaper together, Shelley also reflects on the production of *Come Out!* that 'the quality was uneven, to say the least, but the passion behind it was heartfelt... And, unlike The New York Times, we didn't have to worry about losing

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<sup>37</sup> Martha Shelley quoted in Tracy Baim, *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America* (Chicago: Prairie Avenue Productions and Windy City Media Group, 2012), p. 210.

advertisers or losing access to the halls of power'.<sup>38</sup> Self-produced and fiercely independent, consideration of the production and circulation of *Come Out!* meshes with the demands of the manifestos produced within it.

The extent of publishing amongst groups associated with gay, lesbian and trans liberation is clearly delineated in the third edition of *Come Out!* in a section that lists the names of gay and lesbian periodicals being produced at that time. The geographical breadth of these publications is remarkable, the list includes eight titles published nationally including *Ain't I a Woman*, published by a feminist group in Iowa; the *Gay Sunshine*, one of the best known newspapers of the GLM; the *Great Speckled Bird*, an underground newspaper published by breakaway members of the Student for Democratic Society in Atlanta; the *Bread & Roses News Letter*, which was produced by a group of lesbian feminists based in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and *The Furies*, the Lesbian/Feminist newspaper published in Washington D.C.. Alongside the names of these publications are listed over thirty organisations, many of which were, like the GLF, involved in producing their own newsletters or papers. The publications listed in *Come Out!* represent a field of alternate media within which radical subjectivities were constructed, that was crucial to the development of gay, lesbian and trans liberation.

Alongside marches and organised instances of direct action, the gay press was one forum through which the agenda of gay, lesbian and trans liberation was advanced in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Numerous small presses were established to disseminate ideas and political proposals, raise consciousness and develop networks amongst individuals and groups not only across the U.S. but also internationally. As Martin Meeker suggests of the vast communication networks that were established amongst gay men and lesbians in this period, the place of print was central to the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

collective self-realisation of gay identity. Groups created connections as they 'mimeographed their own circulars, written their own newsletters, or formed their own organizations hoping that others would heed the call and join them'.<sup>39</sup> Key to this groundswell of collective identity, Meeker notes that not only did print culture contribute to transforming what he calls homosexual communication networks in the mid-twentieth century. It allowed groups to participate in creative expressions of self-determination, since the 'acquisition of identity is interactive also means that it is communicative, that the stuff of everyday life is transmitted across space'.<sup>40</sup> Though Meeker is less concerned with form in his work on print media, manifestos, pamphlets, and other print ephemera produced by gay, lesbian and trans activists played a vital role in the spread of politics at that time.

The typography and style of *Come Out!* parallels the 'psychedelic lettering, rainbow split-fountain colour printing, satiric collages and ribald comic drawings' that characterised the underground press of the 1960s.<sup>41</sup> The burgeoning gay press, within which manifestos circulated, was linked to existing contexts of alternative print and publishing. Yet through the gay press, a new discourse unfolding from gay, lesbian and trans identity emerged, one that was critical of existing mainstream and underground platforms. The anti-assimilationist rhetoric and modes of production that characterise *Come Out!* are outlined in two articles that appeared in issue one of the magazine. These critiques, separately, *Gay Power* and the *Village Voice*. In an article by an uncredited author, *Gay Power* was rebuked for its for-profit status. This, the article suggested, had led the editor of the magazine, Joel Fabricant, to attack members of the

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<sup>39</sup> Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s - 1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Heller quoted in Pauline Van Mourik Mroekman, Simon Worthington and Damien Jaques, *MUTE Magazine Graphic Design* (London: eight books, 2008), p. 9. Regarding the subject of comics and gay lib: Roberta Gregory's 'Dynamite Damsels' and Mary Wings's 'Dyke Shorts' are two notable and early examples of lesbian feminist comic production, whose legacy lived on in Alison Bechdel's 'Dykes to Watch Out For' first published in *Womannews*, a New York-based newspaper in 1983.

community. To address this, the article urges a boycott of the paper. ‘We have the power to stop this’ the article concludes. ‘Let’s Use It’.<sup>42</sup> Another article that appears in the same issue, exposes the contempt toward the new gay movement shown by the editors of the *Village Voice*. Reporting on a picket that was held by members of the GLF in front of the *Voice*’s offices, the article reflects on the editorial ambitions of the East Village newspaper, to provide a “voice” to the ‘displaced, disaffected, dissatisfied and unhappy’. This they contrasted with the refusal of the newspaper to print a notice announcing the first GLF meeting in summer 1969, which led to a successful picket on the 12 September 1969. Establishing themselves against these examples, the status of *Come Out!* as non-copyrighted, non-commercial enterprise, provided a necessary context for gay and lesbian life to come into view on its own terms.

Consideration of *Come Out!* allows us to consider the role of an independent and non-commercial magazine, and the manifestos that appear within it, in the political process of coming out. A tract in the seventh issue of the magazine is richly suggestive of the ways that manifestos frame the political dimensions of coming out. By Steve Gavin and titled ‘Consciousness Raising exposes the Orwellian Lies of Sexist Amerika’ (1970), the author discusses, with polemic force, the vital place of consciousness raising within the gay liberation movement. ‘It is not possible for gay people to fight gay oppression without first establishing gay consciousness’.<sup>43</sup> As with this text, the imperative for gay men and lesbians to come out was central to many of the manifestos that circulated in the pages of the magazine of the GLF. What Foucault emphasised as a process of showing oneself to another within a homosocial relation, was also a process of coming into public visibility. Such expressions of a nascent collective identity were linked to the political practice of CR, that gay liberation adopted from the Women’s Liberation Movement. A central refrain of the WLM, that the “personal is political”,

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<sup>42</sup> *Come Out!*, 1, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Gay Liberation Front New York, *Come Out!*, 1.7 (1970), p. 19. New York Public Library.

was fundamental to practices of CR and the challenge they made to the bourgeois public sphere. The personal political declarations of gay liberation meant that ‘the liberal, middle-class order thus faced a challenge to one of its most fundamental precepts: the distinction between public and private [...] For homosexuals this meant revealing themselves in the open: ‘coming out’.<sup>44</sup> Understood in this way, coming out represented a historic political claim made within the public sphere.<sup>45</sup> Despite Foucault’s later comments about the irreconcilability of programmatic politics with homosexual culture quoted above, joint investments in gay consciousness and the manifesto form emerge through *Come Out!* With their historic link to self-determination, manifestos were an essential component in the emergent political awakening associated with the moment of gay liberation.

I have linked an emergent gay consciousness to the material circulation of print ephemera, considering one context in which manifestos were shared and reprinted within the movement. The relative immediacy and availability of print allowed *Come Out!* to become a vital component of the new movement, circulating manifestos alongside images, drawings and articles relating to the struggle. In their recent book *Drawing Difference: Connections Between Gender and Drawing* (2016) Marsha Meskimmon and Phil Sawdon discuss the way that drawing has impacted upon discussions of gender. They turn mostly to examples of what they call “fine art drawing” in opposition to views that the medium represents “an economical form”. They critique this assumption of the ‘immediacy of means’ as essentializing, drawing too intimate between practice and means of production.<sup>46</sup> I wish to read the material

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<sup>44</sup> Rizzo in Aldrich, p. 214.

<sup>45</sup> In a ‘Notes on Gay Male Consciousness-Raising’, a ‘Gay Male Group’ reflect on the process of consciousness raising in the context of the liberation movement. Coming out was an essential part of these sessions, where the group would explore their ‘first sexual experiences, acknowledging oneself as gay’. See *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, ed. by Karla Jay and Allen Young (London: GMP Publishers, 1992), pp. 293-301.

<sup>46</sup> Marsha Meskimmon and Phil Sawdon, *Drawing Difference: Connections between Gender and Drawing* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016).

characteristics of *Come Out!* differently. To recognize that *Come Out!* was a product of the conditions within which it produced, is also to understand the ways that manifestos allowed individuals and groups within the gay, lesbian and trans movements to speak outside of those conditions using the means available to them. On the sixth issue of the magazine a simple text design (fig. 2.4) equates coming out to “seizing the time”. Yet aligning the GLF with other ‘revolutionary movements of history’, the editors of *Come Out!* makes this idea sound differently.<sup>47</sup> Returning to the magazine now allows us to consider how the material characteristics of print facilitated the urgent demands of manifestos. It also allows us to consider how these texts are situated within lineages of liberation politics.

### **with our discussion**

In Autumn 1969, a short polemical piece published in *Come Out!* announced the formation of a new faction within the GLF called The Red Butterfly (TRB):

- 1) Homosexual acts between freely consenting partners harm no one [...] The Revolution cannot be just or complete if our rights as full human beings are not recognised [...]
- 2) We feel that our oppression is due, not merely to ignorance and superstition, but to the interests and ideologies of an authoritarian capitalist society [...]<sup>48</sup>

The article goes on to identify that ‘the values of the nuclear family [are] the basis of authoritarian society’.<sup>49</sup> Staking clearly the ways in which a Marxist analysis might both support but also be advanced by gay liberation, the group sought also to show how the ideas underpinning gay liberation might advance Marxist thought. Manifestos were central to this undertaking. Between 1970 and 1971, The Red Butterfly (TRB), a Marxist faction of the GLF, printed and distributed four mimeographed pamphlets as

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<sup>47</sup> Gay Liberation Front New York, *Come Out!*, 1 (1970), p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Gay Liberation Front New York, *Come Out!*, 1.2 (1969), p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

well as authoring a number of other polemical texts. Of these, two manifestos, 'Gay Liberation' and 'Gay Oppression: A Radical Analysis', were co-authored by the group which, like the *Come Out!* editorial team, comprised a shifting constellation of members. The other two publications were reproductions of existing texts, Kurt Hiller's 'Appeal to the Second International Congress for Sexual Reform for the Benefit of an Oppressed Variety of Human Being', originally given in 1928, and Carl Wittman's 'The Gay Manifesto', first published in 1970. Comprised from existing members of the GLF, TRB initially formed as a reading group when a dominant faction in the group, the June 28 Cell, successfully suggested that the GLF 'have no voting and no structure but that we should form cells'.<sup>50</sup> These cells could be formed by any member of the larger organisation, to address any issue felt necessary and was able to "speak for" the GLF.<sup>51</sup> Deciding to come together as a consequence of this new policy, during the years it was active the group made an important contribution to an emerging theoretical analysis, at that stage relatively nascent within the gay movement.

It is well documented, both through the primary sources consulted here and in broader histories of the movement, that the relationship between Left and the gay, lesbian and trans liberation in the U.S., elsewhere, was at times fraught.<sup>52</sup> A roundtable that appeared in the third issue of *Come Out!* takes up the subject. Titled 'Homosexuals in the Movement', the feature reproduces a discussion that took place between four members of the GLF on the links between the group and what they term "the broader

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<sup>50</sup> John Lauritsen in conversation with the author, 6 July 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. GLF's experiment with structurelessness would not last. Lauritsen attributes the demise of the group (in 1972) to the decision to organise through cells.

<sup>52</sup> On this Lucy Robinson has written on the relationship between the Gay Liberation Front and the Left in the U.K. See Lucy Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain: How the Personal Got Political* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Lucy Robinson, 'Carnival of the Oppressed: The Angry Brigade and the Gay Liberation Front', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History*, 2003, 1–11 <<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=lr&site=15>> [accessed 23 November 2014]. A book on the U.S. context was published in the month that I complete this thesis: Emily K. Hobson, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

movement'. At one point, Bob Kohler<sup>53</sup> describes how 'I've always been active as a homosexual. Openly, but not publicly. In the past six or seven months I have suddenly found myself living the life of a public homosexual. I find resentment in many parts of the movement'.<sup>54</sup> Resonant with my earlier discussion, relating coming out to the public sphere, the testimony here also points to hostility within the broader Left toward homosexuals and gay liberation. There was also parallel distrust amongst gay liberation groups toward socialist politics. Members of the gay movement 'denounce the [Left] Movement because they feel that it has not sufficiently embraced the homosexual cause'.<sup>55</sup> Kissack describes how TRB formed against a backdrop of suspicion, of 'anarchic tendencies', amongst members of the GLF. John Lauritsen, a founding member of TRB who I was able to speak to for this research, suggests such suspicions were unfounded:<sup>56</sup>

the announcement of our cell caused instant anxiety, and we were accused of advocating violence. Our activities, however, were more cerebral. In a way, The Red Butterfly constituted a radical intelligentsia within GLF, concerned with developing theory of gay liberation and linking it to other movements for social change. Our members included graduate students, scholars, artists, poets, workers, and a scientist<sup>57</sup>

Describing the group as a radical intelligentsia, Lauritsen's remarks underscore the importance of "theory" to the group. Having initially come together as a reading group, TRB was dedicated to sharing and debating texts including works by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich. Dedicated to theory, TRB were

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<sup>53</sup> Bob Kohler (1926-2007) was a member of GLF, ACT UP and Fed Up Queers, which formed in 1998.

An oral history is available at: <https://inthemiddleofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com/bob-kohler-recalling/>

<sup>54</sup> Gay Liberation Front New York, 'Homosexuals in the Movement', in *Come Out!*, 1.3 (1970).

<sup>55</sup> Gay Liberation Front New York, *Come Out!*, 1.2, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> John Lauritsen founded TRB with John O'Brien, a former member of the Students for Social Democracy, and others. One notable absence in this discussion are the names of other group members. During our conversations, Lauritsen told me that he did not feel comfortable publishing the names of the other members because of individual's shifting political allegiances in the year elapsed. Lauritsen has undertaken work to archive and digitise his personal collection of material relating to the group, which is available online through the website of his personal press: [www.paganpressbooks.com](http://www.paganpressbooks.com)

<sup>57</sup> John Lauritsen, 'The Red Butterfly', *Pagan Press*, 2011 <<http://paganpressbooks.com/jpl/TRB.HTM>> [accessed 24 January 2015].

not, however, beholden to any theorist in particular. (Lauritsen recalls how, at one meeting, a fellow member of TRB performed an irreverent reprise of Engels's theory of the family). Instead, the group determined to establish a new theory, one that would link the goals of gay liberation to those theories that have traditionally shaped the Left.

Print was a central means through which TRB developed and distributed their ideas. The group published all four of their significant texts in 1970: two co-authored manifestos, 'Gay Liberation' and 'Gay Oppression: A Radical Analysis' were followed by reproductions of Wittman's 'A Gay Manifesto' and Hiller's 'Appeal to the Second International Congress for Sexual Reform for the Benefit of an Oppressed Variety of Human Being'. The latter two include, by way of a response, the addition of a couple of pages of notes co-authored by TRB.<sup>58</sup> The pamphlets were typeset and printed at the offices of the War Resisters League at 339 Lafayette, New York.<sup>59</sup> Without resources for anything more professional, TRB collated their own pamphlets using 'stencils for the pamphlets, some of them were electrostatic if there had to be a picture or something but a lot of them were typed out on a manual Olympia typewriter... it was pretty primitive'.<sup>60</sup> The immediacy of print enabled the texts to be run off quickly and relatively cheaply then put immediately into circulation. The pamphlets were distributed at meetings, marches (Lauritsen recalls that they sold hundreds at the first gay pride march), by word of mouth and in gay bookshops including the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop in Greenwich Village. They were also sold by mail. The pamphlets were generally well received and 'Gay Liberation' was 'a best seller' that 'sold thousands of copies'.<sup>61</sup> Each pamphlet was sold for 25 cents (about \$1.60 today) and any money from sales went to cover printing costs. Despite the low production values, the pamphlets are

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<sup>58</sup> The group also circulated a position paper and an assessment of a series of 'Gay Demands' that had been issued by a Gay Caucus at the Black Panther Party's 'Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention Planning Session' in September 1970.

<sup>59</sup> John Lauritsen in conversation with the author.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

thoughtfully assembled. Each includes a cover of thicker paper or card, stapled to the text, featuring designs prepared by members of the group. The Hiller text has a careful line drawing of a figure, his hands and arms thrust upwards to a sky, his face turned toward a radiating sun. 'Gay Oppression' and 'Gay Liberation' both include blunt, abstract shapes (Fig. 2.5). The former incorporates two fists gripping a hammer and sickle. The latter represents an arrow piercing the outline of the U.S. as though delineating the spread of ideas across the country. Wittman's manifesto (Fig. 2.2.) is illustrated by a figure of four interlocked fists that punch out the points of a compass. In the space created between them, looping cursive letters reads one of the manifestos' unforgettable lines and a slogan of the gay movement: "out of the closets and into the streets!". Distributed, at least partly, on the streets, these pamphlets represent an unrecognised contribution to histories of street art in New York, though perhaps they are more like the posters of *Mai '68* than the vivid lettering that flashed across the city as subway carriages made their way downtown from the Bronx in a similar period.

In the manifestos, the group undertook a structural analysis of the oppression experienced by gay men and lesbians. These polemics drew links between gay liberation and Left thinking, attending to mechanisms of social reproduction. The first pamphlet that they produced, 'Gay Oppression', demonstrates the centrality of Marxist ideas within their work. First setting out the situation as the group view it at that time, with reference to the Kinsey Reports, two influential books on sexual behaviour that suggested that around 10% of any given population was homosexual, TRB continue with an analysis of the oppression of homosexuals in U.S society. Here two sections map out a theory of alienation, first in relation to personal life and then in relation to

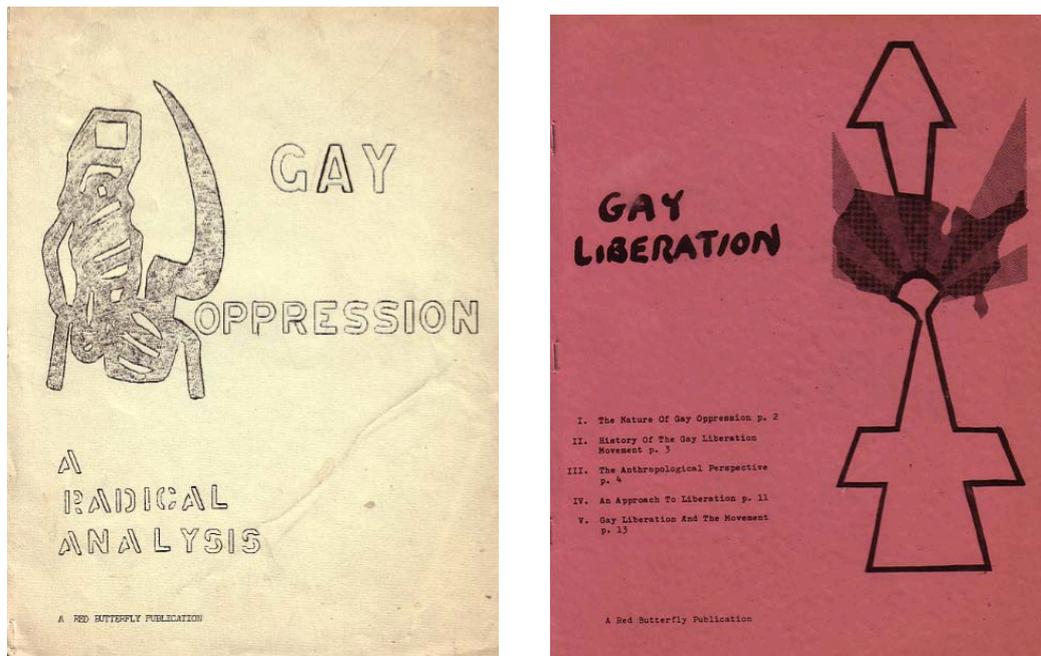


Figure 2.5. *Gay Oppression* and *Gay Liberation*: Two pamphlets published by The Red Butterfly [Stapled pamphlets]. (1970). From the personal collection of John Lauritsen.

society. They consider the way that societal norms create a censure of feeling amongst homosexuals – what TRB describe as alienation from culture – but also they account for other material consequences such as physical violence. They then go on to identify the institutions through which such norms and violence are reproduced including: “the family”, “the educational system”, “organised religion”, “government”, “business”, “the mass media and organized crime” (by which they refer to economic exploitation of the gay community by, for example, mafia run bars and bathhouses). Finally they go on to set out their requirements for the movement, outlining two things: ‘One, getting ourselves and our movement together’ and ‘Two, a readiness to form alliances with other groups struggling for change’.<sup>62</sup> With the aim of creating a ‘free life for all of us’, TRB finally maintain that ‘the American economic and political system, based on the capitalists pursuit of profit, cannot incorporate our demands and satisfy our needs for

<sup>62</sup> Red Butterfly, 'Gay Liberation' (New York: The Red Butterfly, 1970), p. 7.

full social participation'.<sup>63</sup> The manifestos produce an analysis of the family that parallels those set out by Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1942), and by Reich, in *The Sexual Revolution: Toward a Self-Regulating Character Structure* (1986). However, it departs from those two authors, asserting that the elision of homosexuals from both of those books limits the very possibilities of the arguments they set out.<sup>64</sup> Starting from the family, the manifestos of TRB find ways that homosexuality challenges the very basis of the institutions through which systematic oppression is reproduced. Against a system that had until then required homosexuals to conceal themselves, the groups urged that coming out and coming together as a radical movement was the first step to securing this future.

To achieve the free society that TRB called for throughout their manifestos required that, like other groups, the gay community come into consciousness as a class. This was reflected in the byline of the group: 'The Red Butterfly is an association of gay men and women who as revolutionary socialists see their liberation linked to the class struggle'.<sup>65</sup> Asserting in 'Gay Liberation' that 'human liberation in all its forms, including Gay Liberation, requires effective self-determination, i.e., democracy in all spheres of social life affecting the lives of the whole', the group discuss the psychological dynamics of oppression.<sup>66</sup> This offers further reflection on the public dynamics of coming out. The group emphasise that 'effective self-determination' cannot be achieved through 'personal liberation, the experience of feeling free, which is the meaning often given to "coming out", can and often does lead to a kind of escapism or regression, to detachment from the actual conditions confronting us'.<sup>67</sup> For members of

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> For a first hand discussion of the relationship between socialism and gay, lesbian and trans liberation see Doug Ireland, 'Socialism and Gay Liberation: Back to the Future', *New Politics*, XII.2 (2009) <<http://newpol.org/content/socialism-and-gay-liberation-back-future-0>>.

<sup>65</sup> Kurt Hiller 'Appeal to the Second International Congress for Sexual Reform for the Benefit of an Oppressed Variety of Human Being', (New York: The Red Butterfly, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Gay Liberation', p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

TRB, coming out was not only a process of individual self-fulfilment but also a group endeavour. In this sense, manifestos become a way of claiming space that functions at an imaginary level but also is linked to real material gains.

Returning to these texts counters Rizzo's suggestion, that the American gay movement sought cultural transformation whereas European traditions in France and Germany sought more general political transformation.<sup>68</sup> Through an understanding of the ways that cultural transformations were intimately linked to social and political ones, TRB found locate themselves in a lineage of historical and international Left struggle, one that is closely linked to the struggles of 'women, Blacks and other Third World peoples'.<sup>69</sup> As well as allowing for parallels to be made between TRB and Marxist thought, the pamphlets emphasise important links with the Black Panther Party and the Women's Liberation Movement. Lauritsen suggests that these links were made through 'informal associations, between us as thinkers, our ideas and other groups'.<sup>70</sup> Yet these looser associations were coupled with explicit acts of solidarity. For example, TRB marched with the Black Panthers and the Young Lords, the Puerto Rican nationalist group. The group emphasised solidarity along socialist lines, aligning homosexuals as a class alongside other emergent collective formations. This relates to ideas of class consciousness, a process that the group describe as one of "growth", and builds upon my earlier discussion. Their standpoint, that "coming out" be a process of resisting isolation rather than an argument for ghettoization, necessitated that the group also take an anti-racist and anti-sexist position.<sup>71</sup> 'It is axiomatic', the group write in a short pamphlet distributed at the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in September 1970, 'that a program for Gay Liberation should include women as well as

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<sup>68</sup> Rizzo.

<sup>69</sup> The Red Butterfly, 'Gay Oppression: A Radical Analysis' (New York: The Red Butterfly, 1970), p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> John Lauritsen in conversation with the author, 6 July 2016.

<sup>71</sup> 'Gay Liberation', p. 10.

men'.<sup>72</sup> However, it is not my wish to tell a story that renders over the various fissures that continually opened up between groups within the movement, something that the role that TRB and other groups assigned to critique within the movement.

As well as producing their own materials, the group reprinted two manifestos, 'A Gay Manifesto' (1969/70) and Hiller's 'Appeal to the Second International Congress for Sexual Reform for the Benefit of an Oppressed Variety of Human Being' (1928). Both the Hiller text and Wittman's manifesto are accompanied at the end by notes written by members of TRB. The speech by Hiller was first delivered at Congress for Sexual Reform in Copenhagen in 1928. The speech was not delivered by Hiller but by Magnus Hirschfeld, at that time the President of the congress. In it, Hiller calls for the congress to speak out on the issue of homosexuality, urging toward a redefinition in relation to the state, one that would end the criminalization of homosexuality. In the notes prepared by TRB for their translation and publication of the text, 'We think Kurt Hiller's speech of 1928 stands up amazingly well today, 42 years after it was delivered [...] we feel its historical interest justifies making it available in English to the Gay Liberation movement'.<sup>73</sup> Under the subtitle of "Discussion", the group go on to engage with the differences between their position and the one that Hiller set out in 1928. For example, TRB differentiate their position on sexual freedom of adolescents from that of Hiller (Hiller was against this but TRB suggest that 'the only valid ethical concern here is for mutual freedom of self-determination').<sup>74</sup> They go on to write that 'we sometimes have an uncanny feeling that history is literally repeating itself. What Marx called "the old shit" is still schlepping along'.<sup>75</sup> Against such "old shit", Marx's allusion to the most insidious forms of social reproduction, TRB seek to understand how 'gay oppression is not an accident, but is systematically related to the oppression and exploitation of other

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<sup>72</sup> The Red Butterfly, 'Critique of the Gay Demands', (New York: The Red Butterfly, 1970), p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> Kurt Hiller, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

peoples'.<sup>76</sup> Critique as represented by this "dialogue" would form a crucial aspect of this goal, one that was in dialogue with history as much as it was the present conditions of the struggle.

Three pages of discussion also appears after the text of Carl Wittman's 'The Gay Manifesto', published by TRB in 1970. Wittman's manifesto, which was first published under the shortened title 'A Gay Manifesto' in 1970 in the *Chicago Seed*, an underground newspaper established by artists Don Lewis and Earl Segal in 1967, was one of the earliest contributions to the burgeoning writing in the context of the gay liberation struggle. Addressed directly to homosexuals, particularly toward gay men, the manifesto speaks of the newly emergent movement and its affects. 'Where once there was frustration, alienation, and cynicism, there are new characteristics among us. We are full of love for each other and are showing it'.<sup>77</sup> Wittman goes on to outline a definition of homosexuality ('the capacity to love someone of the same sex')<sup>78</sup>; to define the relationship between the Gay Liberation Movement and lesbianism ('we look forward to the emergence of a lesbian liberation voice. The existence of a lesbian caucus within the New York Gay Liberation Front has been very helpful in challenging male chauvinism among gay guys, and anti-gay feelings among women's lib')<sup>79</sup>; on gender roles and the 'mimicry of straight society'<sup>80</sup> and sex ('For us, sexual objectification is a focus of our quest for freedom [...] learning how to be open and good with each other sexually is part of our liberation').<sup>81</sup> Finally, the manifesto outlines four

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> Carl Wittman, *A Gay Manifesto* (New York: The Red Butterfly, 1970), p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 3-4.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

key ‘imperatives’ for the struggle: ‘1. Free ourselves [...] 2. Turn other gay people on [to the struggle] [...] 3. Free the homosexual in everyone’.<sup>82</sup>

As with the Hiller reprint, the notes included on TRB edition of Wittman’s text provide an insight into both parallels and difference between Wittman’s text and the theories that were developing within the TRB. TRB stated that ‘A Gay Manifesto’ had been important in the context of a movement that ‘is struggling for a self-understanding which would probe deeply enough into the causes of our oppression’.<sup>83</sup> Again, the group foreground the place of analysis in this pursuit, praising Wittman’s ‘analysis of homosexual oppression in American which links the individual-psychological experiences of oppression to the social and economic facts’.<sup>84</sup> Following this praise for the manifesto, TRB set out their own comments that they hope ‘will foster discussion and new thinking throughout the movement’.<sup>85</sup> They organise these ‘friendly amendments’ under two main points, the first relating to “coming out” and the second to the question of ‘the kind of social and economic viewpoint most conducive to our liberation as gays’.<sup>86</sup> I have already alluded to the emphasis placed by TRB on coming out as a public rather than personal act. Again, the group addresses this, writing that ‘emphasis on personal liberation, the experience of feeling free, which is the meaning often given to “coming out”, can and often does lead to a kind of escapism or regression, to detachment from the actual conditions confronting us’.<sup>87</sup> The ‘actual conditions’ as they put it, are then outlined further down the page, asserting that ‘a democratic socialism is the necessary basis for building a classless society, i.e., communism’.<sup>88</sup> Added to Wittman’s polemic by way of an extension to his own

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

argument, TRB rewrite aspects of 'The Gay Manifesto' through a 'socialist perspective', linking coming out with the 'social and economic' concerns that underpins their political analysis.<sup>89</sup>

These brief considerations of the printed material produced by TRB, are highly evocative of the ways that manifestos circulated within the movement. Photocopied from elsewhere and added to by the group (as with Wittman's manifesto) or else translated and typeset by members of the group (as with Hiller's speech), the pamphlets of TRB foreground the way that emergent political analysis was constituted within an emergent network of individuals and groups. Through the production and reproduction of texts, the group emphasise the role of critique in relation to the movement. The comments provided by TRB on their own publications of other author's text show that this critique was one that was unfolding within the movement. The qualities of print, including that it was easily available, relatively cheap to produce, and could be circulated through the spaces and networks that were beginning to link members of the community, helped facilitate the new analysis. Such a statement carries with it the risk that the relationship between technologies of print and the political be over determined. Yet investing in the disruptive qualities of the manifesto form, ones imaginatively tied to conceptions of history and self-determination, meant that print was a crucial aspect of the critique of social reproduction that TRB sought to carry out. Contrary to Foucault's worries about polemics and their relationship to programmes, this process was not a fixed thing. Rather, through the qualities of print, and its links with the politics of the movement, particularly an emphasis on solidarity, the manifestos of TRB foreground difference in ways that do not map gay liberation as simply a linear process moving toward greater recognition within existing frameworks.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

## **play time**

Seeking to disrupt existing conditions in ways that do not suggest progressive accounts of liberatory politics, *The Red Butterfly* also mobilised the past in the present context of struggle. The idea that a speech from the 1920s such as Kurt Hiller's 'Appeal to the Second International Congress for Sexual Reform for the Benefit of an Oppressed Variety of Human Being' might speak in the context of a liberatory struggle in 1970 is suggestive of the ways that gay, lesbian and trans liberation was understood through longer lineages of homosexual struggle. This suggestion alludes not only to the analysis of historic conditions of oppression engendered by groups like TRB. It also suggests that complex temporal registers characterise the demands that groups associated with the GLF made within manifestos. These temporal registers are partly connected to the qualities of manifestos that I outlined in my introductory chapter. Speaking to the future from the place of the present, manifestos often map connections to the past as well. Recourse to the past sometimes shows the on-going nature of the struggle against homosexual oppression. At other times, as I will go on to discuss here, it invokes other kinds of time in order to disrupt the present. Linked to the claims that manifestos make to public visibility and voice, as discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to coming out, these complex temporalities seek to disturb mechanisms of social reproduction. In what follows, I investigate the role that the past plays in the claims that manifestos make to the future, in order to think about how groups associated with the GLF in New York mobilise the peculiar temporal registers of the form.

The generational divide often used to separate the radical politics of gay, lesbian and trans liberation from the more liberal politics of homophile movements is thrown into question through the more complex genealogies one encounters through manifestos associated with the movement in the early 1970s. Drawing links with the Civil Rights

movement, for example, manifestos by groups like TRB or that appear in *Come Out!* trace gay, lesbian and trans struggle within political lineages on-going since the 1950s. Translating and circulating Kurt Hiller's speech from 1928, TRB register the even more circular temporalities of revolution, indicating the rise of Stalin in the Soviet Union and the event of the Second World War as moments when advances in the struggle for homosexual recognition experienced devastating set backs. In his manifesto, reprinted by TRB in 1970, Carl Wittman invoked even more cyclical temporalities, through reference to the child. 'As kids we refused to capitulate to demands that we ignore our feelings toward each other'.<sup>90</sup> Each of these examples alludes to the historic returns and playful temporalities, connecting gay, lesbian and trans liberation with the broader ludic atmosphere of protest in the 1960s.

As I sketched in my introductory chapter, recent debates in queer studies have attended to temporality as a means to challenge narratives surrounding rights based LGBT politics. Writers such as José Muñoz have focused on temporality in relation to broader accounts of utopian politics. In *Cruising Utopia* (2013) Muñoz puts forward that 'Queerness should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time'.<sup>91</sup> He does so partly through consideration of the manifesto of the Third World Gay Revolution, a group that was established in New York. 'What we want, what we believe' was reproduced within numerous pamphlets and periodicals associated with the movement, including in the pages of *Come Out!*, when it was first written in 1970. Muñoz suggests that the manifesto does not produce a coherent idea of one generation following another into the future, predicated on identitarian politics or similarities. Rather he writes that the manifesto seeks a 'future collectivity', one that 'registers the illumination of a horizon of existence'.<sup>92</sup> Building on Muñoz's idea that a manifesto like

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> Muñoz, p. 96.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 25

‘What we want, what we believe’ maps a discontinuous model of political generations into the future, I want to consider how manifestos produced by groups associated with the GLF also allow such a possibility to retroactively shift thinking about the relationship to generations in the past. To this end, the figure of the child, invoked within Wittman’s manifesto, is of particular significance here.

Thinking of the queer future, and the queer past, in relation to the figure child, could be problematic given the centrality of the child to mechanisms of social reproduction. This is the main thrust of the argument that Lee Edelman set out in *No Future: Queer theory and the Death Drive* (2004). Identifying the way that the ‘figural Child alone embodied the citizen as an ideal, entitled to claim full rights to its future share in the nation’s good’, Edelman develops his argument instead around the idea of queer negativity.<sup>93</sup> Refusing to embrace a politics predicated on futurity, and its corollary, the Child, Edelman dedicates himself to thinking into ‘the very space that “politics” makes unthinkable’, that is, of queerness as the antithesis of the social.<sup>94</sup> Yet, I want to argue, that the childish desires that shape many manifestos produced in the context of gay, lesbian and trans liberation, do not simply reinforce a politics of futurity organised around the image of the innocent child. Rather than reproduce the same idea of the Child that Edelman identifies in the common refrain of “children are our future”, both Kathryn Bond Stockton and Sara Ahmed have addressed the wilful ways that children grow that, as Stockton suggests, ‘don’t bespeak to continuance’.<sup>95</sup> In this context, manifestos produced within the context of gay, lesbian and trans liberation offer an interesting pre-history to these more recent discussions. Here recourse to the child in the present represents a projection of the past into the future.

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<sup>93</sup> Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009). p. 13. See also Sara Ahmed, *Wilful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

Wittman's brief invocation of the children we all have been ('As kids we refused to capitulate to the demands that we ignore our feelings toward each other') is resonant with the way that the child appears in Martha Shelley's manifesto 'Gay is Good' (1970). Originally published in the underground paper the RAT, 'Gay is Good' represents a strident rejection of sexual roles, which she wrote were 'beginning to wear thin'.<sup>96</sup> Shelley was associated with the lesbian homophile group Daughters of Bilitis before becoming a founding member of the GLF in New York, apparently having suggested the name of the group at the first meeting of the group in July 1969.<sup>97</sup> One of a number of manifestos that Shelley published, 'Gay is Good' is addressed to homosexuals but also simultaneously to "straights" who had 'managed to drive down [their] own homosexuality down under the conscious skin of your mind – and to drive us down and out into the gutter of self contempt'.<sup>98</sup> Importantly for this discussion, her manifesto sustains a critique of the nuclear family whilst orienting the child as the one who might undo heterosexual forms of social reproduction:

Get in touch with the reasons that made you reject straight society when you were a kid (remembering my own revulsion against the vacant women drifting in and out of supermarkets, vowing never to be like them, trivial endless gossip mahjongging sickly sweet lipstick), and realize that you were right<sup>99</sup>

Addressed to gay and lesbian readers, Shelley's manifesto indicates toward the repressive logic that underpins a move from incredulous child to the adult who has been made to forget what it is to be a child by "straight society". 'Get in touch' with the past

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<sup>96</sup> Martha Shelley, 'Gay is Good' (1970). The Lesbian Herstory Archives, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Shelley recalls: 'I don't know who first said the words – people think it was me, but I was drinking beer at the time so I have no recollection of this, but somebody said the words "Gay Liberation Front." And I started pummeling the table and said, "THAT'S IT. THAT'S IT. We're the Gay Liberation Front' in Martha Shelley and Kelly Anderson, 'Voices of Feminism Oral History Project', *Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College*, 2003 <<https://www.smith.edu/library/libs/ssc/vof/transcripts/Shelley.pdf>> [accessed 4 May 2016].

<sup>98</sup> Martha Shelley, 'Gay is Good', n.p.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2-3.

Shelley urges, so that we might unlearn the repression that society requires in order for one to grow up into ‘correct’ gender roles.

To understand this process in terms of repression in relation to childhood is to purposefully invoke the terms of psychoanalysis. The psychic dimensions that underpin references to childhood in GLF manifestos are perhaps most clear in a section of Allen Young’s manifesto ‘Out of the Closet’ (1971). Following an analysis of gay oppression that parallels those set out by TRB, Wittman and Shelley, Young writes that:

Gay is good for all of us. The artificial categories “heterosexual” and “homosexual” have been laid on us by a sexist society. Children are born sexual. To protect the power of straight men in a sexist society, homosexuality becomes prohibited behaviour. As gays, we demand an end to the gender programming which starts when we are born (pink for girls, blue for boys). The nuclear family, with its man-woman model built in by the presence of parents, is the primary means by which this restricted sexuality is created and enforced<sup>100</sup>

As with Shelley’s ‘Gay is Good’, Young’s idea of a child as one who is “born sexual” undoes the restrictive logic of the nuclear family as the unit which limits sexuality. The ideas that Herbert Marcuse sets out in his book *Eros and Civilization* (1955) were an important touchstone for members of the gay and lesbian liberation movements and offer a lens through which to consider the eroticism that seemingly underpins Young’s statement quoted here. Representing a critical overhaul of Freudian, but also Marxist, ideas, *Eros and Civilization* was a ‘well-established influence on the early gay liberation movement’.<sup>101</sup> The importance of Marcuse’s book in the context of gay, lesbian and trans liberation movement can be seen in the context of the linking of homosexuality to regression (not to be conflated with repression), both within U.S. society and within psychoanalytical modes of thinking. Indeed these two things are connected. In the

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<sup>100</sup> Young, p. 8.

<sup>101</sup> Kevin Floyd, ‘Rethinking Reification: Marcuse, Psychoanalysis, and Gay Liberation’, *Social Text*, 19.1 (2001), p. 104.

1960s and 1970s, psychoanalytical models shaped widely held understandings of homosexuality. There is not enough time for me to properly explore the sustained engagement with Freud that Marcuse performs in *Eros and Civilization*, nor the myriad ways that the book speaks to aspects of the gay, lesbian and trans movement, however there are two aspects of the book that are important to this discussion of the way that the child was deployed in manifestos associated with the GLF and the movement more broadly.<sup>102</sup>

In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse takes up both the ideas of repression and regression. In Freudian psychoanalysis these two are absolutely distinguishable from one another. Briefly, Freud uses both terms throughout his psychoanalytical writing. In ‘Instincts and Their Vicissitudes’ (1915), for example, Freud associates the defensive character of repression with the denial of the entry of instinct into the unconscious. Whereas, regression he characterizes as ‘a return to the first objects invested with libido, which we know to be incestuous in character’.<sup>103</sup> Not only are these ‘first objects’ incestuous in character but that incestuous character is understood to have a homoerotic dimension. The return to the early psychosexual stages of development, implies libidinal regression that develops differently, but still in relation to, the “oedipal scenario”. Marcuse establishes these two terms differently, though not with reference to homosexuality. In *Eros and Civilization* repression is linked with the Marxist conception of surplus value in capitalism to establish what Marcuse refers to as ‘surplus repression’ and is closely tied to mechanisms of social reproduction. As he writes in the preface to the 1966 edition of the book ‘The reproduction of bigger and better, of the same ways of life came to mean, ever more clearly and consciously, the closing of those other possible ways of life which could do away with the serfs and the masters, with the

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<sup>102</sup> Kevin Floyd undertakes a rigorous project to establish historic links between queer studies and Marxism, including Marcuse’s influence on gay liberation politics in his book Kevin Floyd, *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

<sup>103</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (London and New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1960).

productivity of repression'.<sup>104</sup> Such a 'union of freedom and servitude' he writes 'has become "natural" and a vehicle of progress'.<sup>105</sup> In the work against the mechanism of progress, it is to the subject of regression that Marcuse now turns.

Marcuse's philosophical consideration of Eros is in dialogue with Freud's writing on civilization, set out in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929), the book in which Freud explored the contrary character of the individual psyche and that of the formation of civilization. Marcuse separates what in Freud's analysis appears as an essential conflict between the Oedipus complex and civilization, which 'depends on the suppression of the strongest of all childish wishes: the Oedipus myth'.<sup>106</sup> Instead, Marcuse suggests that the Oedipus complex 'is certainly not the central cause of the discontents in civilization, and not the central obstacle for their removal'.<sup>107</sup> Deemphasizing the role of Oedipus, which he argues is in fact crucial to the "normal" functioning of society, Marcuse envisages new forms of liberation where:

regression assumes a progressive function. The rediscovered past yields critical standards which have been tabooed by the present... The liberation of the past does not end in its reconciliation with the present. Against the self-imposed restraint of the discoverer, the orientation on the past tends toward an orientation on the future.<sup>108</sup>

Here two things emerge that are important in relation to the way that the child is written in the manifestos that I referred to above. Marcuse shows that returning to our 'childhood wishes and attitudes is not necessarily regression' but rather that it 'may well be the opposite – proximity to a happiness that has always the repressed promise of a better future'.<sup>109</sup> Doing so, he argues against the function of history embedded within Freudian conceptions of repression, were required to come to terms with the past in order to be in

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<sup>104</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. xiv.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 204.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 203.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 19

the present. Instead, Marcuse put forward a model where what the memory might trace is precisely 'images of a free future'.<sup>110</sup>

Marcuse's call to eroticise non-libidinal relations has a historic function since it requires that we return to childhood, to a time before the division of libido and the subsequent sublimation that takes place. This aspect of Marcuse's *Eros* throws into relief the ways that manifestos associated with gay and lesbian liberation invested in the figure of the child. The role of the child, in Marcusean terms, disturbs the linear narrative that is the logical effect of Freudian psychoanalysis. The manifestos discussed here do not invoke a childhood self in order that we might come to terms with the past in the present, but rather they do precisely in order that we break with the conditions of the present. As Marcuse writes 'historical backwardness may again become the historical chance of turning the wheel of progress in another direction'.<sup>111</sup> In these manifestos, the child becomes a proxy for the futurity of the text, one that absolutely resists recapitulating "normal" forms of social reproduction.

The figure of the child returns again, albeit slightly differently, in the Radicalesbians's 'The Woman-Identified-Woman' (1970). First circulated at the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York City, 'The Woman-Identified-Woman' offers particular reflection on the relationship between gay liberation and the Women's Liberation Movement. The Radicalesbians came together out of dissatisfaction with both the response of the WLM to lesbian issues and of the Gay Liberation Front to agendas associated with lesbian, and more broadly female, experience. Caught between these two struggles, yet nonetheless active in both, the Radicalesbians emerged as a response to the lack of visibility of lesbian issues within each movement. Their first zap was planned to disrupt the Congress to Unite Women and the manifesto prepared in

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 231.

<sup>111</sup> Marcuse, p. xvii.

advance of the protest. The group showed up wearing T-Shirts on which were stencilled “The Lavender Menace”, a reference to Betty Friedan’s characterisation of lesbians within the movement and flyer from the event quotes a few paragraphs from the manifesto and states that the publication is on sale in the lobby at the event. Linked to a zap, designed to cause disruption, the group invested in the disruptive character of the manifesto.

In the context of the broader gay, lesbian and trans liberation movement, I want to explore the particular ways that the manifesto invokes the child in the analysis it sets out focused on the uneven power dynamics governing the relation of women to male culture. Doing so, the manifesto formulates a demand for the ‘primacy of women relating to women’.<sup>112</sup> In this struggle, the figure of the child hovers over the text but not one that suggests an essential move between feminist politics and reproduction. The manifesto begins: ‘A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion’.<sup>113</sup> It goes on:

She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society [...] These needs and actions, over a period of years, bring her into conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, until she is in a state of continual war<sup>114</sup>

The evocative idea of a continual war experienced from ‘an extremely early age’ is coupled with the statement that lesbians learn ‘usually much earlier than her “straight” (heterosexual) sisters about the essential aloneness of life (which the myth of marriage obscures’.<sup>115</sup> Like the previous expressions of a childhood self in gay and lesbian liberation, the child embodies certain ideas relating to compulsion and freedom. But she

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<sup>112</sup> Radicalesbians, ‘The Woman-Identified-Woman’, 1970. The Lesbian Herstory Archive, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

also embodies a kind of latent knowledge about patriarchal society, one that cannot be accounted for through Marcuse's critique of Freud.

The invocation of the child in 'The Woman-Identified-Woman' is linked to an idea of time. This is not only the temporality of return in which the childhood self might return to rupture the present, but also it is the stasis of "continuous war". The temporalities of the continuum, rather than the rupture, characterise the mobilisation of the past in the manifesto. In 1980, nearly a decade after Radicalesbians published 'The Woman-Identified-Woman' Adrienne Rich would write about what she called the "lesbian continuum" in her article 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence'. Arguing that a 'feminist critique of compulsory heterosexual orientation for women is long overdue', Rich invokes the idea of a 'lesbian continuum' to 'include a range – through each woman's life and throughout history – of woman-identified experience, not simply the fact that woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman'.<sup>116</sup> Considering the 'possibility that all women [...] exist on a lesbian continuum, we can see ourselves moving in and out of this continuum, whether we identify ourselves as lesbian or not'.<sup>117</sup> Here Rich invested in a similar idea to the one that Foucault sets out in 'Friendship as a Way of Life', through his idea of homosexual cultures. Pertinent to this discussion relating to continuums of homosocial experience, I want to quote from the text at length:

One of the concessions one makes to others is not to present homosexuality as anything but a kind of immediate pleasure, of two young men meeting in the street, seducing each other with a look, grabbing each other's asses and getting each other off in a quarter of an hour. There you have a kind of neat image of homosexuality without any possibility of generating unease, and for two reasons: it responds to a reassuring canon of beauty, and it cancels everything that can be troubling in affection, tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie, and

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<sup>116</sup> Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in *Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader*, ed. by Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 135.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

companionship, things that our rather sanitized society can't allow a place for without fearing the formation of new alliances and the tying together of unforeseen lines of force. I think that's what makes homosexuality "disturbing": the homosexual mode of life, much more than the sexual act itself<sup>118</sup>

Foucault's characterization as homosexuality as nothing but an 'immediate pleasure', which he identifies as being tolerable to society, is offset with the idea of the 'disturbing' character of homosexuality when it is connected to more lasting pleasures such as 'affection, tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie, and companionship'.<sup>119</sup> Not privileging the ephemeral in a discussion of the political possibilities of queer life, Foucault instead puts forward that the 'formation of new alliances' is characterized by more sustained (and sustaining) temporal registers. Similarly, investing again in the woman-identified-woman, Rich alludes to a continuum of lesbian experience that works to connect various moments in history in order to 'begin to perceive a history of female resistance which has never fully understood itself because it has been so fragmented, miscalled, erased'.<sup>120</sup> In 'The Woman-Identified-Woman', the early murmurings of the historic work that lesbian politics would pursue throughout the 1970s are present. Written through subsequent claims of lesbian writing and identity to epic history, for example through the Amazonian, these lineages, function to carve out spaces for survival.<sup>121</sup> Read through the aesthetic dimensions of manifesto form, particularly the temporal registers that it sets into motion. Here the past is mobilised in the present, but not through the rupturing force of 'then' and 'now'. Rather, in the context of the ongoing gay liberation and Women's Liberation Movements, 'The Woman-Identified-Woman' brings with it the force of a rage that is the accumulative affect of an unfinished revolution "condensed to the point of explosion".

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<sup>118</sup> Michel Foucault and others, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', in *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, Editions G (Paris, 1997), p. 136.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Rich, p. 141.

<sup>121</sup> Meeker addresses the extent of print within what he names the 'Amazon network', also allowing for the possibility of non-urban considerations of queer identity. See Meeker.

## **radical aesthetics**

Throughout this chapter I have identified the ways in which manifestos facilitated the claims of gay, lesbian and trans liberation to the public sphere in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Arguing that manifestos represent complex aesthetic-political registers, I tracked the way that the material qualities of the form contributed to the increased collective consciousness characterised by the imperative for members of the movement to ‘come out’. Turning to the printed manifestos and pamphlets produced by The Red Butterfly, the Marxist faction of the Gay Liberation Front, I discussed the way in which printed matter enabled an emergent critique that was central to the burgeoning movement, a critique that largely emerged through polemic forms. Moving on to foreground the child as a figure that repeats across various manifestos produced by individuals and groups associated with the GLF in New York, I showed that not only did this critique seek to disrupt the present but it mobilised the past to do so. Throughout, I have described the strange temporal registers, as well as its intimate relationship to visibility through public “voice”, as the aesthetic dynamics of manifesto forms. This idea lies somewhat at a remove from the chapters that follow, concerned as they are with the way that manifestos allow us to read political investments in art. In these final passages of this chapter, I want to consider how they worked to carve out a space within which such a field of queer cultural production could appear.

Reflection on the explicit connections between art and the gay, lesbian and trans liberation movement by its members is limited. Drawing a link between gay liberation and art, one that resonates with the way the child figured in the manifestos discussed above, Carl Wittman likens art to sex. Writing on sex for ‘A Gay Manifesto’, Wittman writes that ‘as in good music, you get totally into it--and coming back out of that state of consciousness is like finishing a work of art or coming back from an episode of an

acid or mescaline trip'.<sup>122</sup> Such a trite sentiment, which links art to sex through the metaphorical play of music, is easily overlooked by anyone interested in the manifesto for the overarching structural analysis it provides, relating to the systemic oppression of gay men and to a lesser degree lesbians. The conceit is interesting, not only for locating the place of sex within Wittman's argument but also for the clues it gives about the way that the author viewed art in relation to gay liberation. Placing art alongside sex and a good high, Wittman assigned all three to the realm of psychic transformation, to the kinds of practices that might take a person out of this world. Despite the brevity of the statement, indeed perhaps because of it, the passing mention to art helps us to understand how Wittman imagined aesthetics in the context of a programme that challenges, starkly, the repressive forces of heterosexual society. The comment stands apart from the rest of Wittman's analysis, which, as I have discussed, foregrounds the social conditions giving rise to the oppression of gay men as well as the intersection of those issues with categories of gender, class and race. As though against the more materialist underpinnings of gay liberation, Wittman establishes sex and art under the sign of beauty.

The short excerpt from Wittman's manifesto seeks a separation of creativity from the political sphere. This detachment of aesthetics from politics brings to mind a similar separation that Susan Sontag's draws in 'Notes on Camp' (1964), five years before Stonewall and before Wittman would write his manifesto. The text is important because it raises the themes of homosexuality, aesthetics and time in relation to the polemic. Yet she describes camp as a sensibility or a "mode of aestheticism" that is 'disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical'.<sup>123</sup> Separating aesthetics from politics, Sontag's "jottings" on camp nonetheless, indeed perhaps perversely, link homosexual liberation to aesthetics. 'Homosexuals', she writes, 'have pinned their integration into society on

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<sup>122</sup> Wittman, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Laurel / Dell Publishing, 1969), p. 279.

promoting the aesthetic sense. Camp is a solvent of morality. It neutralizes moral indignation.<sup>124</sup> Sontag's suggestion that aesthetic sense provides but one instance where homosexuals are tolerated by society, works along different lines to the liberatory space that aesthetics serves in Wittman's argument. Everything changed in the six years that separate Sontag's remarks on homosexual taste and Wittman's manifesto. Furnishing Wittman with a conception of a radical consciousness, gay liberation began to carve out, along with the WLM and the anti-war movement, a space in which exchanges between aesthetics and politics would take place in increasingly more complex forms.

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested that manifestos give rise to radical articulations of collective politics in the context of the early years of gay, lesbian and trans liberation, which help us to locate genealogies of queer politics in the struggles of other liberation movements. There is however another story to tell of this moment, so favourably signalled to by Foucault in 'Friendship as a Way of Life'. In 1972, just three years after the group had formed in the weeks following Stonewall, the GLF disbanded. John Lauritsen suggests this was partly a consequence of the structurelessness of the group, which he had viewed with suspicion since it was implemented in the first year. Yet, less radical forms of gay politics would also render the project that GLF initially set out in the early issues of *Come Out!* untenable. The demise of the GLF was hastened by the shift toward a single-issue agenda amongst activists in New York. The Gay Activist Alliance (GAA), a group that broke away from the GLF in Winter 1969, were crucial to this political redirection of the movement. Unlike the GLF, who supported 'militant oppressed groups, offers aid', the GAA focused on a more personalised form of identity politics.<sup>125</sup> The GAA did not 'endorse, ally with, or otherwise support any political party, candidate for public office and/or any organization not directly related to

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p. 292.

<sup>125</sup> Karla Jay discusses this in her memoir. See Karla Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 244.

the homosexual cause' and would 'not align itself with any organization that advocates the use of violence (except self-defence)'.<sup>126</sup> Indicative of a broader shift that would take place in the 1970s, alluded to by Foucault in 'Friendship as a Way of Life', the radical aims of gay liberation were rechanneled into single issue political organising. As Meeker writes, 'the ground upon which homosexual communication networks was built already had an established history of patterns of racism, sexism, and economic inequality that would, in turn, play a role in structuring new networks.'<sup>127</sup> The extent to which this shift constituted a redefinition of the movement is legible in the way that queer politics came to reject the values of the gay liberation movement in the late 1980s. It has not been my desire to ignore the conditions that led to increasing conservatism of the liberation movement but to suggest that alternative possibilities were, and still are, available, ones that show that the emphasis of gay and lesbian politics only on greater political recognition was not inevitable.

Located somewhere between the depoliticised aesthetics of Sontag's conception and the increasing emphasis on a rights based discourse in the gay liberation movement, manifestos from GLF trace such a possibility. These forms would contribute to a burgeoning of political consciousness that functioned through aesthetic registers, drawing the two closer together in the imagination of homosexual culture. In 1970, Rita Mae Brown, a member of the Radicalesbians, published a short review in *Come Out!*. The piece focused on two musicals *Gold Diggers of 1935* (1935) and the Pre-Code *Footlight Parade* (1933) that came out in U.S. cinemas in the wake of the Great Depression. Discussing the visual languages and plots of these films, Brown suggests that 'after forty years, we see only the head and camp aspects of these movies [...] We look at these musicals and explode with laughter. Our parents, especially those of us who came up poor, looked at these movies and drooled [...] It is the desperate fantasy of

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Meeker, p. 11.

that generation that provides us with our superior, mocking attitude of camp'.<sup>128</sup> Turning to the present, Brown suggests that the distancing effect of camp continues to elide 'behind the glitter and our summer costumes [...] the hunger in Appalachia, the anti-lesbian backlash in Women's Liberation and the creeping fascism that masquerades as patriotism'.<sup>129</sup> Not a manifesto, the review took on the polemical tone of the material that appeared throughout *Come Out!*, the author urged that the gay liberation movement take itself seriously. Courting seriousness over camp, this was no attempt to separate aesthetics and politics. As Brown went on to say in her 'Manifesto for the Feminist Artist' (1972), the central aim was instead 'to achieve a synthesis of poetry and politics'.<sup>130</sup> The playful temporalities of the manifesto form might just amount to such a project. Through the reproduction and circulation of print, the aesthetic registers of politics signalled to by manifestos enabled new, experimental articulations of a politics that was written through with creativity. Extending possibilities for what could be sensed and seen in their own time, manifestos offers potential to disrupt linear accounts of history. Through them a diverse field of action appears, one that helps us to mine gay, lesbian and trans liberation as a neglected but no less vital force within Jameson's long 1960s and the new collective voice that decade engendered.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Rita Mae Brown, 'Eat Your Heart Out', *Come Out!*, 1.4, p. 20.

<sup>130</sup> Rita Mae Brown, 'Manifesto for the Feminist Artist' (1972). The Lesbian Herstory Archives.

# SCUM MANIFESTO

*Presentation of the rationale and program of action of SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men), which will eliminate through sabotage all aspects of society not relevant to women (everything), bring about a complete female take-over, completely automate, eliminate the male sex and begin to create a far-out, funky female world.*

by

**VALERIE SOLANAS**

This is the CORRECT Valerie Solanas edition

Copyright © 1967 by Valerie Solanas

Figure 3.1. Cover of Valerie Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto' (1977).  
[Mimeographed pamphlet]. The Dobkin Family Collection of Feminism  
/ Glenn Horowitz, New York City.

### **3. SCUMMY SCORES: SOLANAS UNSETTLED, 1967 – INFINITY**

#### **The scummy '60s**

The 'SCUM Manifesto' (1967), the infamous polemic in which Valerie Solanas outlined a programme to do away with the male sex and eventually the whole of the human race, is a difficult text to locate in the accounts of liberatory politics sketched in the previous chapter. Published two years before Stonewall, Solanas never belonged to any gay, lesbian or trans liberation groups nor did she align herself with the early murmurings of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). Even 'SCUM', supposedly an acronym for the Society for Cutting Up Men did not represent any formalised association of members—although Solanas did host one or two meetings with attendees numbering around the same. Self-published in New York in 1967, the manifesto has since become synonymous with the most ardent manifestations of lesbian feminism. Yet the text predates, by a few years, the formation of groups like Radicalesbians. When Solanas's ideas began to circulate amongst radical feminists in the late-1960s, she resisted the role retroactively assigned to her within the burgeoning movement (and, relatedly, to certain matriarchal lines of feminist thinking).<sup>1</sup> In many ways at a remove from these times of liberatory struggle, Solanas's manifesto does not feel out for new

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<sup>1</sup> In 1983, the London-based Matriarchy Study Group republished the 'SCUM Manifesto'. For a sceptical account of the matriarchal myth in feminism see Ellen Cynthia Eller in 'The Feminist Appropriation of Matriarchal Myth in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *History Compass*, 3 (2005), pp. 1-10. Eve Tavor Bannet explores the origins of matriarchal feminism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). Sharon Jansen gives a complete list of different editions produced of the 'SCUM Manifesto' in *Reading Women's Worlds from Christine de Pizan to Doris Lessing: A Guide to Six Centuries of Women Writers Imagining Rooms of Their Own* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

affinities, in either the future or the past. Rather it sought to bring about an end to everything.

The details of Solanas's life are well rehearsed, most recently in a comprehensive biography written by Breanne Fahs, which the Feminist Press published in 2014. The account provided by Fahs's book, and by other authors elsewhere, offers useful coordinates against which to plot a story of the 'SCUM Manifesto' in the context of the 1960s. Born in New Jersey in 1936, Valerie Solanas came out as a lesbian in the 1950s, majored in psychology at the University of Maryland between 1954 and 1958 and began to engage in writing critiques of sexism whilst still at university. By the time she started work on her notorious manifesto, she was living in New York, staying at the Chelsea Hotel, panhandling and occasionally working as a jobbing writer for the erotic presses that was flourishing in the counter-cultural mood of 1960s North America. In New York, she would appear in Andy Warhol's feature film *I, a Man* (1967) and also meet Maurice Girodias, a slippery character who hastily published the 'SCUM Manifesto' through the Olympia Press after Solanas shot Warhol and Mario Amaya at the Factory on 3 June 1968.<sup>2</sup> Her two other notable works, 'A Young Girl's Primer on How to Attain the Leisure Class', which appeared in the *Playboy*-style magazine *Cavalier* in 1966, and *Up Your Ass* were both published in 1965.<sup>3</sup> She gave a copy of the latter to Warhol who, apparently, lost it. This small detail is often brought up to account for the shooting but, as Sara Warner and Mary Jo Watts have argued, such speculation more likely belongs to urban legend than it does to viable fact.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In *I, a Man* Solanas stars in one scene alongside American actor Tom Baker. The two meet on the stairs of a New York apartment block and enter into dialogue during which Baker attempts to engage, unsuccessfully, in a sexual encounter with Solanas's character. A clip can be viewed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPQVtIk3g7s>

<sup>3</sup> Solanas published an edition of both texts together. Like the 'SCUM Manifesto', Solanas typed them both and copyrighted to SCUM Books.

<sup>4</sup> The play was eventually found in one of Warhol's time capsules, a series of boxes that he put together throughout his life starting in 1974, the year after he left The Factory. The boxes include various items from his daily life including visual material, letters and newspaper cuttings. These are held at the Andy

By the time the second edition of the *SCUM Manifesto* was published by Olympia Press in 1968 just one year after Solanas first self-published the text, Solanas was incarcerated in the Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane after she was convicted for attempted murder. Often entering accounts of art in the 1960s only as an unfortunate footnote to Warhol's illustrious career, Solanas's manifesto is repeatedly framed by the shooting.<sup>5</sup> In such accounts, the wide-ranging, and many times hilariously witty, ideas that she sets out in the manifesto are rendered as a blueprint for this one act of violence. Drawing language close to action, such accounts allow the manifesto only to be understood within a processual relation operating between speech and action, however disruptive an action the shooting might have been. The proximity of the text to biography, something that Chris Kraus remarks haunts women's authorship, is paralleled by Solanas's own fraught relationships with her readers, publishers and translators that continued throughout her life.<sup>6</sup>

Solanas worked on the 'SCUM Manifesto' for three years. An early version of the text appeared in the *Village Voice* in February 1967 and the full version self-published later that year as a mimeographed edition. This she peddled on the streets of the Lower East Side, free to women and \$1 to men. In the manifesto, her idiosyncratic and

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Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where they are currently the focus of a large-scale digitisation project. *Up Your Ass* never did become a play during Solanas's lifetime, though Fahs details a series of auditions that Solanas held for actors in 1967. Sara Warner and Mary Jo Watts explain that despite popular belief, Warhol's copy of *Up Your Ass* was not the only copy of the play in distribution or available to researchers. See Fahs, *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)*, pp. 73-77, Desiree D. Rowe in 'The (Dis)appearance of Up Your Ass: Valerie Solanas as Abject Revolutionary', *Rethinking History*, 17 (2013), pp. 74-81 and 'Hide and Go Seek', *TDR: The Drama Review*, 58 (2014), pp. 80-93.

<sup>5</sup> There are various accounts that seek to challenge this reading within art history. Jennifer Doyle explores the idea of queer feminist identification with Solanas whilst Marcia Frank uses Solanas in order to explore the relationship of women to Andy Warhol's filmmaking. Catherine Lord, whose work I consider later in this chapter, is richly suggestive of various imaginative investments in both Solanas and her text, foregrounding performative readings of the 'SCUM Manifesto' as a means to discuss the way that Solanas's words on the page come to life through speaking. See Jennifer Doyle, 'I Must Be Boring Someone,' in *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) and Marcie Frank, 'Popping Off Warhol: From the gutter to the underground and beyond', in *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, ed. by Jennifer Doyle, José Esteban Muñoz, and Jonathan Flatley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Chris Kraus, *I Love Dick* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) / Native Agents, 1998).

polemical analysis made with view toward the complete overhaul of society figures around the elimination of men, the elimination of money and the full automation of reproduction. The text is structured by a series of subheads for example “Money, Marriage and Prostitution, Work and the Prevention of an Automated Society”; ‘Fatherhood and Mental Illness (fear, cowardice, timidity, humility, insecurity, passivity)’ and ‘Suppression of individuality, animalism (domesticity and motherhood) and Functionalism’. Under these headings she produces a rude, blazing commentary on the male in culture. He is “Desperately insecure, fearing his woman will leave him if she’s exposed to other men or to anything remotely resembling life, the male seeks to isolate her from other men”. He has “an obsessive desire to be admired by women, but no intrinsic worth, the male constructs a highly artificial society enabling him to appropriate the appearance of worth through, money, prestige, “high” social class, degrees”. There is more, he is also “empty, not being a complete, separate being, having no individuality, no self to groove on and needing to be constantly in female company, he sees nothing at all wrong in intruding himself on any woman’s, even a total stranger’s, thoughts anywhere at any time”. She goes on:

There is no human reason for money or for anyone to work. All non-creative jobs (practically all jobs now being done) could’ve been automated away long ago, and in a moneyless society everyone can have as much of the best of everything as she wants. But there are non-human male reasons for maintaining the money-work system [...] What will liberate women, therefore, from male control is the total elimination of the money-work system, not the attainment of economic equality with men within it<sup>7</sup>

Identifying a world in crisis, engendered by the dominance of the male sex and its insidious relationship to advance capitalism, Solanas’s manifesto sets out an ambitious proposal for doing away with men altogether. In doing so, she imagines a social body that can no longer reproduce itself. “Why should there be future generations?”.

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<sup>7</sup> Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Self published, 1967).

Throughout the manifesto, “SCUM” is characterised as an amorphous collective force that will undertake this radical programme by any means necessary. “SCUM” is impatient, selfish, cool and calculated. For “SCUM” ‘dropping out is not the answer’ since it ‘gives control to those few who do not drop out’.<sup>8</sup> Instead, the business of “SCUM” is to be undertaken by female workers who are called upon to slowly erode the “money-work system” by un-working in their jobs. Put bluntly, these un-workers – including telephone operators who will not charge for calls, office assistants who destroy equipment and, pertinently for the discussion that follows, women who take over the T.V. and the airways – fuck things up. Often thought to be an acronym for the Society for Cutting Up Men, Solanas’s use of “SCUM” (not S.C.U.M.) is far more ambiguous than this popular misconception allows. In the manifesto, the society is referred to once but more often “SCUM” is invoked as a collective sign. Exactly whom Solanas meant by “SCUM”, or meant “SCUM” to be, remains unclear throughout the manifesto. Instead of an existing class of individuals, “SCUM” is deployed as political myth, rather alike the ways that terms like “woman” or “lesbian” have been invoked within feminist writing and politics. Yet, unlike the difficulty that the category of women poses to second wave feminism, “SCUM” provides a less essential basis upon which to establish collective identification.<sup>9</sup>

The manifesto uses the repetition of “SCUM” as a rhythmic insistence throughout: ‘...SCUM is impatient; SCUM is not consoled by the thought that future generations will thrive; SCUM wants to grab some swinging living for itself’.<sup>10</sup> Conjured in the present tense, “SCUM” also inhabits the future that Solanas sets out. This future is one of ‘female control of the world and, subsequently, to the cessation of

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<sup>8</sup> Valerie Solanas, 'SCUM Manifesto' (New York: Self published, 1967), p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> In this way, perhaps Solanas’s deployment of “SCUM” has parity to the cyborgs of Donna Haraway’s ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’ (1985). In a recent article ‘The Critical Manifesto: Marx and Engels, Haraway, and Utopian Politics’, Kathi Weeks identifies the cyborg as ‘a “myth” of a future political subject’, which could as well stand for scum as well. See Weeks, p. 223.

<sup>10</sup> Valerie Solanas, 'SCUM Manifesto', p. 16.

the production of males and, ultimately, to the cessation of the production of females'.<sup>11</sup> The future tense is complicated here. If the manifesto looks forward to anything at all its logical conclusion is the end of human race. Occupying this future, "SCUM" both instigate and benefit from the programme that the manifesto sets out, a programme that represents a radical overhaul of social relations. Rhythm and repetition play out through the multiple tenses of the manifesto, enabling Solanas to speak outside of her time.

As I alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, Solanas occupies a somewhat difficult place in relation to liberation narratives of the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> Yet, despite the extremity of the ideas that Solanas sets out, there are significant overlaps between the manifesto and the early years of the Women's Liberation Movement. Crucially, for many, it captured the anger felt by women at that time. The role that the 'SCUM

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> There are other ways to think of Solanas in the 1960s, but for this thesis, it has been most useful to highlight her fraught relationship with the Women's Liberation Movement. In the context of the 1960s, the manifesto also falls into relief against the utopian glow of 'white heat'. The phrase, coined by U.K. Prime Minister Harold Wilson to describe the pace of technological change in the 1960s, takes on a different resonance in relation to 'SCUM Manifesto' and the rage that radiates through the bleakly dystopian programme that it sets out. The idea of 'white heat' comes from a speech given by Harold Wilson at the Labour Party conference in Scarborough in 1963. Wilson suggested that British industry be 'forged in the white heat of this revolution', signaling toward the major technological developments that were the legacy of both the Second World War and the Vietnam War. Though attributed to a British context, it is useful for understanding the way that during the 1960s, the U.S. witnessed similar effect to technology and industrial. Interestingly, one new technology to emerge in this climate is portable video, which I discuss later in this chapter in relation to Carole Roussopoulos's feminist video practice in France in the 1970s. This moment gave rise to various theoretical interventions. Perhaps two of the most famous are Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) and Raymond Williams's *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974). More recently Brian Winston has published a series of, albeit still technologically determinist, accounts relating to the shifting relationships between technology and society. See for example his *Media Technology and Society, A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet* (London: Routledge, 1998). One group that Solanas did have links to in the 1960s was Up Against the Wall Motherfucker, the anarchist group that had initially been known as Black Flag. Dana Heller describes a peculiar performance that followed Solanas's arrest after the shooting: 'immediately following Solanas's arrest for the shooting, Up against the Wall Motherfucker, an offshoot of the revolutionary group the Weathermen, holds a "classic sixties" street theater action in support of Solanas. The action stages a reading of a prose poem that extols the courage of the "Sweet Assassin" and the fascism of the "Plastic Man". The prose poem 'rehearses and superficially historicizes a number of countercultural dualisms that correspond to debates surrounding shifts in the relationship between culture and capital in the late 1960s: the live versus the virtual; the collective versus the corporate; resistance versus complicity; the public space of the street versus the private space of Warhol Productions'. Both Gavin Grindon and Nadja Millner-Larson have written extensively on Black Mask. Grindon makes a passing mention to Solanas whilst Millner-Larson focuses on the relationship of the group to Solanas in one chapter of her PhD thesis, 'Up Against the Real: Anti-Representational Militancy in 1960's New York'. See Gavin Grindon, 'Poetry Written in Gasoline: Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker', *Art History*, 38 (2015); Nadja Millner-Larson, 'Up Against the Real: Anti-Representational Militancy in 1960's New York' (New York University, 2013).

Manifesto' had in galvanising radical feminism to the women's movement was thrown into stark relief by a number of events that took place toward the end of the 1960s. In 1968, the radical feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson split from the New York-chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), relinquishing her role as president.<sup>13</sup> She cited the decision of the organisation to retain its hierarchical structure as well as its conservative position on abortion as reasons for her resignation. Later that year she went on to establish The Feminists – A Political Organization to Annihilate Sex Roles, a radical group organised non-hierarchically.<sup>14</sup> In a section of *The Female Eunuch* (1970) that outlines the activities of the women's liberation movement to date, Germaine Greer speaks favourably of the group as 'propaganda-makers who are trying to develop the notion of a leaderless society in which the convention of Love ('the response of the victim to the rapist'), the proprietary relationship of marriage, and even uterine pregnancy will no longer prevail'.<sup>15</sup> Atkinson's split from NOW is reflective of an increasingly radical focus within one centre of the movement and was one of a number of splinter groups that would form that year.<sup>16</sup> For her, NOW's narrow focus on workplace equality could not feasibly address a time when 'women were just the

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<sup>13</sup> The National Organization for Women was founded in Washington, DC in 1966 in order to focus on issues of equality in the workplace following the perceived failure of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to address sex discrimination in the wake of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. A detailed account of Atkinson's involvement with NOW and the broader Women's Liberation Movement can be found in Breanne Fahs, 'Ti-Grace Atkinson and the Legacy of Radical Feminism', *Feminist Studies*, 37.3 (2011), pp. 561–90.

<sup>14</sup> As Linda Greenhouse and Reva Siegel have written 'not all the women who were drawn to [NOW's] workplace-focused antidiscrimination agenda were interested in, or even particularly comfortable with, making abortion reform a priority' in *Before Roe v. Wade: Voices That Shaped the Abortion Debate Before the Supreme Court's Ruling* (New Haven, CT: Yale Law School, 2012), p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> The Feminists continued activity until 1973. The group was originally called October 17 Movement (the date it was founded) and members included Sheila Michaels, Pamela Kearon and Anne Koedt, who author of the infamous text 'The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm' (1968). The group was vehemently anti-marriage. Indeed, one of their early zaps was a picket of the New York City Marriage License Bureau. See Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (St Albans: Paladin, 1973), p. 297.

<sup>16</sup> They were not the only group to break off from NOW. For example, the Women's Equity Action League (WELD) formed from another conservative splinter group in 1968. See the entry on WELD in the *Encyclopedia of Women in American Politics*, ed. by Jeffrey D. Schultz and Laura van Assendelft (Phoenix, Arizona: The Oryx Press, 1999), p. 245.

victims every place, and if you didn't want to be a victim, but you saw all of this, it was just overwhelming'.<sup>17</sup>

Atkinson's decision to depart from NOW to pursue a radical feminist agenda is linked to an increasing recognition of violence against women as well as a deepening feminist consciousness amongst women. It was also something she attributed to Solanas shooting Warhol and Amaya. This, perhaps more than any other single event, galvanised emerging groups of radical feminists. At a time when 'everybody was aware of this anger building', Atkinson describes the shooting thus: 'some woman had done something appropriate to the feelings we were all having. She was fighting back. That's what it felt like'.<sup>18</sup> Whilst other women who were identified with the Women's Liberation Movement, such as Betty Friedan, one founder of NOW, distanced themselves from Solanas's action and ideas, Atkinson attributed the birth of radical feminism to her and located her within an imaginary of feminist politics. Before splitting from the NOW, Atkinson and others read the 'SCUM Manifesto' to disrupt a meeting of the organization. The manifesto also allegedly inspired other manifestos by groups such as W.I.T.C.H., the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, and was featured in various anthologies of feminist writing including Robin Morgan's important volume *Sisterhood is Powerful*. Greer reflects on the significance of the shooting to the emergence of the radical feminist movement:

The summer of 1968 was not only momentous for the women's movement because women emerged as a coherent group in the New Left but also because Valerie Solanas shot Andy Warhol. Suddenly S.C.U.M., the Society for Cutting Up Men, was big news, battling with Bobby Kennedy's assassination for the front page... it was probably the fierce energy and lyricism of her uncompromising statement of men's fixation on the feminine, and their desperate battle to live up to their own penile fixation, which radicalized Ti-Grace Atkinson out of NOW, and even gingered up those ladies' slogans until they managed to purify their

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<sup>17</sup> Fahs, 'Ti-Grace Atkinson and the Legacy of Radical Feminism', pp. 575–576.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

ranks of such brutality, and eventually gave birth to WITCH, Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell<sup>19</sup>

Even Greer and her typically sceptical and sardonic tone – “*even* ginged up” [my emphasis] – seems impressed by Solanas and the ‘fierce energy and lyricism’ of the manifesto.

Shulamith Firestone, conversely, recalls her suspicions surrounding the adoption of Solanas and her manifesto into feminist struggle: writing much later, she recalls how she ‘thought it was a dangerous leaning towards what would become matriarchalist theory in the women’s movement, a glorification of women as they are in their oppressed state’.<sup>20</sup> However, there are significant parallels between the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ and Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1969), which proposed that the technological innovations of the 1960s held in them the kernels for a feminist revolution. Firestone’s text, though a far more rigorous analysis of patriarchal society, reflects ideas that come up in the ‘SCUM Manifesto’, demonstrating how ideas surrounding the emancipatory possibilities of new reproductive technologies were circulating more broadly in the late 1960s. Despite the seeming parity between Solanas’s ideas and those of radical feminism – both Solanas and Firestone bring into visibility the gendered conditions of production and reproduction<sup>21</sup> – Firestone recalls that ‘Frankly, I thought it was a big mistake to recognize Valerie as one of us, a women’s liberationist, let alone to embrace her book as serious feminist theory. (I thought the initiative to do so had come from the media)’.<sup>22</sup> If Firestone was suspicious of Solanas, and the role assigned to her as a provocateur sent to discredit feminist

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<sup>19</sup> Greer, p. 308.

<sup>20</sup> Shulamith Firestone, *Airless Spaces* (Massachusetts: Semiotext(e) and MIT Press, 1998), p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> Nina Power discusses brilliantly the reasons that Firestone’s revolution did not come to pass in ‘Toward a Cybernetic Communism: The Technology of the Anti-Family’, *libcom*, 2013 <<https://libcom.org/library/toward-cybernetic-communism-technology-anti-family-nina-power>> [accessed 8 February 2015].

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

struggle, Solanas also resisted assimilation of her ideas into feminist politics. In the 'SCUM Manifesto' she rails against the 'privileged' 'middle class' girls represented by Betty Friedan's 'ilk', associating them with affluence and fatherhood, mindlessness and the 'decline of women'.<sup>23</sup> With no desire to advance women's position in society as it was, Solanas would distance herself from feminists even though they often tried to come to her help. She argued that her manifesto described women's oppression not along the lines of gender but those of economic relations, and that this differentiated her from the emergent feminist theory of those decades. That this economic oppression is analysed along gender lines is one contradiction of a contradictory text. Accepting the internal contradictions that lay at the heart of Solanas's politics is important.

Despite Solanas's resistance to being thought of as a feminist thinker, and the resistance of some feminists to think of her in those terms, Solanas has been imbued with a kind of mythical status in genealogies of radical feminism. Researching and writing about manifestos one often encounters Solanas, her manifesto is a touchstone of not only radical feminism but also in existing literature addressing the manifesto form. It shows up in almost every account of the manifesto, including in chapters by Janet Lyon, Martin Puchner, Jacqueline Rhodes and Anne Sinkey.<sup>24</sup> In feminist theory too, the 'SCUM Manifesto' has increasingly been acknowledged as both an important part of feminist history and a text that remains relevant to feminism as a movement. It has continued to be an awkward touchstone in feminist histories, and scholars including Breanne Fahs, Dana Heller, and Sam McBean have all attempted to trace a narrative relating the manifesto to feminism by locating it at the cornerstone of radical feminism,

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<sup>23</sup> Valerie Solanas, 'SCUM Manifesto', p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> See Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), Jacqueline Rhodes, *Radical Feminism, Writing and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modern* (Albany: State University of New York Press) and Sinkey.

influential to the materialist critiques that the movement produced.<sup>25</sup> Each of these authors describe the ways that Solanas resisted her adoption into feminist politics and thought. Others like Victoria Hesford, have allowed for the disruptive terms of feminist history to come into view as they navigate Solanas's biography. All suggest that there are the reasons that the text may also have fallen out of circulation but also the possibilities it produces for feminist history writing. As Heller writes:

the very concept of a “feminist classic” misreads Solanas by framing her work, and ostensibly the entire history of feminist writing, with the hierarchical order of “greatness” that the *SCUM Manifesto* critiques and rejects. The *SCUM Manifesto* is the undoing of the logic of canonization, a radical document that should recall us to feminism's unacknowledged debt to the margins of the representable and the representative<sup>26</sup>

Similar to the way that this thesis approaches manifestos in the writing of queer social movements, Heller recognises the anti-epistemological qualities of Solanas's manifesto and how they might productively undo narratives that threaten to solidify within feminist political histories.

Interestingly Atkinson describes Solanas as something like a Rorschach test, indicating the way that both Solanas and the 'SCUM Manifesto' has been adopted by various individuals and groups. Resonate with Heller's writing of Solanas, the comparison that Atkinson draws, between the shooting and a form of psychological test, requires that we think of the ways that Solanas has come to figure across, and was figured by, a number of domains including feminism, academic scholarship and art. Atkinson's comment alludes to the way that Solanas has been read through various

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<sup>25</sup> See Breanne Fahs, *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2014), Dana Heller, 'Shooting Solanas: Radical Feminist History and the Technology of Failure', *Feminist Studies*, 27 (2001), pp. 167–89 and McBean.

<sup>26</sup> Dana Heller, 'Shooting Solanas: Radical Feminist History and the Technology of Failure', *Feminist Studies*, 27 (2001), pp. 186-187. Fahs also refers to some of the difficulties (and pleasures) of teaching Solanas in her article 'The Radical Possibilities of Valerie Solanas', *Feminist Studies*, 34 (2008), pp. 591–617.

other movements. The particular difficulties that the manifesto produces in accounts attempt to co-opt or appropriate her within a broader context of feminist struggle. Out of step with feminist politics as it reignited in the 1960s, yet still somehow on the nose, Solanas's manifesto offers a great deal when considering how the manifesto form acts in relation to convention, a defiant and disruptive political force that functions through aesthetic registers.

The idea of Solanas as an unsettling force connects to broader issues of chronology. While certain goals put forward in the manifestos of gay liberation seem to have been achieved, both queer activists and queer scholars have looked to disturb the narrative of progress engendered by LGBT rights discourses. As I discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, scholarship relating to queer temporality has sought to challenge linear accounts of history, showing the way that such accounts continue to obscure, elide and control queer subjects. In doing so, writers such as Jack Halberstam, Claire Hemmings and Elizabeth Freeman, have attempted to account for possibilities that have been left behind by linear narratives of progress. In doing so, these writers have simultaneously shown that narratives of queer and feminist histories are limited by generational models and the reproductive thinking that underpin them. This is starkly felt in Solanas's manifesto, in which she asks what is the point of future generations at all? Seeking to disrupt the mechanisms of social reproduction in the present, Solanas imagined a social body no longer able to, nor wanting, to reproduce.

In light of the disruptive qualities of the 'SCUM Manifesto', this chapter is interested in what Solanas manifesto has offered for her readers. Turning to the ways that the manifesto has been read from outside of the 1960s, I show how Solanas's difficult relationship to feminism is invoked in ways that reinvest in the disruptive character of the manifesto form. Building on the area of scholarship that has attended to

the idea of queer time, and its concern for disturbing teleological accounts, it might seem counterintuitive that what follows is organised around decades: ‘the scummy 60s’, ‘the scummy 70s’ and so on. In using this tongue-in-cheek organising device, I hope to offset the imaginary character of decades with the looping temporalities of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’, as “SCUM” comes up again outside the moment of its own production. Turning to the various times that the manifesto has been invoked outside of the 1960s, including through a video produced by radical feminists in France in the 1970s, by artists identifying as lesbian feminists as queer established itself as a term within the art world in the 1990s and by contemporary artists working to map themselves into self-consciously queer genealogies, this chapter identifies particular investments surrounding Solanas’s manifesto in differing political contexts. The investments that each of these artists make in Solanas’s manifesto figures the text as a still disruptive force, one that alludes to the aesthetic dimensions of politics. Returning to the ways that the text has been read out of its own time, it seeks to build on these possibilities and particularly to think what it offers for thinking about the manifesto form and how it allows an uneven story of aesthetics and politics to take shape.

### **the scummy ‘70s**

The issues of reproduction that surface in the ‘SCUM Manifesto’, which are written through its well-known references to the male chromosome as a walking aberration and the programme that centres the potential for women to reproduce non-sexually, overlap with the issues that surrounded the reproduction and circulation of the text. Rather than this comparison between Solanas’s ideas and the conditions that frame the production of text signalling no more than a nice metaphor, I wish to argue that the two things are intimately connected. As Sam McBean has written, this ‘comparison at the level of reproduction that aligns Solanas was the medium of print and the “short life” of radical

feminism’, foregrounding ‘irreproducibility of a particular kind of woman and a particular kind of feminist politics’.<sup>27</sup> McBean signals to the struggles that surround the iterability of a feminist politics that organises itself not around the desire for equality under the present conditions but one that wishes to rupture those very conditions, violently if necessary. As McBean signals, the dual characteristics of reproducibility and ephemerality bound up in the print medium are produced at the level of culture as much as they are any essential quality of paper itself. Equally, Solanas’s stark framing of reproduction in the manifesto (‘Why should there be future generations? What is their purpose to us?’) registers the difficulty that one is faced with when trying to locate Solanas in accounts of feminist history.<sup>28</sup> Yet it is her apparent refusal ‘to settle in the past but not quite being of the present either’, that continues to shape readings of Solanas’s polemic outside of the 1960s.<sup>29</sup>

The ideas that Solanas laid out in her manifesto are claustrophobically close to her own anxieties regarding to the reproduction of her texts. The well documented and conflicted relation between Solanas and her publisher Maurice Girodias is a thread that runs through the oft-cited events of her biography.<sup>30</sup> Her anger at inaccuracies in the version of the manifesto published by Girodias under his imprint Olympia Press in 1968, one month after Solanas shot Warhol, is distinct in her subsequent writing. Perhaps it is most tangible through the annotations she made to a copy of the Olympia Press edition held in New York Public Library. Having withdrawn the book from the library, Solanas returned it covered with her characteristically frantic handwriting. This example of marginalia-cum-vandalism, including annotations on the front and inside

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<sup>27</sup> McBean, p. 104.

<sup>28</sup> This starkly negative framing of reproduction is the reason why I have chosen not to frame my discussion of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ through Kristeva’s notion of ‘women’s time’ and the cyclical temporalities of the maternal-feminine that it implies.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion see Fahs, *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)*.

covers of the bound volume, on the colophon and at the end of Girodias's preface, is written through with Solanas's displeasure at the publication. Upon the back cover, where the blurb reads 'then we were horrified when she shot Andy Warhol in 1968, just to make a point'. Except Solanas has crossed out 'just to make a point' and next to it she has written: 'Lie'.<sup>31</sup> Of Vivian Gornick, who wrote the introduction for this edition, Solanas writes 'one of the many fleas riding on my back. Valerie Solanas'.<sup>32</sup> On the cover, Solanas has scratched out her own name so violently that the biro comes through on the other side of the card. Instead, Solanas's signature is everywhere on this publication, inside and out. On the inside covers she has scrawled "Lies! Lies! Valerie Solanas". The instance of an of the 'SCUM Manifesto' vandalized by its author, illuminates Solanas's relationship to the text and to her own authorship. Like the manifesto itself, it speaks of an on-going scramble for self-determination against the odds of one who was institutionalized for long parts of her life and marginalized by the other institutions that she came into proximity too.

The degree to which Solanas's revision of her text continued throughout her life. This is legible throughout amendments that she made of her own texts but also through the extensive notes and letters she wrote to others through the 1970s. Often addressed to an anonymous body she called the "MOB", these letters document her anger at the misinterpretation of her ideas. In one note, dating from 3 September 1977, Solanas asks for a retraction to be printed in 'Il Corriere Della Sera', the Italian daily newspaper, regarding an edition of her manifesto that was published by *Edizioni delle donne* in Italy. The *Edizioni delle donne* was an Italian feminist publishing house founded by Annemarie Sauzeau-Boetti, a French art critic, with Maria Caronia, Manuela Fraire and

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<sup>31</sup> Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (London: Olympia Press, 1971). New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York City.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



9/3/77

MOB:

I just noticed 2 mistakes in my 9/2 letter. On page 1 line 2 change "...just enough to let you know..." to "...just enough to let her know..."

*This word is "12"*

~~important phrase~~ The last sentence (which should really be 2 sentences) should be this: If the court order isn't given by Oct. 3, ~~1977~~ ~~1978~~ isn't ~~published~~ published on the first page of Il corriere della sera, you'll have to punch all Boetti's teeth out. If ~~xxx~~ the ~~xxxxx~~ court order isn't given by Oct. 3, 1977 ~~and~~ isn't published on the first page of Il corriere della sera and she later publishes a postcard by me, in addition to knocking all her teeth out, you'll have to put deep scars on her face.

I want it made clear that part of Boetti's sentence for defamation by means of the press is for a libelous translation. I don't want it to appear that all of her libel was in her saggio. She's to receive 2 ~~xxx~~ sentences (with respect to just the defamation charge) - one for her saggio and one for her translation.

(OVER)

I'm going to Valerie Solanas today, in addition to calling Corriere della Sera to writing him.

Figure 3.3 Note from Valerie Solanas to 'The Mob' (3 March 1977)  
 The Dobkin Family Collection of Feminism / Glenn Horowitz, New York City.  
 'I want it made clear that part of Boetti's sentence for defamation by means  
 of the press is for a libellous translation'

a garbage "translation" of it at that, promoting sales of the illegal garbage and, I suspect (but I'm not sure), profiting as a secret financier of the *edizioni delle donne* from the sales of the full-length garbage'.<sup>34</sup> These notes, like the annotations of the book, signal Solanas's ongoing preoccupation with the publication of her text. This is in many ways representative of the little recognition she ever received for it, despite its notoriety. Yet underlying this was also an impossible desire that the manifesto be read correctly. In an interview with the *Village Voice* in 1977, Valerie Solanas asked her readers to take her word for it. Speaking to editors Howard Smith and Brian Van der Horst, Solanas said of the polemic that 'it's just a literary device'.<sup>35</sup> Her assertion, that the manifesto should be taken not literally but literarily, directly responds to a tension that underscores the histories of reception surrounding the meaning of 'SCUM' and its association in the public imaginary – or in the very least that of the newspaper's editors – with the Society

<sup>34</sup> Valerie Solanas to the MOB, 19 August 1977. The Dobkin Family Collection of Feminism / Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, New York City.

<sup>35</sup> Howard Smith and Brian Van der Horst, 'Valerie Solanas Interview', *Village Voice*, XXII.30 (1977), 32.

for Cutting Up Men. The interview, which coincided the republication of the text in 1977, frames many of the issues that Solanas's had in the reproduction of the text. The various revisions of the text undertaken by Solanas throughout her life are thrown into particular relief by the manifesto form and the complex relation it bears to performativity, occupying a space between language and action. Solanas's attempts to evade the consolidation of meaning within her text are legible in the numerous revisions she made throughout her life. Turning to the issues that surround the reproduction of the manifesto in the 1970s helps us to understand the ways in which the 'SCUM Manifesto' is a deeply contested document. As I have begun to argue, it is precisely this that continues to frame the ways that Solanas's manifesto is imagined in relation to histories of feminism.

A video by the French feminist collective Les Insoumuses offers an interesting route into the issues of reproduction that circulate the text, inviting the viewer to question the ways that Solanas's manifesto has continued to circulate since it was published in the late 1960s.<sup>36</sup> The video *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* (1976) was produced by, and features, the Swiss French filmmaker Carole Roussopoulos and director and actor Delphine Seyrig in 1976.<sup>37</sup> The video is shot on Portapak and credited to Les Insoumuses, the all-woman group that Roussopoulos and Seyrig established with Ioana Wieder and Nadja Ringart. Though Roussopoulos and Seyrig were the only two involved in the production of this video they worked collaboratively with Wieder and

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<sup>36</sup> As Stephanie JeanJean explains, 'Insoumuses' was a neologism combining 'insoumise', which translates as 'disobedient', and 'muses', a word sharing the same signification in both French and English and customarily thought of as referring to female personifications for artistic inspiration'. See Stéphanie Jeanjean, 'Disobedient Video in France in the 1970s: Video Production by Women's Collectives', *Afterall*, Summer 27 (2011) <<http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.27/disobedient-video-in-france-in-the-1970s-video-production-by-women-s-collectives>>.

<sup>37</sup> The title of the video was taken from the Olympus Press edition of the book, *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*, which was first published in France in 1971, which is why the video uses the acronym rather than Solanas's title. This version was accompanied by an introduction by French feminist writers Christiane Rochefort and Emmanuèle de Lesseps.



Figure 3.4, Still from *Les Insoumuses, S.C.U.M. Manifesto*, 22' (1976).

Ringart on various other projects including *Maso et Miso vont en bateau* (1975), perhaps the most well-known of their collaborative productions. Roussopoulos is reportedly the first woman in France to have owned a Portapak in France, and the second person after Jean Luc Godard.<sup>38</sup> With others, she produced a number of videos formed through a radical political agenda that intersected workerist, feminist, anti-colonial, and lesbian and gay politics.

Both Roussopoulos and Seyrig were embedded in feminist communities of activism and filmmaking in the 1970s. One year before Roussopoulos and Seyrig made the video *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*, Seyrig played the titular character in Chantal Akerman's classic feminist feature film *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975). In *Jeanne Dielman*, Seyrig plays the role of a mother and prostitute, repeating the daily routines of contemporary women's life (including, famously, a scene in which

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<sup>38</sup> Jeanjean.

she peels a potato for fifteen minutes).<sup>39</sup> The story ends with the central protagonist literally cutting up one of her clients. These repetitious temporalities of women's work, as well as the violence it takes to rupture them, compare to those that play out in the 'SCUM Manifesto' if not in Solanas's life itself.

In the video, Seyrig dictates from Solanas's manifesto as Roussopoulos types (fig. 3.4.). The two women are shown facing one another across a small table. Long shelves bisect the space at the top of the screen, straining with the weight of copious books that seemingly press down upon the scene. Almost as soon as the credits open onto this *tableau vivant*, Seyrig and Roussopoulos move into action and begin to enact an elaborate transcription that sets Solanas's words in motion. Seyrig introduces the manifesto and goes on to recite from the first part of the French translation of Solanas's searing critique of economic capital and its operation along gendered lines. She reads from the first part of the manifesto, in which Solanas produces her critique of patriarchal culture including her infamous lines claiming the male as an aberration aborted at the gene stage. Recited to video, anxieties surrounding reproduction in the text mix with the reproductive qualities of the new video technology that Roussopoulos and Seyrig were experimenting with.

Roussopoulos, wearing a scarf wrapped around her hair as though prepared for housework, sits at a typewriter working deliberately using just two fingers like an un instructed secretary (anyone who learnt to type in the 1970s would have done so with

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<sup>39</sup> Luce Giard discusses this scene in the second volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and Cooking*. In a section titled Innumerable Anonymous Women, Giard studies the domestic practices surrounding cooking. Identifying what she calls the Kitchen Women Nation (*le peuple féminin des cuisines*), Giard turns to 'triviality in order to break through the entrapment [of domestic routine and its gendered inequalities]'. Ackerman's *Jeanne Dielman* and particularly the potato-peeling scene paralleled, and were embedding within, the atmosphere of Women's Liberation in France at the time. The film was preceded by an essay on the subject of potato peeling by the journalist Nicole-Lise Bernheim was included in *Les Temps modernes*, a journal edited by Simone de Beauvoir with others. See Michel De Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life: Volume 2: Living and Cooking* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 154-155 and Nicole, 'Les Pommes de Terre', *Les Temps Modernes*, April-May (1974), pp. 1732-34.

every digit). For the benefit of Roussopoulos's task, Seyrig sounds out the text as well as its punctuation. 'Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women,' she reads from Solanas's manifesto, in French, 'there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex. Period'. The untrained typist works away at the keys and produces a monotonous beat that undulates throughout the piece. A television set is placed between the two in the middle of the table so that it punctuates the centre of the screen. Its picture flickers during the reading but the volume is turned right down. An image of a news broadcaster gives way to other images of men, a line up of almost indistinguishable personalities, politicians, commentators and soldiers. Every so often Seyrig interrupts the reading to turn up the volume on the set. At these moments, Roussopoulos smokes and the camera zooms in on the television screen. The broadcast news programme recounts a series of items pertaining to various issues including nuclear arms, events in Korea, aerial bombardments in Lebanon, the murder of six individuals in Buenos Aires and a 1976 peace march in Ireland, that had initially been instigated by a group of women associated with the group the Peace People. The effect of this device is of a kind of *mise en abyme* that produces a telescoping image in which various images and objects reflect and refract one another. The encounter between technologies, including text, typewriter, Portapak camera and television, that takes place within the video, register as a kind of closed reproductive system.

In France the entry of the 'SCUM Manifesto' into feminism is recorded in the work of French feminist theorist Françoise d'Eaubonne in *Le féminisme ou la mort* (1974). The book, the title of which translates as 'feminism or death', is an important

text since it was the first to use the term eco/feminism.<sup>40</sup> It includes a short passage titled ‘Une Rose pour Valerie’, which indicates that Solanas occupied a similar role in French radical feminism as she did to the WLM in the U.S. but also incorrectly states that Solanas was dead. Despite Solanas’s ideas being known in France in the 1970s, especially among female intellectuals and feminists, Roussopoulos and Seyrig’s film was produced in 1976, nearly ten years after Solanas’s manifesto was first published, it was out of print in French and English language editions.<sup>41</sup> The performance of Solanas’s words to camera foreground many of the issues of repetition and reproduction that are bound up in the text as well as Solanas’s own concerns about her words be distributed and read.

It is worth noting that the video *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* looks a lot like the kind of self-reflexive video art that many feminist artists were producing in this period, including for example Nancy Holt and Lynda Benglis or Martha Rosler, whose *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) shares surprising visual cues with this video (including, pertinently, the stabbing of a knife in the air when Rosler reaches the letter ‘K’).<sup>42</sup> Despite the visual and political parities between these examples and Roussopoulos and Seyrig’s video, Nicole Fernández Ferrer, director of the Centre Audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir, which Roussopoulos, Seyrig and Ioana Wieder established in 1982, notes that in France artists working with video were quite separate from the activist circles within

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<sup>40</sup> Niamh Moore offers a useful overview of the genealogy of this term along with a history of the translation of Francoise d’Eaubonne’s book into English in her essay ‘Eco/feminist genealogies’ for *Contemporary Perspectives on Ecofeminism*, ed. by Mary Phillips and Nick Rumens (Routledge, 2016).

<sup>41</sup> In Chapter Five I discuss translation in relation to another manifesto, thinking about the way that translation both complicates but also offers potential for thinking about the circulation of manifestos. For a discussion of Solanas in relation to translation, see Katherine Harrison, “‘Sometimes the Meaning of the Text Is Unclear’: Making ‘Sense’ of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ in a Contemporary Swedish Context”, *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 10.3 (2009), pp. 33–45.

<sup>42</sup> Rosalind Krauss famously critiqued this quality of new video technology with reference to U.S. artists including Vito Acconci, Lynda Benglis and Nancy Holt and Richard Serra. Rosalind Krauss, ‘Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism’, *October*, 1, 55–64.

which Roussopoulos and Seyrig's experiments took place in the 1970s.<sup>43</sup> Instead, as Ros Murray writes, these videos 'often refused to be categorized as art and demanded instead, to be screened at meetings, in town squares, and on the street where the action was taking place'.<sup>44</sup> They were distributed in meetings with groups but also using what is amusingly termed the "wheelbarrow" method whereby monitors would be played from the boots of cars and electricity channelled from a local shop. Though I am not sure that Solanas's video was disseminated in this way – at a conference Ferrer told me it was more likely to have been distributed for screening at feminist meetings throughout France – thinking of *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* in the context of the broader context of the practice of the two video makers helps us to think about the dissemination of Solanas's within a public sphere, one that was undergoing renewal in France in the 1970s as a consequence of contemporaneous liberation movements.

Through its visual composition, the reading of the 'SCUM Manifesto' for video places the act of transmission at its very centre. This indicates to the work that Roussopoulos and her collaborators were undertaking to recode video as a medium embedded within an urgent and disruptive political context. The video never produces a full reading of the manifesto. Instead, the transcription ends with Roussopoulos announcing that she is tired. Even as the camera continues to record and Seyrig continues to recite, Roussopoulos refuses her work. Ceasing to type, she interrupts the circuits that keep this video moving. Yet keep moving it does. In the absence of the typewriter, the medium of video is revealed as another reproductive technology that produces a mutated form of manifesto writing. Performing the failure of their feminist homework, Roussopoulos and Seyrig actively resist reproducing their own labour. It is not boredom that leads Roussopoulos to put down her tools but exhaustion. By

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<sup>43</sup> This was mentioned in conversation at 'Debout! Feminist Activism and Video in France and Beyond', Queen Mary, University of London, 31 May 2014

<sup>44</sup> Ros Murray, 'Raised Fists: Politics, Technology, and Embodiment in 1970s French Feminist Video Collectives', *Camera Obscura* 91, 31 (2016), p. 109.

attempting and failing to supervise the entry of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ into the circuit that the video seemingly generates, the video-makers refuse to put Solanas’ text to work. Instead they allow the body of writing to be the one that gets caught in the machine. The video might be said to show us what is at stake in feminist acts of reading. Maintaining the disruptive potential of women’s writing, the performance becomes an opening. Murray has written of *Maso et Miso vont en bateau*, another of Les Insoumuses’s videos, that it exposes ‘feminist activity as disruptive through the very forms of interruption, rewinding, repetition, and insertion offered by video technology’.<sup>45</sup> The video *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* does this less explicitly but nonetheless represents a similar refusal to reproduce along the lines established by patriarchal traditions.<sup>46</sup> Though this is not named as queer, the emphasis on the text as a disruptive force prefigures Solanas’s later appearance in queer theory.<sup>47</sup>

In 1977, Solanas ‘became obsessed with the idea of printing her own correct version of the *SCUM Manifesto*’.<sup>48</sup> As a result of the closure of Olympia Press due to bankruptcy, she now owned the copyright and ‘had total control over how to publish the manifesto’.<sup>49</sup> The new edition was typeset by *Majority Report*, a New-York based feminist newspaper that Solanas had worked with in 1976. It included a revised text and was printed as two fold out newspaper sheets (fig. 3.1.). According to an advert that appeared in *Majority Report*, the new edition sold for \$1 – \$2 by mail order – and boasted the ‘correct edition’. Solanas took the opportunity to mock Girodias again, writing in the advertisement: ‘Maurice Girodias, you’re always in financial straits.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 114.

<sup>46</sup> Valerie Rohy, ‘On Homosexual Reproduction’, *D I F F E R E N C E S: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 23.1 (2012), 101–30.

<sup>47</sup> The distance is not so great, in 1971 Roussopoulos made a video with the Front homosexuel d’action révolutionnaire in France, a group founded in 1971 by d’Eaubonne with Guy Hocquenghem and others.

<sup>48</sup> Fahs, *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)*, p. 296.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Here's your big chance—hawk *SCUM Manifesto*'.<sup>50</sup> On the return side of the new manifesto were printed several similar comments that mocked various figures that Solanas had encountered through the 'SCUM Manifesto' along with quotes taken from elsewhere. "I never read it." – Jo (Joreen) Freeman (author of BITCH Manifesto, 1970)'; "'SCUM Manifesto and radical women's liberation have always been in opposition" – Brooke; "'[SCUM Manifesto] is of no value for understanding anything except [Girodias's] desire to make some money" – Phoebe Adams, *Atlantic*, November, 1968'.<sup>51</sup> According to Fahs, Solanas 'felt immense joy at having an authentic copy of the *SCUM Manifesto* distributed to the world'.<sup>52</sup>

Solanas largely disappeared from public life in the 1980s, after the corrected edition of the manifesto was published in 1977. Yet the publication of the second official edition of the manifesto did not cease Solanas's anxieties about the text. Solanas brought it up in her last documented conversation with Ultra Violet, the Warhol superstar. The conversation, which happened over telephone, took place when Solanas was staying in San Francisco at the Bristol Hotel, a welfare hostel, under the name of Zno Hol in 1987 (Solanas died at the Bristol Hotel in April 1988). Ultra Violet decided to track Solanas down after Warhol died in 1987 at a time when 'her name [was] revived and her short-lived fame rekindled'.<sup>53</sup> The Warhol star eventually found her using Solanas's social security and SSI numbers.<sup>54</sup> During the call, made in November 1987, Ultra Violet asked if Solanas would be interested in re-publishing the manifesto. At first Solanas said she would not but then she asked whether Ultra Violet had a copy of the newspaper edition of the manifesto (although Ultra Violet thought Solanas

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<sup>50</sup> Advertisement for 'SCUM Manifesto' printed in *Majority Report*, 7, No page number. New York Public Library.

<sup>51</sup> Valerie Solanas, 'SCUM Manifesto', 1977 (self-published), no page number. The Dobkin Family Collection of Feminism / Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, New York City

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ultra Violet, *Famous for 15 Minutes: My Years with Andy Warhol* (Orlando, Florida: Hardcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), p. 187.

<sup>54</sup> Fahs, *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)*.

referred here to the mimeographed edition that was self-published in October 1967). Ultra Violet did have ‘one copy, but [didn’t] intend to give it to her’.<sup>55</sup> According to the transcript of the recorded conversation, Solanas returned to the issue of the Olympia Press edition of the manifesto, which she described as being ‘full of mistakes’.<sup>56</sup> After being informed of Warhol’s death (‘I don’t feel anything’) she returned again to the topic of the manifesto, asking whether Ultra Violet could ‘write to the copyright office for a copy of the manifesto’.<sup>57</sup> To the end, Solanas’s concern with the manifesto is inscribed with her struggle to claim an authorial voice, one that could control how her words were read and the way in which they travelled. Roussopoulos and Seyrig write this into video differently. If reproduction is the central force of the manifesto, it is also something embedded in the material qualities of the manifesto form that allow texts to continue to circulate precisely beyond the ways that authors imagine them to.

### **the scummy ‘90s**

Both the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ and Roussopoulos and Seyrig’s video come up again in an article by artist Catherine Lord, ‘Wonder Waif Meets Super Neuter’ (2010). Interestingly, particularly for the focus of this thesis on manifestos within queer social movement, Lord identifies Solanas’s manifesto as a foundational text in queer political activism. To do so, she outlines a brief historiography of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’, mapping the ways that the manifesto has been referenced and read since it was first published in 1967. Alongside Roussopoulos and Seyrig’s video, Lord cites Carolee Schneemann who credits ‘Solanas with accelerating the “issues that would carry feminist theory and practice into our present moment,”’ and Yvonne Rainer who

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<sup>55</sup> Violet, p. 188.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 189.

acknowledges Solanas 'for helping her think her way through feminism'.<sup>58</sup> She continues her list, writing that:

an excerpt from *SCUM* was published in the catalogue of the landmark 1995 exhibition *A Different Light*, from whence it officially made its way into haute queer theory. An accidental encounter with *SCUM* in a bookstore generated Mary Harron's film *I Shot Andy Warhol*. The electronic music duo Matmos have rendered a tribute... Artists such as Jeannie Simms, Trina Robbins, punk goddess Alice Bag, Diane Dimassa, Jennifer Worley, and Wu Ingrid Tsang have all put Solanas to use<sup>59</sup>

In each of these examples, the manifesto is performed live, to camera, or through musical score. Indicating toward these artists and the various ways that they have engaged with the 'SCUM Manifesto' in their own work, Lord addresses the complexities of reading a text as excessive Solanas's manifesto. She concludes that 'Solanas's riffs backfire when they lie dead on the printed page, the voice of the reader being their only hope of animation'.<sup>60</sup> Whether she means that simply reading by sight is an inadequate means to engage with the full thrust of the text, or that the manifesto requires readers in order to activate its other dormant possibilities, is unclear. Either way, Lord suggests that performance is the right medium to be able to underscore the fierce demands of Solanas's writing. Accentuating the act of reading through recourse to performance, she foregrounds the artist reader as one who has a particularly generative relationship to a text. Lord links these acts to Jennifer Terry's idea of "deviant historiography".<sup>61</sup> Terry's article 'Theorizing Deviant Historiography' (1991) was published in the proceedings of one of the earliest conferences of queer theory. It sought to employ feminism's conceptions of difference, as well as its 'generative

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<sup>58</sup> Both quoted in Catherine Lord, 'Wonder Waif Meets Super Neuter', *October*, 2010, p. 152.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Jennifer Terry, 'Theorizing Deviant Historiography', *D I F F E R E N C E S: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 5 (1991), pp. 55–74.

contradictions' in order to think the shifting character of identity over time.<sup>62</sup> Lord's suggestion that we consider the work of artists who re-perform Solanas's manifesto as "archivists of deviance" is richly suggestive of the difference that such performances make, since reading works always already to shift the meaning of the text.<sup>63</sup> The focus of some of the foundational texts of queer studies upon repetition and difference pave the way for understanding the reappearance of the 'SCUM Manifesto' within artists practice that span the past three decades.

Interestingly, Lord's discussion goes some way to situating Solanas within the 1980s despite her disappearance from public life in this decade. Lord locates Solanas's last years in San Francisco in the context of the AIDS crisis emerging contemporaneously. Writing of her death from pneumonia Lord asks 'why not junkie pneumonia?—which is to say AIDS, which is to say that Solanas fell between the cracks of yet another revolution'.<sup>64</sup> Although Lord doesn't have her facts straight – according to her death certificate, Solanas's death was not HIV related – the author's wish to find Solanas in the 1980s at the emergence of the AIDS crisis is telling.<sup>65</sup> Elsewhere in the article Lord writes that 'queer theory would not have happened without ACT UP would not have happened without the feminist movement. The feminist movement would not have happened without Valerie Solanas'.<sup>66</sup> The author's wish to position Solanas as a feminist origin story within queer theory and politics, gestures toward, though does not explore, the reappearance of the 'SCUM Manifesto' in the context of AIDS activism. As this chapter goes on to show, the manifesto would become an important signifier within commentaries on "queer art" as it was formed in

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>63</sup> This idea owes much to post-structuralist theories of repetition and difference, subsequently taken up within queer theory. See Jacques Derrida.

<sup>64</sup> Lord, p. 163.

<sup>65</sup> Fahs confirms the details of Solanas's death from pneumonia but, with reference to Solanas's death certificate, demonstrates that it was not AIDS related in *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)*.

<sup>66</sup> Lord, p. 136.

the crucible of cultural activism surrounding the AIDS crisis in the U.S. In exhibitions such as *In a Different Light*, and through the work of art historians like Laura Cottingham and the group Dyke Action Machine, the collaborative practice of Sue Schaffner and Carrie Moyer, Solanas's manifesto was again invested in as disruptive force, this time to unsettle genealogies that were beginning to be established around queer practice. Although not always through performance, references to the 'SCUM Manifesto' at this time call upon her manifesto as a particularly difficult instance of feminist history, one that, to borrow from McBean, refuses to settle. Like Insoumuses's video, citations of the manifesto in the context of the early 1990s sought to continue Solanas's disturbing work, this time in the context of emergent queer art. Though this chapter does not dedicate a section to reading SCUM into the 1980s, the work that I go on to discuss represents a complex and largely unrecognised intersection of second wave lesbian feminism and radical queer politics in that decade.<sup>67</sup> The 1980s is the axis upon which a story of queer feminist art told through Solanas's manifesto turns. Belonging to an imaginary of queer politics that precedes the 1980s, Solanas's own disappearance from public life after the late 1970s foreshadows the struggle for visibility that lesbian feminism encountered, as a new queer politics emerged within the AIDS movement. This struggle is written through what follows.

As Lord mentions in her article, in 1995 the 'SCUM Manifesto' was reproduced in the catalogue for *In a Different Light*, an exhibition of queer art that was installed at the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.<sup>68</sup> *In a Different Light* was a ground-breaking survey of queer practice organised by Lawrence Rinder, curator of twentieth-century art at the museum, in collaboration with artist

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<sup>67</sup> Another history that could be told of SCUM in the 1980s would be through the London-based Matriarchy Study Group who republished Solanas's manifesto in 1983, in the belief that it represented 'a feminist spiritual piece of writing'. See Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (London: Matriarchy Study Group, 1983), p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> The exhibition ran from the 11 January – 9 April 1995.

Nayland Blake. The exhibition, which featured over two hundred works by artists, sought to feel the pulse of contemporary queer art following a decade of AIDS cultural activism that had transformed the field of practice.<sup>69</sup> More than this, the exhibition sought to establish new curatorial and art historical methodologies surrounding the display and contextualisation of works, challenging the ways that a term like queer might be put into dialogue with art with the space of an exhibition.

In his introduction to the catalogue, Blake expands upon the curatorial rationale for the project and recalls another show that he had organised in 1991. Working that time with Pam Gregg,<sup>70</sup> *Situation: Perspectives on Work by Lesbian and Gay Artists* was held at San Francisco's New Langton Arts and had been 'a gathering of works by over thirty young gay and lesbian artists'.<sup>71</sup> Rather than choose to showcase art which had typically been marginalised by major institutions, Blake describes how *Situation* 'documented the fact that that activity had established itself in the art world and had found its voice'.<sup>72</sup> The curator refers to this endeavour as a disappointment, recalling that 'the emotional tone' was too tidy as though telling a story that ended with lesbian and gay artists having finally received recognition from the art world. Against such narratives of success, in which institutional visibility is established as the endpoint for queer art, *In a Different Light* organised works within a non-linear structure. Here, something like Terry's idea of deviant historiography helps us to think of the way that the exhibition disturbed chronology and foregrounded instead ideas relating to difference and queer socialisation.

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<sup>69</sup> This is something that I discuss further in Chapter Four.

<sup>70</sup> Gregg had also been responsible for curating the important *Obvious: A Program of Lesbian Art* at the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in 1990.

<sup>71</sup> Nayland Blake, Lawrence Rinder and Amy Scholder (eds.), *In a Different Light: Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, Queer Practice* (Berkeley: City Light Books, 1995), p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

The non-linear structure that underpinned *In a Different Light* established a genealogy for queer practice that could, the curators hoped, be read both vertically and horizontally. In practice, this meant that art was placed not in chronological order but rather organised thematically, placing younger generations of artists alongside older ones. Including people as diverse as Vito Acconci, Eva Hesse, Tee A. Corrinne, G. B. Jones and Diane Arbus, the artists in the exhibition were not only selected on the basis of their sexual preference(s) but for the way their work became legible under the sign of 'queer'. Unmoored from categorisations such as gay and lesbian, the exhibition also relinquished any idea of shared aesthetic sensibility. Instead *In a Different Light* emphasised sociability and organised each section around different states of relation such as "void", "self" and "drag". The progression of the categories is not without its own linearity, moving as it does toward greater sociability until it reaches "utopia", but forgoing chronology for looser, intergenerational associations, the exhibition signalled toward relational networks through which queer identifications are configured both in the present but also retrospectively. Foregrounding the various returns and resemblances between different generations of artists, the exhibition established new modes of exchange between lesbian, gay and feminist art and aimed to 'redress some of the cultural amnesia to which the art world is prone'.<sup>73</sup> Breaking curatorial and art historical rules that had up until this point largely segregated artists and movements according to generation, *In a Different Light* attempted, as Helena Reckitt neatly puts it, to 'fuck with generation'.<sup>74</sup>

Loosening the ties that bind queer to lesbian and gay identities, the exhibition was nonetheless underpinned by a political ethos that sought to map a future for queer politics. This future was in exchange with histories of lesbian, gay and feminist practice.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Reckitt in *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*, ed. by Amelia Jones and Erin Silver (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2016), p. 361.

The curators commented upon those contributions to the arts that still remained undocumented comparative to their straight peers. Citing Kate Millett and Harmony Hammond amongst other lesbian feminist artists included in the show, the curators show themselves to be particularly conscious of the issues surrounding lesbian visibility within accounts of both art in general and homosexual art in particular. The curators refer to lesbian artists as ‘doubly obscured: first as women, secondly as homosexuals.’<sup>75</sup> To this end, the catalogue was an important aspect of *In a Different Light*, both broadening the scope of the already enormous exhibition and attempting to speak critically to the various political issues bound up with queerness at the time. Along with newly commissioned contributions, the catalogue included excerpts from various writers including punk poet Kathy Acker, lesbian art critic and speed freak Jill Johnston and Bertha Harris, whose classic lesbian novel *Lover* (1976) includes a glancing reference to the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ amongst titles on the protagonist’s bookshelf.<sup>76</sup> Included in the library of texts assembled for *In a Different Light* was Solanas’s manifesto. Both a feminist text that had been obscured with gay and lesbian histories and as a queer text in feminist one, it was an important touchstone for the broader curatorial rationale of the exhibition.

The appearance of Solanas’s manifesto in the catalogue helps us to locate the text within an emergent imaginary of queer art in the early 1990s. The suitability of Solanas to underscore some of the ideas emerging within the exhibition was commented favourably upon by Glen Helfand in a review of the show. Writing for *The Advocate*,

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<sup>75</sup> Blake, Rinder and Scholder (eds.).

<sup>76</sup> In Bertha Harris’s book *Lover*, a copy of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ on the protagonist Veronica’s bookshelf, sandwiched between books by Flannery O’Connor and Agatha Christie. For Harris, Solanas showed up here as one of her ‘own *objets de vertu*.’<sup>76</sup> In an introduction to the book, the radical lesbian author refers to the Valerie Solanas’ ‘SCUM Manifesto’ in the context of the women’s liberation movement and what was felt as ‘a rush of manhating.’ Describing events toward the end of her book, Harris speaks of how she wheeled ‘in the cospo of a murdered man.’ She suggests that we ‘Think of the corpse as Lover’s revenge motif’ and goes on to detail how ‘The character of Veronica hides the corpse by hastily turning it into fiction.’ Allowing us to think Veronica as Valerie, the statement could as easily come to describe how Solanas’ has rested at least in one kind of cultural imagination, the shooting of Warhol given up to myth of contemporary art. See: Harris, *Lover*

Helfand observes that the placement of Solanas's manifesto alongside 'fiction and excerpts from queer 'zines [...] is particularly well-chosen - it seamlessly combines the kind of historical, artistic, and sexual concerns that light the core [the exhibition's] provocative subject'.<sup>77</sup> Like Lord's attempt to trace Solanas retroactively into a genealogy of queer practice, Helfand finds that there is much in this pre-history of radical feminism that speaks to the desires embedded within queer practice. In *In a Different Light*, the reproduction of the 'SCUM Manifesto' underscores the disruptive possibilities of the text, to disturb categories that had, in the early 1990s, began to be established around queer art.

One example among a number of citations of the 'SCUM Manifesto' by artists in the early 1990s, the inclusion of Solanas's writing within the *In a Different Light* catalogue challenges certain narratives that have been established around queer art and particularly its relationship to feminism. The issues surrounding the relationship between feminist politics and emergent queer perspectives in the early 1990s were felt in the intersecting fields of street activism, queer theory and art. During this period lesbian identity, linked to groups associated with ACT UP New York like The Lesbian Avengers and Fierce Pussy, became a particularly contested category. As the art historian Laura Cottingham argued in 1996, though queer held all the promise of a broader definition than gay, which had come to refer often only to men, it also threatened to take on the implicit emphasis of gay on male experience.<sup>78</sup> Part of what makes *In a Different Light* so interesting is the attempt it makes to map lesbian feminism, even now much maligned within queer theory for its supposedly essentialising character, into a genealogy of queer work. Amongst other texts and artworks included under this aim, Solanas's manifesto brought with it the disruptive force of lesbian feminism to bear once more the present.

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<sup>77</sup> Glen Helfand, 'Big Gay Art', *The Advocate* (Los Angeles, 7 March 1995), p. 64.

<sup>78</sup> Laura Cottingham, *Lesbians Are so Chic...* (London: Cassell, 1996).

Two years before *In a Different Light* opened to the public, Laura Cottingham contributed an essay on Valerie Solanas to the exhibition *The Art of Self-Defence and Revenge... It's Really Hard*. Curated by artists Laura Parnes and Eric Heist at the artist-run space Momenta Art on 578 Broadway, New York in 1993, the exhibition brought together artists influenced by the feminist art movement of the 1970s.<sup>79</sup> The show had initially developed from two separate proposals, one a panel discussion focused on feminist art and anger planned by Parnes and the other an exhibition considering representation and masculinity organised by Heist. These two were bought together under a broader theme, linked by the way that 'feminist art has changed how art practices functions [...] not just as a story that affects women [...] all art practices have changed due to feminist art'.<sup>80</sup> As with *In a Different Light*, the exhibition invited artists of all genders and sexualities to participate and featured work by Chuck Agro, David Carrino, Ardian Dannatt, Lucky Debellvue, Tony Feher, John Hatfield, John Hodges, Barry Hylton and Serge Pinkus, Janine Antoni, Jed Brian, Jody Caulkin, Laura Cottingham, Paula Hayes, Eric Heist, Marlene McCarty, Julie Melton, Laura Parnes, Barbara Pollock, Jude Tallichet and Sure Williams. Though collected together, the exhibition maintained the identity of the two separate sections. As feminist art historian Arlene Raven described in a review for the *Village Voice*, *The Art of Self-Defence and Revenge* worked as 'a separate title, or half title, for women's contribution to the exhibition of new works by both genders influenced by feminist art of the 1970s'.<sup>81</sup> It carried with it Parnes's interest in exploring legacies of feminist politics, feminist anger and feminist visual art in the context of the early 1990s.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Laura Parnes cites Abbie Hoffman, whom she worked for a time before he committed suicide in 1989, as a big influence on her work. Laura Parnes in conversation with the author, 14 June 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Arlene Raven, 'A Queer Match' in *Village Voice*, 29 June 1992, p. 89.

<sup>82</sup> There is a connection to riot grrrl here that I have not drawn out but adds a potentially interesting footnote. Laura Parnes is closely linked with the visual cultures that developed under the riot grrrl banner in the early 1990s and has worked closely with Kathleen Hanna, one of the figures most associated with the movement. There is another connection too, Laura Cottingham was included amongst a list of Le

Two “take home” packets were available within the exhibition in editions of 50, each representing one of the two sections of the exhibition. The packet relating to *The Art of Self-Defence and Revenge* included Cottingham’s essay “‘He Had Too Much Control on my Life’ – Valerie Solanas’. It was included alongside a number of artist editions such as a matchbook designed by Cottingham with Gran Fury member Marlene McCarty on which was written the joke: “How Many Men does it take to tile a bathroom floor? SIX if you cut ‘em in one-inch squares”. The only essay to be inserted in the pack, “‘He Had Too Much Control on my Life’ – Valerie Solanas’ functioned as a kind of preface to the broader themes of the exhibition as well as to the figure of Solanas herself. She introduces Solanas as ‘A writer, panhandler, feminist, prostitute, homeless person, actress, lesbian, Chelsea Hotel dweller and member of Andy Warhol’s Factory’, the essay goes on to discuss the shooting as an act that connects histories of second wave feminism and contemporary art.<sup>83</sup> ‘Declaring someone as “crazy” is another way of denying her actions any validity’, Cottingham aligns herself with Solanas in a move that most feminist art historians who write about her cannot manage.<sup>84</sup> It goes on to consider, through reference to the shooting, how art function as a reified form of social life. As a consequence of this reification, Cottingham demonstrates how economic, political or emotional abuses are condoned within art. Similarly she suggests that public violence that attempts to reveal such abuses is condemned as private madness if the object of that violence is art (she also cites the Suffragist struggle in England by way of example). Locating Solanas’s assault as an example of rational feminists response to patriarchal society, Cottingham’s essay emphasises the political dimensions of art history.

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Tigre’s influences (or perhaps, heroes) in the song Hot Topic: “Gretchen Phillips and Cibo Matto / Leslie Feinberg and Faith Ringgold / Mr. Lady, Laura Cottingham / Mab Segrest and The Butchies, man”. (I remember Solanas’s name being included in the list but listening again realize that she didn’t make it in).

<sup>83</sup> Laura Cottingham, “‘He Had Too Much Control on My Life’ – Valerie Solanas”, *The Art of Self-Defence and Revenge*, (New York: Momenta Art, 1992). n.p.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

Both Cottingham's essay, and *The Art of Self-Defence and Revenge*, attempt to attend to a broad silence surrounding feminist art history in the early 1990s. In this context, Parnes recalls of Solanas's influence at that time: 'I love the idea of [Solanas]... I mean who doesn't want to kill Warhol in a sense'.<sup>85</sup> Interested in 'that connection to 70s feminism and the idea that history isn't really delineated in relationship to men's work', the exhibition sought to look at the ways that feminism contributed to a substantial rethinking of, not only art in relation to feminist politics, but in relation to art in general.<sup>86</sup> The exhibition looked back to feminist, lesbian and lesbian-feminist histories in the years after the earliest cultural activism surrounding the AIDS crisis, at a time when the term queer was beginning to circulate within politics and practice. Whilst Cottingham's writing foregrounds the act of shooting, rather than the 'SCUM Manifesto', there is an intimate link that it makes between its reference to Solanas and the way that manifestos produce a rhetorical or written investment in action. The polemical tone of Cottingham's writing, including her book that most clearly resembles an art historic monograph, *Seeing Through the Seventies: Essays on Feminism and Art* (2000), carries the force of the manifesto form. Through mapping histories of feminist art and politics she sought to produce an alternate account of art in relation to political activism. Read as a footnote for queer art in the 1990s, in a different way to how Solanas had previously appeared as a footnote only in relation to Warhol, Cottingham's writing produces a critique of art's institutions closely bound to Solanas's manifesto. Linked through the terms of rupture and through an economic critique of the separation of art and life, Cottingham disrupts the terms through which histories of art are reproduced. In doing so, the reference to Solanas is made in order to address the organisation of art in relation to politics, both historically and in the present.

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<sup>85</sup> Laura Parnes in conversation with the author.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

The reworking of art and its relation to politics, present in Cottingham's writing and *The Art of Self-Defence and Revenge*, coincided not only with the cultural activism surrounding the AIDS crisis, but also with the emergence of an explicitly politicised lesbian identity. Cottingham's reference to Solanas finds resonance with a number of projects, including the Lesbian Avengers, whose 'Dyke Manifesto', which I discussed in my introductory chapter in relation to Janet Lyon's writing and Fierce Pussy, who I discuss in chapter four with consideration of a manifesto written by Zoe Leonard, a member of the group, in 1992. Perhaps most closely it resembles works by Dyke Action Machine that includes an explicit citation in the project *D.A.M. S.C.U.M.*<sup>87</sup> The emergence of a new lesbian politics is discussed by Laura Cottingham in the slim volume titled *Lesbians Are so Chic...* (1996). There she writes of the erasures of lesbian politics within emergent queer politics. In this context, the recollection of Solanas operates not only to affect accounts of feminism's contribution to broader art histories but also it underscores the disturbing properties of feminism for queer practices. Similar to *In a Different Light*, but with more polemic force, these references to Solanas reinvest in the manifesto as a form that performs disruptive work.

Looking at references to the 'SCUM Manifesto' in two queer art shows in the early 1990s, in which the text is deployed as a reference to disturb existing art histories, both allow reflection on the space that Solanas occupies in relation to queer art as it came into visibility as a category in the early 1990s. It is interesting that investments in the term queer as an intersectional and antagonistic identity, represented most clearly by manifestos like 'Queers Read This', similarly privilege the disruptive possibilities of the

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<sup>87</sup> Dyke Action Machine or D.A.M. were founded by the artists Sue Schaffner and Carrie Moyer. *D.A.M. S.C.U.M.* (Dyke Action Machine Society for Cutting Up Men) was created in 1995 to re-examine the concept of lesbian separatism, imagining a lesbian-only militia movement. It was created in reaction to the growth of the far-right Christian militias in the United States.' and included a recording of the 'SCUM Manifesto' that could be listened to by calling a hotline; '2-color offset matchbooks and cards artist page commissioned by Art Journal, 1996' and '2,000 pieces distributed nationally that advertised an interactive phone-line'. See No Author, 'Dyke Action Machine!', *Public Art Review*, 8.1 (1996), p. 44.

manifesto form. In these two examples of queer feminist exhibition making, ones which have largely been overlooked in existing discussions of feminist curating, Solanas's manifesto is a feminist footnote that hovers over emerging queer identities.<sup>88</sup> Here the 'SCUM Manifesto' represents an unmined element of lesbian past, but not one that could be fixed with any particular movement. Representing a placeholder for a politics still yet to come, Solanas's manifesto is a peculiar object that sits somehow between genealogies of queer and feminist practice. In fact, both of these projects, through their desire to disrupt historic and emerging categories of practice find the two to be more closely linked than existing accounts would tell. Each find Solanas where Lord would look for her in an article published some fifteen years later, as an origin myth for the potentialities, but also pitfalls, of an art that defines itself self-consciously as queer.

### **the scummy times we're in**

So far I have attempted to show how readings of the 'SCUM Manifesto' outside of the 1960s reinvest in the disruptive capacities of the manifesto form and the particular issues of reproduction that surface within the manifesto if not Solanas's life more generally. Through a performative reading in the context of French feminist video activism in the 1970s and a series of exhibitions in the U.S. in the early 1990s, I have tracked the ways that Solanas reappears against a set of quite different political, social and economic contexts. In each example, the disruptive force of the manifesto is bought to bear on a renewed critique of the mechanisms of social reproduction within cultural and political fields. These raise certain parallels with the way that the term queer has been deployed also with the desire for it to disrupt at the level of epistemological knowledge that threatens to establish itself through historical narrative.

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<sup>88</sup> See for example a recent article by Amelia Jones, which problematises curatorial issues in feminist exhibitions but, in relation to the 1990s, does so predominantly through consideration of large scale exercises in feminist curating: 'Feminist Subjects versus Feminist Effects: The Curating of Feminist Art (or Is It the Feminist Curating of Art?)', *OnCurating*, 27 (2016), pp. 5–20.

In 2005, a discussion at the Modern Language Association, attended to a relatively new development in queer theory characterised as the “anti-social thesis”. A panel on this topic brought together four queer scholars: Lee Edelman, J. Jack Halberstam, José Muñoz and Tim Dean. In their contribution to the session, Halberstam outlined a critique of Edelman’s recent book *No Future* (2004). Writing in an account of the event published by the MLA, Halberstam highlighted what they termed the ‘narrow’ scope of the “archive” that Edelman uses in order to discuss his conception of queer negativity, which is opposed to the reproductive futurity that Edelman argues is embedded in the meanings and values of the social.<sup>89</sup> The archive that Halberstam takes exception with is comprised from what Halberstam identifies as references linked to a particularly gay (male) culture. These include, amongst others, Marcel Proust, Alfred Hitchcock, Jack Smith and Judy Garland. Attempting to build upon the potentialities of an anti-social thesis for queer theory, Halberstam first shows how negativity has been the mainstay of many political and cultural projects (Halberstam mentions anti-colonialism and punk as examples). At the top of Halberstam’s alternate list of antisocial queers, featuring characters as diverse as Shulamith Firestone and Spongebob Squarepants (assumedly queer for his childless, domestic union with a languid pink starfish named Patrick), is Solanas. For her ‘deeply antisocial politics that casts patriarchy as not just a form of male domination but also the formal production of sense, mastery and meaning’, Halberstam locates Solanas as the disturbing absence in Edelman’s flawed proposal for a queer politics antagonistically at odds with the ideological underpinnings of the social.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Robert L Caserio and others, ‘The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory Forum : Conference Debates The Antisocial Thesis in’, *PMLA*, 121.3 (2006), p. 824. See also See J J Halberstam, ‘The Anti-Social Turn in Queer Studies’, *Graduate Journal of Social Science*, 5.2 (2008), pp. 140–56; Doyle, ‘Blind Spots and Failed Performance: Abortion, Feminism, and Queer Theory’ and Siona Wilson, *Art Labor / Sex Politics: Feminist Effects in 1970s British Art and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> J J Halberstam, p. 150.

The disruptive force with which Solanas is introduced to rupture an emerging agenda within queer studies in the mid-2000s, parallels the ways that Cottingham and others invested in the disruptive capabilities of the 'SCUM Manifesto' in the early 1990s. It does so, not only because of the disruptive work that the manifesto is made to undertake but because in both instances citations of the 'SCUM Manifesto' earmark a feminist intervention within a self-consciously queer arena, one that is at risk of neglecting its feminist roots. Here the manifesto is not deployed with the potentially troubling force of a foreign object but with the disturbing qualities of one feminist antecedent in queer politics that has been (indeed continues to be) forgotten, elided or worst, actively erased. The erasure of feminist genealogies from queer politics and theory is an epistemological issue. Halberstam's reference to the 'SCUM Manifesto', reinvests in the 'SCUM Manifesto' in particular, and the manifesto form more broadly, with its potential to trouble empirical accounts of history and the positivist narratives that underpin it. The investment in Solanas's manifesto renders it as a kind of disturbing detritus, showing that distinctions between queer and feminist political genealogies are not as easily drawn as accounts such as Edelman's make it seem.

Sara Warner and Mary Jo Watts take up this possibility of Solanas's manifesto as a kind of epistemological detritus in their recent article 'Hide and Go Seek: Child's Play as Archival Act in Valerie Solanas's SCUM Manifesto' (2014). As the title suggests, for Warner and Watts, Solanas's manifesto is all about archives. Of course, Warner and Watts do not mean that the 'SCUM Manifesto' creates an archive in the sense that it accumulates and manages records. Rather, the authors suggest that the manifesto is itself a record of history in progress. The idea of a manifesto as a record of history, one that is still unfolding, connects to the way that this thesis approaches manifestos, as forms that wrestle with the conditions that surround their production. The 'scummy archives' that Warner and Watts describe are composed from trash and personal

ephemera. Again foregrounding ephemera as the condition of queer life, Warner and Watts turn to the 'SCUM Manifesto' within the climate of queer and feminist archival research and collecting that I discussed in my first chapter. Along these lines, the author's contend that 'Queers have a desire for history, a yearning to access, document, and conserve the hidden pasts and lived experiences of sexual dissidents, gender outlaws, and erotic nonconformists'.<sup>91</sup> Like the accounts that scholarship by Ann Cvetkovich and Kate Eichhorn have produced, Warner and Watts view queer archives not only as receptacles for ephemera but also as spaces in which contemporary articulations of queer politics might be made. This "scummy" archive is more likely to be found on the street or in the gutter than in the spaces of the institution. Infected with the historic claim made by one living so closely to the margins, Warner and Watts raise the possibility that the past might contaminate the present with the unrealised possibilities that the manifesto maps out. The idea of contagion helps to understand the seemingly intangible ways that political ideas spread. But here there is also a risk that one might overstate the reach of the manifesto. Perhaps at risk of fetishizing the material conditions that shaped Solanas's claim to a political voice, if not archives in general, Warner and Watts's argument does not account for the desires that frame readings of Solanas's manifesto within queer studies.

A sobering riposte to Warner and Watts can be found in Firestone's own notes on Solanas, published in a slim volume *Airless Spaces* (1988). The "airless space" to which the title of the collection refers is partly an allusion to the twenty-eight years that separates Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) and the new book. Through a series of vignettes, Firestones attends to isolated figures associated with the feminist movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, each one either lost or else threatening to disappear against a backdrop of a public sphere increasingly in the service of financial capital in

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<sup>91</sup> Warner and Watts.



Figure 3.5. Still from Ridykeulous, *Times Square S.C.U.M. MANifesto*, 7'29" (2011).

the years intervening. Writing on Solanas, Firestone describes a person deeply alienated from the institutions she so vehemently rails against in her manifesto. The airless space within which Firestone locates Solanas is the antithesis to the archival encounter that appears in Warner and Watts article. Solanas, living 'somehow too close to history' literally could not survive in the world that she brings into visibility through her manifesto, alluding to the material consequences for those lives not in step with changes in the economic, social and political spheres of the past fifty years.

In an artist video from 2011, the 'SCUM Manifesto' appears anachronistically against a backdrop of a modernised city centre that might stand in for the economic, social and political changes alluded to above. *Times Square S.C.U.M. MANifesto*, a short video by Ridykeulous, the collaborative practice of artists A. L. Steiner and Nicole Eisenman, returns us to the city as a space in which, like archives, histories are both inscribed and occluded. Laughter punctuates the video in which Ridykeulous cruise New York's Times Square with a copy of Solanas's manifesto in hand. The two artists can be heard from behind camera, coaxing members of the public into reciting sections

of the text. In a manner akin to the style of a vox pop, Solanas's ferocious and tricky polemic is hauled from the gutter and spoken to the camera against a banal backdrop of tourists and shoppers, planters and advertising hoardings. At one point, a man in a suit is asked to read from the text. As he does so he tries not to grin. Someone in the background, presumably one of the artists, is laughing along too. As he approaches the end of the passage he begins to speak faster. His voice lowered he inches toward the screen. "Life in this "society" being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of "society" being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex", he reads. His whole face fills the frame as he says these last five words and looking straight into the camera he makes a point of each of them. He places emphasis on this final statement of which he, a man, is the subject. He turns away, allowing a smile to spread across his face, getting in on the joke. Here we might think of the epistemic value of something like a joke and the way that feminist practices have often had recourse to laughter.<sup>92</sup> Yet here laughter does not seem to service a feminist politics but rather underscore the ways that *S.C.U.M MANifesto* might be emptied out as it is put in the service of a kind of North American rhetoric. The vox pop, after all, is used as an advertising technique, a form of public speech that urges "buy buy buy".

Circling Times Square, Ridykeulous could be seen to be performing something akin to Roussopoulos's use of video monitors set up on the street or at public meetings.

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<sup>92</sup> I wrote about the power of women's laughter in relation to the 'SCUM Manifesto' in a conference paper given at 'Debout! Feminist Activism and Video in France and Beyond', Queen Mary, University of London, 31 May 2014. In "'The Rhythm that Laughs You'": Women having fun unwork Valerie Solanas' SCUM Manifesto for video', I referenced Hélène Cixous's essay 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1976): 'Everything will be changed once woman gives woman to the other woman' said Hélène Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa", but 'what about she who is the hysterical offspring of the bad mother?' In the production of feminist genealogies, Solanas has proved a difficult object for feminism. She is the bad feminist who didn't want her sisters but also she is the bad mother who did not herself want to be reproduced. The diligence with which they attend to this work registers its sheer absurdity, a joke that keeps language light enough to take Solanas seriously'. For a study of the revolutionary potential of laughter between women, see Jo Anna Isaak, *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter* (London: Routledge, 1996).

They literally project Solanas's manifesto into the street.<sup>93</sup> Bringing the manifesto out of the 1960s, as though they themselves are the time travellers or alien tourists from a lesbian-feminist past, Steiner and Eisenman find the area rapidly altered to the insidious forms of neo-liberalism. Proffered to unsuspecting members of the public in Times Square, the artists return the text to the place where Solanas handed herself in to the police the same day that she shot Warhol in June 1968. Confessing her crime to a police officer, Solanas, inadvertently or otherwise, transformed herself into a public figure. As Ridykeulous coerce members of the public into reading the manifesto to camera, the artists give the 'SCUM Manifesto' up again, albeit in a renovated city centre now unmarked by its scummy past.

Gentrification haunts the video from the beginning as a scrolling passage that reads "Ridykeulous on vacation: Times Square. Reading Material: S.C.U.M. ManifestOhhhhhh". The white words glide vertically across the screen and recede into the inky black background as they approach the top of the frame in the style of the iconic opening scene of Star Wars. The text says that Ridykeulous are on vacation, peddling the 'SCUM Manifesto' as "holiday reading". The title of the video moves across the screen, followed by the byline: "Totally NEXT GEN(TRIFICA)ERATION!". Though the opening sequence certainly alludes to the political dimensions of humour, there is a more serious implication of the tourist in relation to Times Square. Writing on the dawning of rapid urban regeneration in New York, Christopher Mele describes how 'thousands of young people [flocked] to the East Village to witness the public spectacle of hippy culture during the summers of 1966 and 1967 and on weekends throughout

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<sup>93</sup> Ridykeulous reworked Roussopoulos and Seyrig's *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* at Light Industry, simultaneously performing reader and scribe and generating the kind of structural borrowing called for in post-structural analysis. Invoking this Roussopoulos and Seyrig's performance, Ridykeulous' reinscribe the 'SCUM Manifesto' in the present context of a small arts institution based in a former manufacturing area of New York. The gallery is named after the kind of light manufacturing that used to populate New York City, which Sharon Zukin has described in *Loft Living* (1982), and which, along with members of the counter-culture and avant-garde, was eventually driven out by increasing rents.

each year'.<sup>94</sup> The effects of this, Mele argues, led to a redefinition of hippy culture. It also led, in part, to "New "elements," [which] commodified and trivialized the environment of the East Village'.<sup>95</sup> Such encounters between tourists and counter-cultural scenes in the late 1960s do not map evenly onto subsequent transformations of that area. For much of the 1970s and even early 1980s it was demonised in the press as a dangerous ghetto. Nonetheless these early murmurings of the pernicious commodification of sub-cultures, is a crucial touchstone for a process that is now familiar. Nowhere is the transformation of urban space into cultural and economic value perhaps more visible to us than in Times Square, which this video obliquely indicates toward. Samuel R. Delany once described Times Square as having 'established itself not only in the American psyche, but in the international imagination, as one of the world's most famous areas'.<sup>96</sup> In a series of writings that are largely autobiographical, Delany focuses on the queer life of New York's porn theatres against a backdrop of enormous redevelopment of Times Square that began in the mid-1980s (although Delany traces it even further, to the early 1960s) and is still continuing today.<sup>97</sup> Throwing into relief an inner city area in a state of constant and forceful flux, Delany explores transformations in the condition of urban space in relation to the AIDS crisis, rampant financialization and inner-city clean up programmes designed to shift diverse populations out of zones where the homogenising effects of economic profit are palpable. The impossibility of reconciling the ideas that Solanas set out in the 'SCUM Manifesto' with the contemporary image of Times Square, standing in for a post-AIDS, post-Giuliani, post-9/11 New York, is central to the video, legible in the ease with

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<sup>94</sup> Christopher Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side: Culture, Real Estate, and Resistance in New York City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 173.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>96</sup> Delany, xiv.

<sup>97</sup> Delany's book was published in 1998, when a new phase of the redevelopment had been announced. Anticipated to culminate in 2005, this was followed by another reconstruction project that began in 2010 and is due to finish up this year.

which Solanas's words become cyphers for the queer life that is now largely absent from this area.

Solanas's manifesto was written in another time of decline in competitive capitalism, during national recession and accelerated job loss in New York City, that Mele describes: 'The ensuing notions of the East Village fraught with images of danger and decay were central to the policies and actions that led to neighbourhood disinvestment and "blowout" between 1969 and 1979'.<sup>98</sup> In Ridykeulous's video, it is read after the financial crash of 2008, a historical present that is perhaps only legible in the sheer number of homeless people one encounters in mid-town Manhattan (along with the signs that warn tourists of panhandlers). In her book *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a lost imagination* (2013), Sarah Schulman argues that the homogenising effects of gentrification not only affect our relationship to cities in the present but work historically too. Writing about the effects of the AIDS crisis in New York, Schulman explores the way that gentrification works to remove 'the dynamic mix that defines urbanity'.<sup>99</sup> This homogeneity, she argues, serves to replace what was there and does so seamlessly that it also performs a kind of historical forgetting. Schulman discusses the way that this affects how populations conceptualize themselves, both in relation to the past and the present. One function of the video that reads Solanas's words into the street in New York is to work against this processes of forgetting, to remind us of a moment that clearly belongs to the past but which is also not recognisable in our future. But there seems more at stake than attempting to make visible a forgotten queer at moment. Returning us to Solanas, and the New York that she occupied in the 1960s and 1970s, the artists simultaneous map themselves into a lineage of queer and underground practice. I revisit this idea in the final chapter of this thesis, an epilogue

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<sup>98</sup> Mele, p. 179.

<sup>99</sup> Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), p. 27.

that considers a series or collective readings in the 2010s of a manifesto produced in the context of the AIDS crisis. A. L. Steiner once described herself as having emerged from the “ashes” of 1960s counterculture. Her independent and collaboratively authored work has often references, as the citation of Solanas does, these histories of alternative cultural production. Establishing an antagonistic relationship to the art world, Ridykeulous are nonetheless well aware that their practice continues to circulate – and accumulate value – within art’s institutions. Is it just the rub of excitement that draws artists to radical forms, like the lesbian protagonist of Schulman’s novel *After Delores* (1988) who roams Manhattan with a gun pressing against her thigh? In Ridykeulous’s video, the citation of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ seems more ambiguous than in the practices of the early 1990s that I discussed in the previous section. The disruptive potential of a lesbian feminist polemic written in the late 1960s hovers across the work, but rather than perform that disruptive work it seems to show us the ways in which an historic instance radical speech threatens not only to be elided but also co-opted as a form of cultural capital.

At the same time, the video makes me wonder about the effects of gentrification and what possibilities for survival there are now that the grimy places within which Solanas wrote and touted her ‘SCUM Manifesto’ are further marginalised, no longer permissible within the centre of the city. If the artists desire to somehow touch across time and reach her, it is shockingly apparent, as Firestone makes clear, that she did not survive.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps there is another reading (the brief historiography that I have sketched around Solanas’s manifesto shows us that there always is *another* reading), one that returns us through the idea of grime to contagion. Asking people to speak the words of the manifesto, from the position of ‘SCUM’ or detritus, the video not only speaks through but to the critique that Solanas sets out of commodity relation under

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<sup>100</sup> Martha Rosler, *Culture Class* (Berlin and New York: e-flux and Sternberg Press, 2013).

capitalism. Scum, detritus, trash: these are the logical conclusions of the commodity form. They are also the material consequences of lives lived on the margins. In the U.S., public education emphasises public oratory. The artists hijack this tradition to carry a different message, that of the ‘SCUM Manifesto’. Here a vernacular language is allowed to infect forms of public rhetoric in commercialised public space. In producing an instance of minor speech that infects a majority, perhaps the reading that takes place in the video infects discourse with difference.

The looping rhythms of two dykes trailing around Times Square are not quite like the rhythms that pulse through Boudry and Lorenz’s *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation* (2013), the final work I want to consider in this chapter. The title of the piece comes from a score that the feminist avant-garde composer Pauline Oliveros produced in 1970. Oliveros’s arrangement is simple. Designed to be played by a group of all female musicians, the instructions are thus:

Any group or groups of instrumentalists, from small chamber ensemble to large orchestra may be utilized. Singers who have perfect pitch (or a pitch pipe) may be included. Pipe organ, electrophonic instruments and electronic music systems may be used<sup>101</sup>

Playing these notes, the group are led through a ‘duration of the three sections [...] controlled by a lighting system. Section 1 is all red light, Section 2 is all yellow light, and Section 3 is all blue light’.<sup>102</sup> Within this composition, the instrumentalists are required to play the same pitch throughout but to rise in volume to meet any member of the group who raises themselves above the other members thus producing what Oliveros describes as ‘a continuous circulation of power’<sup>103</sup> Inspired by reading the ‘SCUM Manifesto’ and linking also to Marilyn Monroe who like Solanas is also

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<sup>101</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* (Baltimore: Smith Publications, 1977). n.p.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Pauline Oliveros

associated with Warhol, the piece seeks to produce a feminist aesthetics, one not predicated on language but sound.

In Boudry and Lorenz's film, Oliveros's score is rendered as an image on screen. To produce the work, the two artists worked with six musicians and artists, Rachel Aggs, Peaches, Ginger Brooks Takahashi, Catriona Shaw, Verity Susman and William Wheeler, all of whom are connected to queer music scenes internationally. The film opens with a shot of a corridor of a building with a 1960s interior and iron framed windows filling one wall. Outside, amongst overgrown ferns, a figure begins to move. The figure is dressed all in green with a hat that has a beaded veil but otherwise resembles the kind that a bee keeper might wear. A note sounds and then, on the inside of the windows, another figure comes into view, playing an accordion (Pauline Oliveros's instrument). Continuing to pan, a different sound is heard and then another figure comes into view. She wears a purple onesie and has an amplifier strapped to her body with a leather harness. Moving around a pillar, she apparently produces the noise of an untuned electric guitar until we see that she is in fact wearing one strapped horizontally to the front of her body. The opening sequence continues in this way, one figure giving way to another and one note to another in the same way. Susman, who wears an unconvincing handlebar moustache, spraypaints the name of the film, and the name of Oliveros's composition on a set of windows. The electro singer and performance artist Peaches sings a line from Sinead O'Connor's song 'Black Boys on Mopeds' acapella:

Margaret Thatcher on TV / Shocked by the deaths that took place in Beijing / It seems strange that she should be offended / The same orders are given by her / I've said this before now / You said I was childish and you'll say it now / Remember what I told you / If they hated me they will hate you

Each representing different sounds and diverse looks, the group all appear as solitary figures in this single tracking shot. Who each of these individuals are is not important. Cultural references in Boudry and Lorenz films are many and not all are available to the viewer.<sup>104</sup> It is more useful to think of the work as held within a world that is not usually seen on film, where friends and members of subcultural groups come together such as DIY music scenes.

Unlike Ridykeulous's *S.C.U.M. MANifesto*, which is filmed on a hand-held camera and calls upon DIY production values (and attitudes), Boudry and Lorenz's work is filmed on 16mm and transferred digitally for editing. The artists characterise their works as "filmed performances". These performances always incorporate multiple references to various historic figures and artworks. Manifestos often figure amongst these references. For example, in their film *Charming for the Revolution* (2009) a script riffs off a series of historic manifestos, including Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* (1967) and Silvia Federici's "Wages Against Housework" (1975), to produce an offbeat roll call for marginalised feminist polemicists. The artists recently told me that though they have often worked with manifestos in their works, they 'are interested in an open connection between objects, bodies and meanings, and in a complexity of references that a manifesto might not strive for'.<sup>105</sup> Though Boudry and Lorenz's works do not, as the artists say, attempt to operate alike to manifestos in and of themselves, the ways in which manifestos often operate complex temporal registers means that parallels between the form and the ways that the artists mobilise the past in their works can be drawn. That time is an operation of both experimental language and moving artist image is key to understandings the way that the artists figure references to manifestos of queer struggle within their films.

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<sup>104</sup> I have written about this elsewhere in Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, *I Want*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016) and Laura Guy, 'Hiding in plain sight: Recognition and resistance in recent queer artists' moving image' in *Moving Image Review and Art Journal*, 5 (1-2) (forthcoming December 2016).

<sup>105</sup> Laura Guy, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, 'Scene / Unseen', *Frieze D/E*, 2015, p. 103.



Figure 3.6. Stills from Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation*, 18' (2013).

Catherine Grant has explored the way that Boudry and Lorenz utilise references to the past within their works in relation to another of their films, *Solomania* (2010). In her work focusing on contemporary feminist art and strategies of re-enactment, Grant focuses on Boudry and Lorenz's film in order to think about the various temporalities that the works seek to operate through.<sup>106</sup> Boudry and Lorenz are always keen to foreground this aspect of their works, referring to the way that they seek to trace lineages between queer practice past and present. Interestingly for this discussion, the artists often use the idea of contagion to describe this kind of work with historic materials. In her book *Queer Art* (2012) Lorenz, remarks on the desire of her collaborative work with Boudry to imagine queer communities across time. She is alert to the risks of such a project, acknowledging that these “queer ancestors” might protest against a desired binding, they will perhaps reject differences as unbridgeable gaps, they will view the methods of binding as inappropriate, or “bondage” could be crushing’.<sup>107</sup> Attempting to negotiate such risks, Boudry writes that ‘contagion is not appropriation’.<sup>108</sup> As with Warner and Watts's article, the idea of contagion indicates an investment in the infectious power of the queer past but also in the agency of that past to infect the present. Neither appropriation nor parody, Lorenz suggests a way in which we might become contaminated by the past. The difference or change implied by the idea of becoming contaminated is also a means of connecting in which neither the past nor the present remain intact.

Returning now to *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation* we might begin to understand the relationship that the artists see as operating between themselves and Oliveros, and themselves and the ‘SCUM Manifesto’. After the opening sequence, the remainder of the film concentrates on the

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<sup>106</sup> Catherine Grant, *Re-Enacting Histories: Boudry/Lorenz's Salomania* (York, 2013).

<sup>107</sup> Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art: A Freak Theory* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012), p. 160.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

performance. Through one continuous shot, the musicians are shown in a large, woodpaneled sound studio. Other than the instruments the only things to fill the room are a series of studio lights, the kind used for filming, and a large rectangular screen. Throughout the performance, which lasts around twelve minutes, this screen changes colour three times, signalling the red, yellow and blue of Oliveros's lighting system. This is the only visual element in Oliveros's original score that otherwise afforded each musician an equal role in an attempt to reject the hierarchical structures of traditional music. Oliveros's piece is not solely a means to produce an alternative form for music however, but also to produce an alternate form of feminist practice. Whereas Oliveros's score represents a translation of the manifesto into music, Boudry and Lorenz seek to translate a musical score into a visual representation. Their interest in the score is that 'Oliveros proposes a queer-feminist methodology in music, which uses no slogans (except maybe the amazing title) and is not based on language at all'.<sup>109</sup> Interested in the way that the 'visualization of the piece became the work's challenge [...] [the artists] wondered if the film could be about the contradictions and hierarchies between listening and watching'.<sup>110</sup> Translating the score to film, the artists explicitly seek challenge the hierarchies that have historically been produced around image making and the way that visualization, in a wider field of visual and scientific discourses, has historically produced, policed or precluded queer subjectivities looping us back to Oliveros's comments about her piece, that it is "a score about power".

Unlike *Times Square S.C.U.M. MANifesto*, in which the work is all about making Solanas's words sound again, Boudry and Lorenz's film attempts the apparently paradoxical task of rendering sound as an image. This parallels the original shift from language to musical composition within Oliveros's original piece. Rather than attempt to respeak the manifesto, the composer sought to enact certain qualities of Solanas's

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<sup>109</sup> Boudry and Lorenz in Jones and Silver, pp. 178-179.

<sup>110</sup> Guy, Boudry and Lorenz, p. 107.

manifesto. Based on a feminist idea of a non-hierarchical space, the composition allows for difference to take place within the collective. Rather than rely on language to produce disruption, both the score and film search out a political aesthetics based around sound. Instead of rearticulating Solanas's words, both works seem instead to embody something of Solanas's idea that a 'in a female society, the only Art, the only Culture, will be conceited, kookie, funkier females grooving on each other, cracking each other up, while cracking open the universe'.<sup>111</sup> One of Solanas's more utopian moments, the line in the manifesto might as well frame the performance of the six musicians for camera. Within the closed space of the recording studio, they play for one another (and, of course, for the camera). Boudry and Lorenz describe the work as 'pushing to a paradigm shift in the future'.<sup>112</sup> Instead of foregrounding the ways that Solanas's manifesto might achronistically register in the present, as in *Times Square MANifesto*, Boudry and Lorenz seem to occupy a utopian feminist space, one that no longer requires the political speech that brought it into being.

The two recent moving image works discussed in this section are both based on citations of the 'SCUM Manifesto'. Whilst one shows the manifesto emptied out by processes of transformation, the other tries to fill up a feminist space organised around Solanas's polemic. Despite these differences, each utilises the manifesto as a kind of score, one that traces a disruptive history into the present. Whilst Ridykeulous's video shows Solanas's manifesto to hijack instances of public rhetoric, Boudry and Lorenz's film creates a feedback loop between a group of musicians that relies on Oliveros's practice of 'deep listening'.<sup>113</sup> Listening out for Solanas, both works work

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<sup>111</sup> Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Self published, 1977), p. 4.

<sup>112</sup> For a brief description of the film see Renate Lorenz and Pauline Boudry, 'To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation', 2013 <<https://www.boudry-lorenz.de/to-valerie/>> [accessed 26 October 2016].

<sup>113</sup> Oliveros describes this idea as follows: 'Deep coupled with *Listening* or *Deep Listening* for me is learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound—encountering the vastness and complexities as much as possible [...] Such expansion means that one is connected to the whole of the environment and beyond'. Oliveros's concept of "deep listening" is closely

away at the airless space that Firestone suggests surrounds marginalised women's voices. But this process is not the one of "giving voice" to the "other" that Gayatri Spivak problematizes in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. Instead each work characterises the manifesto as an active force. Lyon has written of what she calls the "inflated affect" of the 'SCUM Manifesto'. For Lyon, this 'overrides the traps of feminist identity politics, since no one need identify with or as Valerie Solanas to be affected by the contagious fury of her polemic'.<sup>114</sup> This distinction does not hold in relation to either of these works, explicitly in the second. 'To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe', is dedicated in 'recognition'. Desiring to be infected by the contagious force of the polemic, each work responds to the demands of the manifesto form for recognition. This is not however identification predicated on sameness. Rather, in leaving neither the past nor the present entirely intact, both foreground reading as a process that shapes difference.

Throughout this chapter I have looked at the ways that the 'SCUM Manifesto' has been read outside of the 1960s. Engaging with the desires that underpin investments in Solanas's manifesto, a discontinuous history of feminist practice emerges, one that calls attention to the ideological character of social reproduction. Returning us to Solanas's own critique that centred around disrupting mechanisms of reproduction, each of these works mines the manifesto for its still disruptive possibilities. Against the backdrop of Solanas's own anxieties about how the text be read and reproduced, each of these readings privileges the refusal of the manifesto to settle for the present. Highly suggestive of the disruptive character of the manifesto form more generally, each of the works discussed here signals to the way that the past might be mobilised in the present in order to produce alternative accounts of history. Performed through the times and

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connected to that of presence, it emphasises listening as a form of openness. See Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2005), p. xxiii.

<sup>114</sup> Janet Lyon, 'Feminist Futural: Five Kinds of Time', *Retz Kopsi: A Journal of Art and Aesthetics*, 2007, p. 150.

rhythms of Solanas's manifesto, this proposition seems to invoke Claire Hemmings' exploration of the way that stories of feminism are told. In *Why Stories Matter*, Hemmings considers the way that citations of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* disproportionately foreground the influence of Foucault on her writing, over that of Monique Wittig. The forgetting of Wittig in narratives surrounding *Gender Trouble*, locate Butler as "the first" feminist critique of sex/gender from a *queer* perspective'.<sup>115</sup> Neglecting Wittig's materialist lesbianism, which, against the idea that women are an essential group, foregrounds the way that women have been ideologically constituted as a group by patriarchal society. 'Instead of asking "Where has Wittig gone?," instead of remaining frustrated by her absence, I want to ask what happens when we invite Wittig back, what joys and unremembered sorrows re-surface when we bring her out of the shadows and into the spotlight?'<sup>116</sup> The question could as well stand for the way that each of the examples considered in this chapter asks what happens when we invite Solanas back. What genealogies of queer practice become legible when we approach art history through the disturbing rhythms and disruptive returns of Solanas's polemic?

### **postscript**

The date range in the title for this chapter, '1967 – infinity', refers to another recent artwork in which Solanas is referenced. *Killjoy's Kastle: A lesbian feminist haunted house* is an on-going project by Canadian artists Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue. An ironic nod to the hell houses that Evangelical Christian groups stage during Hallowe'en in North America. Unlike the hell houses, *Killjoy's Kastle* is not a tool used to teach a lesson of judgement (although the two might be as hammy as one another). Instead, *Killjoy's Kastle* allows visitors to feel the drag of feminism's lesbian past in the present. Solanas has made a number of appearances within the project. Visitors to the

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<sup>115</sup> Hemmings, p. 179.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

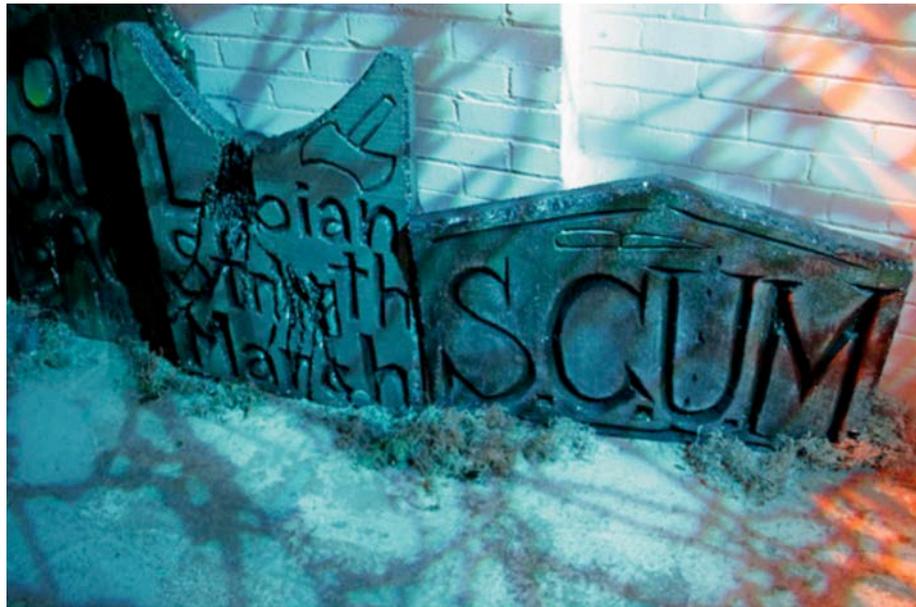


Figure 3.8, Documentation from Deirdre Logue and Allyson Mitchell, *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House* (2013)

first iteration of *Killjoy's Kastle* in Toronto in 2013 would have encountered the 'SCUM Manifesto' laid to rest amongst other defunct feminist organisations and ideas also including the Lesbian Strength Marches of the 1980s, their names carved onto balsa gravestones (fig. 3.8). More recently, a version of the project in West Hollywood reincarnated Valerie Solanas as a zombie who greeted guests at the gates of the house. In Mitchell and Logue's installations, along with numerous other references to lesbian feminist ideas past, Solanas continues to haunt our own political present.

In this chapter I chose not to talk about readings of either Solanas or her manifesto as a form of haunting, finding the ideas of reproduction and disruption to more congenitally speak to the ideas that Solanas set out in the 'SCUM Manifesto'. However, Jacques Derrida's idea of a 'spectral moment, a moment that no longer belongs to time' lesbian past. 'Solanas and her *SCUM Manifesto* tend to flicker in and out of is resonate with what I have outlined above.<sup>117</sup> Derrida's writing on hauntology figured around *The*

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<sup>117</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. xix.

*Communist Manifesto* and the spectre that famously haunts its opening line: “A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism”. The spectral moment that Derrida identifies is central to his idea of hauntology, where things that were never really alive such as communism can never truly be consigned to the past. Hesford calls up Derrida and a different kind of ghost in her writing on the spectres of feminism’s contemporary studies of the second wave era’.<sup>118</sup> This flickering, across histories of second wave feminism, alludes to the still uncertain place that Solanas occupies within a feminist historical imagination. If, as Cottingham, Hesford and others suggest, the figure of the leaping lesbian – that is the lesbian who is never really present, never really in time – haunts feminism, then Solanas appears as a paradigm. With regard hauntology, we might also be led to consider the peculiar ways that a text which imagines a future, one that never came to pass, appears again now. In *Killjoy’s Kastle*, Solanas is a character among others who allow us to excavate something like the futures of feminisms’s queer pasts.

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<sup>118</sup> Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women’s Liberation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 103.

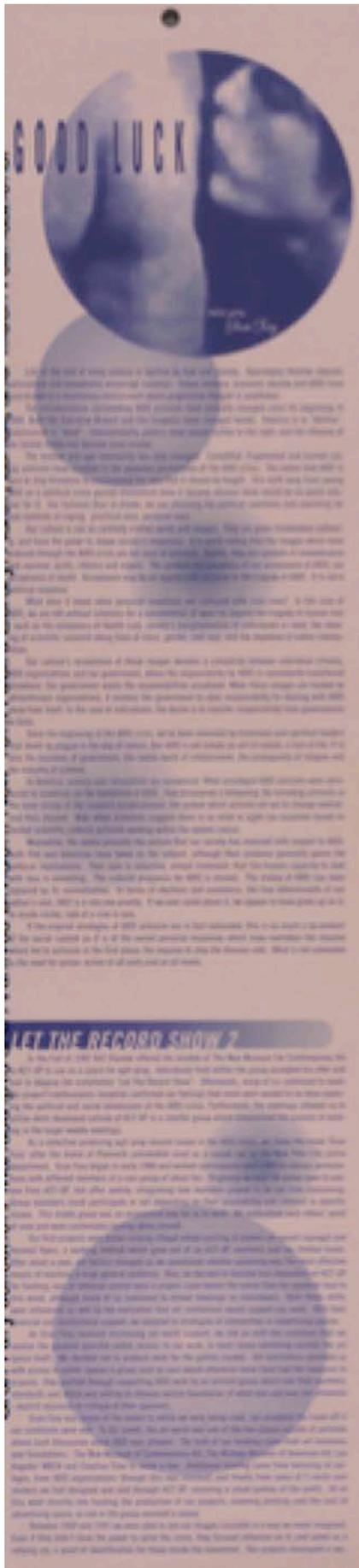


Figure 4.1, Gran Fury, 'Good Luck... Miss You. [Paper pamphlet]. (1995). New York Public Library. Manuscripts and Archives Division. Shelf locator: MssCol 3648

I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for vice president and I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place where the earth is so saturated with toxic waste that they didn't have a choice about getting leukemia. I want a president that had an abortion at sixteen and I want a candidate who isn't the lesser of two evils and I want a president who lost their last lover to aids, who still sees that in their eyes every time they lay down to rest, who held their lover in their arms and knew they were dying. I want a president with no airconditioning, a president who has stood on line at the clinic, at the dmv, at the welfare office and has been unemployed and layed off and sexually harrassed and gaybashed and deported. I want someone who has spent the night in the tombs and had a cross burned on their lawn and survived rape. I want someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, who has made mistakes and learned from them. I want a Black woman for president. I want someone with bad teeth ~~and an attitude~~, someone who has eaten ~~that nasty~~ hospital food, someone who crossdresses and has done drugs and, been in therapy. I want someone who has committed civil disobedience. And I want to know why this isn't possible. I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.

Figure 4.2. Zoe Leonard, 'I want a president' [Single page typed script]. (1992).  
Courtesy of the artist.

#### 4. CHRONIC INTERVENTIONS: ART HISTORY IN THE TIME OF AIDS POLEMICS

##### **Read my lips**

Visitors to the exhibition *Read My Lips: New York AIDS Polemics*, held at Tramway, Glasgow, in 1992, would have encountered one gallery space built within another. Comprised from two L-shaped walls, the small internal structure created the effect of an “inside” within the cavernous space of a former tram depot—the floor tracks still visible today. Installed across both the usual gallery space and the new internal one, were works from a number of high profile groups and artists associated with AIDS activism in New York. They included Gran Fury, the cultural wing of ACT UP New York, as well as artists like Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Jenny Holzer and David Wojnarowicz. The show’s curator Nicola White describes how, upon entering the exhibition:

you were met with a gigantic black Silence = Death banner, then pasted on the walls were various graphics. There was one by Barbara Kruger and quite a few by ACT UP, some designed by Gran Fury... like the long ‘Kissing Doesn’t Kill poster... On the outside of the ‘gallery’ wall we pasted statistics and slogans<sup>1</sup>

White, then the curator of visual arts at Tramway, organised *Read My Lips* at a time when Scotland had the highest rate of HIV in the U.K.<sup>2</sup> *Read My Lips: New York AIDS Polemics* took its name from a well-known poster first designed by Gran Fury for a Kiss

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<sup>1</sup> Nicola White in email correspondence with the author, 27 September 2016.

<sup>2</sup> As Simon Watney writes in the exhibition catalogue ‘In order to understand how affected communities have identified and responded to local needs, it is necessary to look at... detailed figures... in Scotland there have been 313 cases of AIDS, and a further 1,903 reported cases of HIV infection. Up to the end of 1985, 81 per cent amongst gay men, and less than 1 per cent resulting from heterosexual transmission. By the end of 1991 this picture had changed dramatically. Largely as a result of the widespread introduction

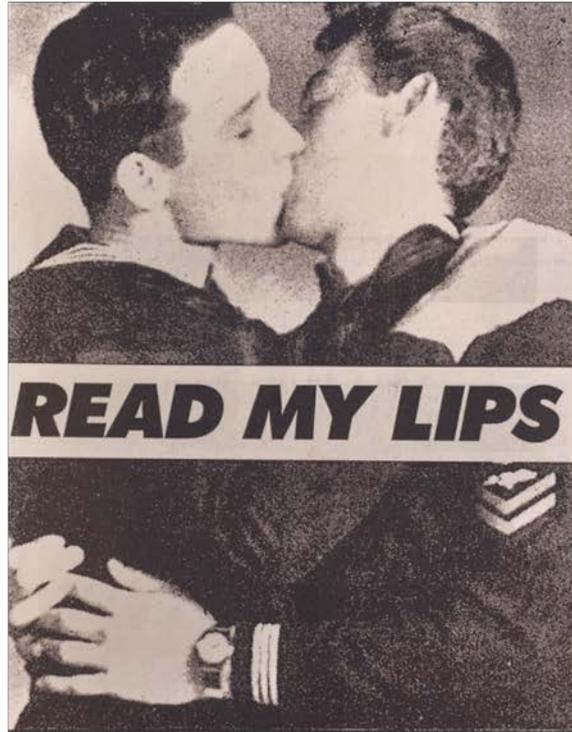


Figure 4.3. Gran Fury, 'Read My Lips', [Postcard] (1988).  
New York Public Library. Manuscripts and Archives Division. MssCol 3648

In organised at 6th Avenue and 8th Street on 29 April 1987 (fig. 4.2.). Used for *Read My Lips*, it worked to organise instances of cultural activism under the banner of the polemic. The characteristics of the manifesto form, and their historical association with a claim to visibility for subjects within the public sphere, throw into relief the intimate relation between art and politics engendered by the first decade of the AIDS crisis. Revisiting the exhibition allows reflection on the role of the manifesto in cultural activism at this time. It also offers potential for thinking about how we might engage in writing histories of AIDS cultural activism.

Not only intended as a means to see, and show, what was going on elsewhere, *Read My Lips* reacted to the AIDS crisis in Scotland and represented its own cultural

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of state-funded need-exchanges since 1986, the annual proportion of new cases of HIV amongst injecting drug uses fell to 36 per cent of the total, whilst the proportion of new cases amongst gay men rose to 36 per cent. In the same period, heterosexual transmission also rose to account for 28 per cent of reported cases, with a significantly disproportionate impact amongst the female sexual partners of bisexual men and male injecting drug uses'. See Simon Watney, 'Read My Lips: AIDS, art and activism' in *Read My Lips: New York AIDS Polemics*, ed. by Nicola White (Glasgow: Tramway, 1992), n. p.

intervention in this political context. White, who trained as an art historian in Dublin before moving to Glasgow to take up a role as administrator at the Third Eye Centre in the mid-1980s, became the first visual arts manager at Tramway in 1989. Although she was involved in forms of queer activism before the exhibition, for example working at the gay switchboard in Glasgow, White had a closer association with the counter-cultural scene of the city. In many ways this was because, as the exhibition catalogue describes, the activism surrounding AIDS was still, in the early 1990s, relatively nascent in the U.K. compared to U.S. counterparts.

Feeling that she needed to collaborate on the exhibition with others who had expertise in this area, White invited Simon Watney to contribute to the exhibition and help with the task of bringing work from the U.S. to Scotland.<sup>3</sup> Watney, an art historian by training and founding member of the Gay Liberation Front in Brighton, U.K., was instrumental in the theoretical debates known as the politics of representation emerging in British film studies and photography theory from the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> Working with Watney, White envisaged that the exhibition at Tramway would traverse the distance between

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<sup>3</sup> Nicola White in correspondence with the author, 17 August 2016.

<sup>4</sup> By the time that 'Read My Lips' took place, Watney had left his job lecturing photography at the Polytechnic of Central London since he was finding it increasingly difficult to fulfil his obligations as a teacher whilst also his committing to the political struggle surrounding the AIDS crisis. Watney had been politically active prior to the unfurling of the crisis in the early years of the 1980s. A gay man, Watney had 'been lured into the very very [sic] first meetings of the Gay Liberation Front at the London School of Economics' as a student at the University of Sussex living in Brighton. In Brighton, he helped to establish a new GLF group, which began in the flat that he shared at the time with his boyfriend.<sup>4</sup> Moving to London in 1974, Watney continued his involvement with the Gay Left as a member of the collective and regular contributor to the magazine. As a volunteer at the Lesbian and Gay Switchboard Watney participated in the initial response to the AIDS epidemic in the UK, later recalling that 'almost everything that was done in the HIV field was done, one way or another, by people who came out of Switchboard'. Though he left academia in 1986, the following year he published his ground-breaking book *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media*, at the time one of the most important interventions into AIDS literature and still amongst the most vital contributions to photography theory. The ideas that are, in many ways, just beginning to take shape in the book, evolved into a significant contribution to the thinking the ways that images circulate, reproduce and construct ideas around what constitutes a 'normal' body and its other, be it abjectly sick, gendered, raced or queered. Watney's examination of the cultural dimension of the crisis is a thread woven throughout his writing as he navigated the personal and political (and personal political) dimensions of the crisis between his home in London and the city of New York, then the epicentre of the epidemic and related activism, looking at the aesthetic dimensions of the crisis. See Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media* (London: Comedia/Methuen & Co., 1987). There is a transcript of an oral history with Watney in *Queer in Brighton*, ed. by Anthony Luvera and Maria Jastrzebska (Brighton: Photoworks, New Writing South, Pink Fringe, 2014).

Scotland and New York, where Watney facilitated various contacts to help with acquiring works. Seeking to make a selection of responses to AIDS visible in a new context, the exhibition engaged with the ways that cultural activism addressed the issue of representation of AIDS in the mainstream media. In this respect, *Read My Lips* is an important touchstone in British histories of cultural activism, representing the first time that the work of various artists and groups who had, as Watney put, developed a ‘practical relation to the language and imagery of the epidemic’, was shown in the U.K.<sup>5</sup> The exhibition featured posters by Gran Fury, the cultural arm of ACT UP in New York, alongside works by artists including Richard Deagle, Tom Starce, Joe Wollin, Adam Rolston, Marina Alvarez and Ellen Spiro. The Electric Blanket, a slide project set up by the Visual AIDS Artists Caucus in New York, whose members included Allen Frame, Frank Franca and Nan Goldin, was installed in the downstairs space of the gallery. The show featured images divided into three sections titled “Action”, “Document” and “Memorial”. It included photographic work by well known photographers such as Goldin, Peter Hujar and Robert Mapplethorpe as well as artist activists like Ann Meredith who, starting in March 1987, had recorded the testimony and images of women living with HIV, AIDS-related Complex (ARC) or AIDS.<sup>6</sup> Initially designed for projection onto the façade of Cooper Union in New York, the slide show was another point where *Read My Lips* complicated distinctions between the gallery space and activism that was going on contemporaneously in the street.

Keen that the work included in the exhibition speak to the issue of AIDS in Scotland, White invited groups such as the Scottish AIDS Monitor (SAM), formed to educate gay men about AIDS and to campaign around the availability of drugs, to participate in the show. SAM were given space within the exhibition from which they

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<sup>5</sup> Watney in White, n.p.

<sup>6</sup> For more information on Ann Meredith’s project, see her chapter ‘Until That Last Breath: Women with AIDS’ in *AIDS: The Making of a Chronic Disease*, ed. by Elizabeth Fee and Daniel M. Fox (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 229-244.

distributed information and condoms to visitors. Further connections to external groups in Scotland were developed through an accompanying programme of events, which was again dedicated to forging links between the inside and the outside of the gallery. As White explains in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue:

Here in Scotland, the AIDS epidemic is critical, but as yet is far behind the American epidemic in terms of the numbers affected, and there has been no cultural response to speak of. The point of this exhibition is not to set it up as an example of cultural practice which could be imitated here, but to use it as a sounding place for our own assumptions about AIDS, and our expectations about what role artists can play in a social and political crisis<sup>7</sup>

Highlighting works produced in New York in the new context of Scotland, *Read My Lips* functioned both as a demonstration and a call to arms for the Scottish community. Explicitly foregrounding the “outside”, the gallery space was reconfigured so that Tramway, one centre of the Glasgow art scene, became a space for discussion about the AIDS epidemic.

The polemic, which formed the organising principle for the show as indicated by its title, alludes to a division between the gallery and the street inasmuch as it complicates the separation of aesthetics from politics. Framed thus, work made by artists is shown to seek political visibility within the public sphere whilst at the same time representing an intervention within the art institution. White reflects that this relationship was not a binary one. To illustrate this, she cites the example of a curtain designed by Keith Haring that had been included in the show.<sup>8</sup> Originally intended as a backdrop for a theatre production, the curtain is as reminiscent of Haring’s street murals as it is of his gallery pieces. Similarly, work by Félix González-Torres, known for his ephemeral sculptures that take up a legacy of U.S. minimalism, was shown as a billboard project across the city. Posters by Gran Fury that riffed off the language of

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<sup>7</sup> White, n.p.

<sup>8</sup> White in conversation with the author, 17 August 2016.

advertising were included in the smaller internal space. The seepage of works between the categories of “inside” and “outside” reflected the strategies employed by many of the artists included in the show. Invoking the form of the polemic, the exhibition foregrounded the claims of artists to the political sphere at a time of political unrest.

Throughout this thesis I have put forward that time is a fundamental aspect of the manifesto form. Complex temporal registers characterise the claim of the manifesto to history and to action in times of crisis. These different temporalities frame the works exhibited in *Read My Lips*. In the exhibition catalogue, Watney opposes the political responses to the crisis represented by artists in the exhibition against universalising ideas of mourning connected to transcendence. Referencing art historian and critic Robert Rosenblum, who praised Gilbert and George for articulating ‘a supposedly *universal* dimension of the epidemic’, Watney counterposes allegorical approaches to AIDS to instances of cultural activism.<sup>9</sup> Doing so, Watney locates the works in the exhibition as a “timely” response to the crisis, emphasising both the political dimensions of cultural production and the aesthetic registers of political action.

Included in the catalogue for *Read My Lips* is a transcript of a speech given by Vito Russo, an AIDS activist who authored the book *The Celluloid Closet* in 1981. The speech, titled ‘Why We Fight’, was given by Russo at an ACT UP demonstration in Albany, New York, on the 9 May 1988.<sup>10</sup> In it, Russo “spoke out [...] as a person with AIDS who is not dying”. The startling and powerful speech made explicit a divide that separated PWAs (Person With AIDS) from the general population. Not himself invested in such a pernicious division, Russo’s speech instead sketches the limits of empathy in the mass media, citing an editorial in the *Life Magazine* that read, “it’s time to pay

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, n.p. Original emphasis.

<sup>10</sup> A video recording of the speech is available online: Vito Russo, ‘Why We Fight’, *ACT UP Demonstration in Albany, NY, 9 May, 1988* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0Q8p0HCQEs>> [accessed 24 August 2016].

attention, because this disease is now beginning to strike the rest of us". Russo, himself a PWA, responds: "It was as if I wasn't the one holding the magazine in my hand. And since then, nothing has changed to alter the perception that AIDS is not happening to the real people in this country". He concludes the speech by addressing the activists who stood before him. "So, I'm proud to be with my friends today and the people I love, because I think you're all heroes, and I'm glad to be part of this fight. But, to borrow a phrase from Michael Callen's song: all we have is love right now, what we don't have is time". Russo's closing remark, borrowed from a song, that "what we don't have is time", underscores the urgency of the struggle that he was participating in.

Framed by the idea of the polemic, the practices and strategies exhibited in *Read My Lips* were diverse, sharing both a present condition and future goals, but also mobilising history toward those aims. Shuttling between various tenses, the polemic offers a means to think about how time is a cultural and political affect of crisis as well as a means to organise subjects. During a period of increased state censorship, in both the U.S. and the U.K., and a culture of silence and neglect surrounding the AIDS crisis, artists such as Wojnarowicz took up the political terms of the manifesto form to stake an illegitimate claim to the public sphere. Importantly, this claim to visibility is made through harnessing the temporal registers of the polemic. Wojnarowicz's photostat poster *Untitled (One day this kid...)* (1990), which was shown as part of *Read My Lips*, includes an image of the artist as a young boy surrounded by text. One line reads: "One day this kids will do something that causes men who wear uniforms of priests and rabbis, men who inhabit certain stone buildings, to call for his death". And another: "One day families will give false information to their children and each child will pass that information down generationally to their families and that information will be designed to make existence intolerable for this kid". Referring to the child in the photograph in the present tense from the perspective of the future (that of the artist fully

grown), the work employs complex temporal registers that reveal mechanisms of social reproduction alongside their devastating effect.

In gesturing to the different temporalities present in Russo's speech and Wojnarowicz's work, it is not my wish to offset the two against one another. Rather, as *Read My Lips* suggests we do, in this chapter I consider how both the looping tenses of manifestos, represented by Wojnarowicz's work, and the urgency of polemical statements such as Russo's speech necessarily existed alongside one another in the context of AIDS cultural activism. Both Wojnarowicz's poster and Russo's speech help us to understand the way that experiences of time are culturally contingent. Each knows, all too well, the material consequences of this statement. Seizing time as a mechanism by which marginalisation occurs, 'Why we Fight' and *Untitled (One day this kid...)* both seek to remake politics from the standpoint of a PWA. Doing so, both make a historic claim to subjective self-determination, one that seeks to enact a rupture with the existing conditions of crisis.

Privileging works that speak to the local dynamics and tensions within the crisis, *Read My Lips* resisted the universalising terms of political discourse (that which makes possible the PWA as other to the reader of *Life Magazine*). Instead, putting activism in New York in dialogue with the situation in the U.K., *Read My Lips* took up the ephemeral terms of the manifesto, investing the form with the disruptive qualities that I have attended to throughout this thesis. This chapter organises its argument around the idea of the "chronic". Relating to time, and also to illness, the chronic is, as Elizabeth Freeman has said, 'not about repetition [...] rather it's about not having any kind of "break" within which to begin again, detour something, or mark openings and

closures'.<sup>11</sup> *Read My Lips* invites us to consider the manifesto in relation to the AIDS crisis. It indicates the importance of language within the graphic works of AIDS and the fervency of the often didactic messages that they produced. But it also signals toward the ways that manifestos invoke counter-narratives in relation to dominant modes of political thought or action. Recalling, through the exhibition and the works included in it, the multiple temporalities of the form, *Read My Lips* sought to enact, in Freeman's words, the "break" within which to begin again, detour something, or mark openings and closures'. The idea that crisis can also represent stasis is alluded to by Russo when he says after the reference to holding *Life Magazine* in his hands two years before: "since then, nothing has changed to alter the perception that AIDS is not happening to the real people in this country". Invoking the manifesto in relation to cultural activism, *Read My Lips* signalled to the aesthetic dimensions of politics and to the ways that modes of public dissemination and distribution were vital mechanisms in the fight against AIDS. In this chapter, I take up this invitation to consider the manifesto form in relation to the cultural activism surrounding AIDS. Resurfacing as a category and useful political tool during this period, forms of polemical speech and writing sought to transform a situation that seemed unchanging. Intervening in time, AIDS manifestos sought to make bodies visible. Not only that. From a position of extreme marginalisation, they also undertook the colossal task of making bodies endure.

### **the time of AIDS polemics**

Contrasting the gallery and the street, whilst also complicating distinctions between the two, *Read My Lips* resonates with the way that art and politics was reimagined alongside one another following the onset of the AIDS crisis in the U.S. in the early 1980s. The cultural response to AIDS was particularly pronounced in New York, where

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<sup>11</sup> Freeman in Renate Lorenz, Elizabeth Freeman and Mathias Danbolt, 'The Chronic: A Conversation', *FRANK*, 2014 <[http://www.f-r-a-n-k.org/conversations/01/pdfs/150608\\_FRANK\\_conversations\\_Chronic.pdf](http://www.f-r-a-n-k.org/conversations/01/pdfs/150608_FRANK_conversations_Chronic.pdf)> [accessed 3 July 2016].

a large concentration of artists participated in the struggle for medical care and visibility against government negligence surrounding the crisis. Others before me have taken as their subject the political dynamics of art, and representation more broadly, at this time. Perhaps most notable is the contribution of art historian Douglas Crimp to the re-conceptualisation of art practice in light of the cultural response to AIDS. Crimp's influential role in these debates is famously documented in a special edition of the U.S. journal *OCTOBER* published in 1987. Crimp, then managing editor of the journal and a member of ACT UP New York, dedicated the issue to the cultural dynamics and political manifestations of AIDS. Under the title 'AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism', the journal included contributions from Gregg Bordowitz on the activist video practices of the group Testing the Limits that began with the line, 'As a twenty-three-year-old faggot, I get no affirmation from my culture';<sup>12</sup> Martha Gever, whose article for *OCTOBER* focused on British artist Stuart Marshall's video *Bright Eyes*; and Carol Leigh, who wrote, and fought, at an intersection between AIDS and the rights of sex workers. Leo Barsani's 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', a foundational text of queer studies, also appeared for the first time in the journal. It had initially been commissioned as a review essay of Watney's influential *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the media* (Watney's article 'The Spectacle of AIDS' was also included). Collected together, these texts speak to the sense of urgency that surrounded the special issue of the journal.

By the late 1980s, *OCTOBER* had established itself as a bastion of U.S. art criticism that emphasised a form of reconstructed modernist critique through social and political theory. The special edition of the journal was 'initially planned to approach AIDS from within *OCTOBER*'s usual purview – how the art world was dealing with AIDS', and had been inspired by a number of writings and artworks

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<sup>12</sup> Gregg Bordowitz, 'Picture a Coalition', *October*, 1987, 182–96.

including Marshall's *Bright Eyes* and Watney's *Policing Desire*, published the year before in 1986.<sup>13</sup> However, emphasising that 'AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism' had *started* with a similar remit, Crimp goes on to explain that instead it came to represent 'a combination of activist and academic perspectives'.<sup>14</sup> In Crimp's view, one thing that the special issue achieved was 'that it made AIDS something that people in the academy could consider, using the postmodern theory that we were all involved with at that time'.<sup>15</sup> More than extending an awareness of AIDS to people in the academy, however, Crimp addressed the ways that the representation of the crisis was a fundamental consideration for activists.

The special edition of the journal considers the role and responsibility, of cultural producers in the context of the crisis. This is raised explicitly in Crimp's introductory essay. There he mentions a new programme established at the California Institute of the Arts including a course entirely dedicated to AIDS media ran by Jan Zita Grover, one-tenth of the library's video acquisition budget allocated to AIDS videos and information about AIDS disseminated regularly in the student's monthly newsletter (Crimp writes 'the information was also regularly silkscreened onto the school's walls').<sup>16</sup> Crimp praises the program for helping students both personally (allowing them to access information) and for the context it provided in which they might 'begin to reconsider their roles as artists working in a moment of social crisis'.<sup>17</sup> The dual imperatives to learn about – or teach – political and personal responsibility as an artist, might well frame the claims made by artists to political speech through manifestos at this time.

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<sup>13</sup> Douglas Crimp and Mathias Danbolt, 'Front Room - Back Room: An Interview with Douglas Crimp', *Trikster - Nordic Queer Journal*, 2008 <<http://trikster.net/2/crimp/1.html>> [accessed 18 June 2016].

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Douglas Crimp, 'AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism', *October*, 43 (1987), p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

The contribution of the journal to political moment of the AIDS crisis in its first ten years is well documented. Yet it is useful to return to it here, as a background context, for the manifestos discussed in what follows. As I go on, with particular reference to texts by artists Gregg Bordowitz, Zoe Leonard and Gran Fury, I look at the role of the manifesto in histories of AIDS cultural activism. In doing so I invoke the idea of a “chronic intervention”, that is, the way the manifesto form can be seen as producing a material intervention into time. The complex invocations of time that manifestos produced in the context of the crisis serve to intervene in both the political landscape and the artistic one, sometimes simultaneously. Interested in the ways that these manifestos mobilise the past in relation to the on-going struggle, the chapter goes on to think about how manifestos offer ways for approaching histories of the AIDS crisis. In this context, something like ‘AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism’ enables us to think about the way that the terms of the polemic worked to extend the legibility of unfolding political issues within art history in the 1980s. Edited at a time of perceptible crisis, the journal responded to a moment of urgency, reconsidering the field and terms of art historical discourse as it did so. The politicisation of art historic discourse during the AIDS crisis was also, importantly, enabled by earlier feminist interventions relating to the feminist art movement of the 1970s. Tracing the often complex genealogies that characterise experiences of politics, I go on to look at the ways that manifestos from the 1980s and early 1990s might help to understand the on-going crisis of AIDS in our own time.

In existing accounts of the cultural practices surrounding the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and early 1990s, little consideration has been given to the place of print ephemera and even less the manifesto form. Notable accounts of this period of cultural activism, for example by Alexandra Juhasz, Catherine Saalfield, Gregg Bordowitz and Ann Cvetkovich, have tended to focus on the important role of video in the struggle for

visibility in a context of silence and censorship.<sup>18</sup> More recently, studies by Kate Eichhorn and Tara Burk have attended to the particular qualities of print ephemera, foregrounding the centrality of printed matter to the work of artist activists.<sup>19</sup> In her doctoral thesis, referred to in my introductory chapter, Burk cites *AIDS Demographics*, a book co-authored by Crimp with the artist and designer Adam Rolston, as one antecedent for her own studies of print culture and AIDS activism. Interestingly for this thesis, Burk points out that *AIDS Demographics* might be located itself in a tradition of the polemical: intended as a demonstration, in both senses of the word, it was designed as much to be a manual as an academic study of the use of graphics in AIDS activism. Discussing the various graphic art and activist productions to emerge from the AIDS crisis, *AIDS Demographics*, which includes overviews of projects by Gran Fury, reframes artistic production as a political tool. Hitting a polemical note itself, as alluded to by Burk, *AIDS Demographics* signals, though not explicitly, toward the usefulness of the manifesto form in AIDS activism. Crimp and Rolston, Burk and Eichhorn all engender consideration of the ways that that printed ephemera lends itself to distribution, publication and readership, themes that I return to throughout this thesis. Revisiting exhibitions like *Read My Lips* or publications like ‘AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism’ and *AIDS Demographics* allows one to begin to see how the polemic represents an important form of print ephemera, one that structured intersections between art and politics during the first decade of the AIDS crisis.

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<sup>18</sup> See Gregg Bordowitz, Alexandra Juhasz, *AIDS TV: Identity, Community and Alternative Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Catherine Saalfield, ‘On the Make: Activist Video Collectives’ in *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, ed. by Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 1993) and Ann Cvetkovich, ‘Video, AIDS, Activism’ in *Art, Activism and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*, ed. by Grant Kester (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Kate Eichhorn, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century*; Burk, ‘Let The Record Show: Mapping Queer Art and Activism in New York City, 1986-1995’; Tara Burk, ‘From the Streets to the Gallery: Exhibiting the Visual Ephemera of AIDS Cultural Activism’, *Journal for Curatorial Studies*, 2.1 (2013), 32–53 and Crimp and Adam Rolston.

Despite the lack of attention paid to the manifestos produced by artists and activists in the context of AIDS cultural activism in New York and elsewhere, traditions of public collective speech are vital considerations if we are to understand the significance of this moment for art and politics. Although this chapter goes on to focus on three manifestos produced in the early 1990s, it is useful to return to the cultural activism surrounding AIDS that was engendered by the onset of the disease in the early 1980s. As the exhibition *Read My Lips* signals to, the cultural activism emerging from New York was particularly significant. Among the most visible and successful cultural responses were those emerging from ACT UP New York. ACT UP NY formed in 1987 and was the first chapter of the group that would eventually have chapters internationally including in Chicago, San Francisco, Berlin and London. Privileging forms of direct action, the group also emphasised access to information as a vital response to the censorship surrounding the crisis. Manifestos were one important form to emerge in ACT UP struggles. Take for example Carlton Hogan's polemical 'How to be a problem patient'; or 'The Denver Principles', a statement given by PWAs in 2014; or Kiki Mason's 'I am someone with AIDS and I want to live by any means necessary' (1994), a manifesto in which Mason compared government neglect surrounding the AIDS crisis to genocide; or the text 'We know when we're well, and when we're not' (1996), written and distributed by the PWA Health Group and the People With AIDS Coalition – New York when a pharmaceutical company was allowed to set up booths during a display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington D.C. ("We know our hearts are sick when drug companies are allowed to hawk their wares next to the largest, most creative, most personal, and most explicit memorial for people with AIDS ever").

While the speeches and texts listed above all foreground the aesthetic dimensions of politics, both through their use of rhetoric and modes of distribution, the investment in the manifesto provoked within AIDS activism is perhaps most usefully explored in

relation to the cultural response to the crisis by artists and graphic designers associated with ACT UP. Turning to manifestos helps us to understand the extent to which the cultural response to AIDS altered fundamentally the way that politics and aesthetics were imagined both within and without queer social movements. For groups like Gran Fury as well as other artists associated with ACT UP New York, such as Gregg Bordowitz, language was a central component of artistic practice. Gran Fury, for example, produced posters, leaflets and interventions into mainstream newspapers that deployed stark slogans to raise awareness whilst simultaneously holding mass media outlets, pharmaceutical companies and the state to account. Their posters utilised methods borrowed from corporate advertising as well as strategies appropriated from examples of postmodern art, for example the well-known text-image pieces of artists like Barbara Kruger. In *AIDS Demographics*, Crimp and Rolston explore these strategies, writing that ‘for AIDS activist artists, rethinking the identity and role of the artist also entails new considerations of audience’.<sup>20</sup> Along with independent video, network television and radio, Gran Fury’s graphic designs constitute forms of public address in ways that productively resonate with the tenets of the manifesto form. Using the polemic as an organising principle for these graphic interventions is suggestive not only of the rhetoric they employed or even the demands they made but also how those materials were circulated and distributed in ways that contributed, as the manifestos of gay, lesbian and trans liberation had before them, to burgeoning political networks.

In his text ‘The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous’ (1993), the artist and writer Gregg Bordowitz references a manifesto produced by actor and writer Charles Ludlam who died from AIDS related pneumonia in 1987. The text begins with a reproduction of Ludlam’s own manifesto, the ‘Manifesto: Ridiculous Theater, Scourge of Human Folly’ (1975), in which the older artist set out the terms for his Ridiculous Theater. (The

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<sup>20</sup> Crimp and Adam Rolston, p. 19.

stipulations for such a theatre include: “The things one takes seriously are one’s weaknesses” and “The theater is a humble materialist enterprise which seeks to produce riches of the imagination, not the other way around”). Reproduced at the beginning of Bordowitz’s text, the manifesto is followed by a quotation from Gertrude Stein’s ‘Composition as Explanation’ (1925-26), in which the modernist writer noted that ‘nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition’.<sup>21</sup> Under the sign of Stein’s reflections on the repetitions and differences bound up in generational relationships, Borowitz’s text introduces Ludlam under the title “A Fantasy About a Father”. What follows however, does not reproduce the generational form of a father and a son, rather it invokes the queer reproduction of inheritance associated with the AIDS crisis. Describing his desire for Ludlam to ‘fuck [him] without a condom’, Bordowitz articulates a queer heritage that reproduces rhetorically along lines of desire rather than through (hetero)sexual reproduction.

Bordowitz’s emphasis on writing as practice has been said to follow in the tradition of artists like Yvonne Rainer, who have made ‘writing an integral part of an artistic practice’.<sup>22</sup> Bordowitz’s writing not only allows us to reflect on the claim of an artist to political subjectivity but also to understand the temporal dynamics at work within manifestos produced in the context of the AIDS crisis. As I suggested in my brief discussion of Wojnarowicz’s *Untitled (One day this kid...)*, the complex temporalities surrounding works produced in the context of the AIDS epidemic in New York register as both political and affective response. Bordowitz dedicates ‘The AIDS Crisis is

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<sup>21</sup> Stein quoted in Gregg Bordowitz, *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous and Other Writings, 1986 - 2003*, ed. by James Meyer (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2004), 45.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, book jacket. On manifestos in general, and her ‘NO Manifesto’ (1965) in particular, Rainer writes ‘Polemics and manifestos having always served as sparkplugs to my energies and imagination, I’ve been surprised when, following their publication, such statements were taken with what seemed to be an excessive seriousness. Thus, in the mid-sixties, when I said “no” to this and “no” to that in dance and theatre, I could not foresee that these words would dog my footsteps and beg me to eat them (or at least modify them) for the next twenty years’. See Yvonne Rainer, ‘Thoughts on Women’s Cinema: Eating Words, Voicing Struggles’, in *In Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists*, Brian Wall (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art / The MIT Press, 1987), p. 380.

Ridiculous' to his friend, the art critic Craig Owens who died of an AIDS related illness in 1990. Employing the temporal characteristics of the manifesto genre in 'The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous', Bordowitz fantasises about a relationship between himself and Ludlam that extends beyond the death of the older man. The reproductive desire for a future imagined within the text is, however, deferred. Shuttling between the future and past, Bordowitz sets out a wish that can only fail. The explicit risk that surrounds Bordowitz's desire to "fuck" during the AIDS crisis is coupled with the impossibility of the desire in light of Ludlam's recent death. Here the generational difference that shifts the conditions of what can be "seen", in Stein's terms, is, Bordowitz writes, the AIDS epidemic. The impossible future act that Bordowitz imagines functions through the repetitive device of the contagious virus.<sup>23</sup> Doing so, he instead seeks to imagine impossible attachment retrospectively.

Media theorist Felicity Colman has suggested that 'the language of the manifesto is primarily given as an imperative command, but the wording of the manifesto is often couched in the future anterior – the language of hope – in its orientation toward shifting not only the future, but also the past'.<sup>24</sup> Bordowitz's text produces similar tenses that are familiar that are described here and are familiar within the manifesto form. However, both the impossibility of the act and the risk of infection resist the point of futurity. Although his reference to manifestos bears a relation to the principles of the avant-garde practice – pertinently Ludlam was himself an avant-garde figure – the text avoids futurity couched such terms. The future of the text is one that reproduces mimetically. With reference to the affective registers of fear surrounding tropes of reproduction, Valerie Rohy has written that the 'tropes of homosexual sterility mask a fear of [...]

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<sup>23</sup> This might sound like a worryingly metaphorical way to speak of AIDS and its devastating material consequences. But likenesses between the highjacking of public space through printed matter and the manner of a virus were explicit at the time. See Burk, 'Let The Record Show: Mapping Queer Art and Activism in New York City, 1986-1995'.

<sup>24</sup> Colman, p. 385.

homosexual reproduction – that is, a propensity to multiply not biologically but semiotically in an unsentimental, insistent form of replication, repetition and reproduction.’<sup>25</sup> For Bordowitz this kind of queer attachment functions through contagion that produces something like the ‘queer genealogies unmoored from the geometry of linear descent’ that Rohy describes.<sup>26</sup> Recourse to the manifesto allows the artist to access the temporalities of grief in order to make a claim to (having a) history when the terms of the future are, at a time of crisis, uncertain.

Manifestos speak, sometimes simultaneously, in the present, past and future tense. They do so as a political necessity, manifesting the aesthetic registers of politics. To pay attention to Bordowitz’s polemic is to understand how the methods and strategies employed within AIDS activism are organised in relation to time. The temporalities of the manifesto, facilitated through the rhetorical and material qualities of the texts, are ones that I have alluded to throughout this study. In the political atmosphere of the AIDS crisis, not only did the kinds of direct address enabled through manifestos facilitate claims of artists to public space, the temporalities of the manifesto form themselves enabled such a claim. Bordowitz’s text, which is written through with the material conditions of queer life alluded to by Russo in his speech “Why We Fight”, allows us to consider time as well as space in relation to the cultural response to the AIDS crisis. The investment and desires that characterise uses of the manifesto form at times of crisis renders legible the temporal dimensions of political action. Recoding the aesthetic dimensions of the manifesto in relation the struggle surrounding AIDS, these temporalities were not only carved out in relation to political urgency, they also looked to the past in order to carve out spaces for collective action in the present.

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<sup>25</sup> Valerie Rohy, “On Homosexual Reproduction,” *d i f f e r e n c e s: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 23 (2012), p. 102.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 124.

## left wanting

It is interesting that the exhibition *Read My Lips* highlighted the still nascent stages of AIDS cultural activism in Scotland in the early 1990s and how, at the same time, in the U.S., in the early 1990s the context that AIDS cultural activism had initially sought to speak to was transforming dramatically. The 1992 presidential primaries, leading to the election in which Bill Clinton took office, represented an important moment in histories of AIDS activism, signalling the end of two decades of Republican governance in the U.S. A groundswell of support that led to Clinton being elected by a landslide coincided with a less well-known story of lesbian poet Eileen Myles's attempt to run for Presidency the same year. Running as the only female candidate through a write-in campaign, a poem by Myles from 1991 illuminates her political motivations: 'The homeless are wandering / the streets of our nation's / greatest city. Homeless/ men with AIDS are among / them. Is that right? / That there are no homes/ for the homeless, that / there is no free medical/ help for these men. And women. / That they get the message / - as they are dying -/ that this is not their home?'<sup>27</sup> Myles's poem, highlighting as it does some of the political context of that moment, was inspired to run since 'It was 1991 and there wasn't any possibility that there would be a female candidate, a gay candidate, an artist candidate, a candidate making under \$50,000 a year, a minority candidate'<sup>28</sup>.

Myles's campaign for office inspired a manifesto written by the artist Zoe Leonard in 1992. The untitled text was distributed during the US presidential primaries in 1992 and recounts a list of demands for (im)possible presidential candidates starting

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<sup>27</sup> There is a video of Myles reading the poem online. See Eileen Myles, 'An American Poem', *Poetry Spots*, 1993 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mbmBSKiq5k>> [accessed 2 February 2015].

<sup>28</sup> Joanna Rothkopf, 'A Look Back at Eileen Myles' Revolutionary, "Openly-Female" Write-In Presidential Campaign', *The Slot*, 2016 <<http://theslot.jezebel.com/a-look-back-at-eileen-myles-revolutionary-openly-femal-1752734234>> [accessed 26 September 2016].

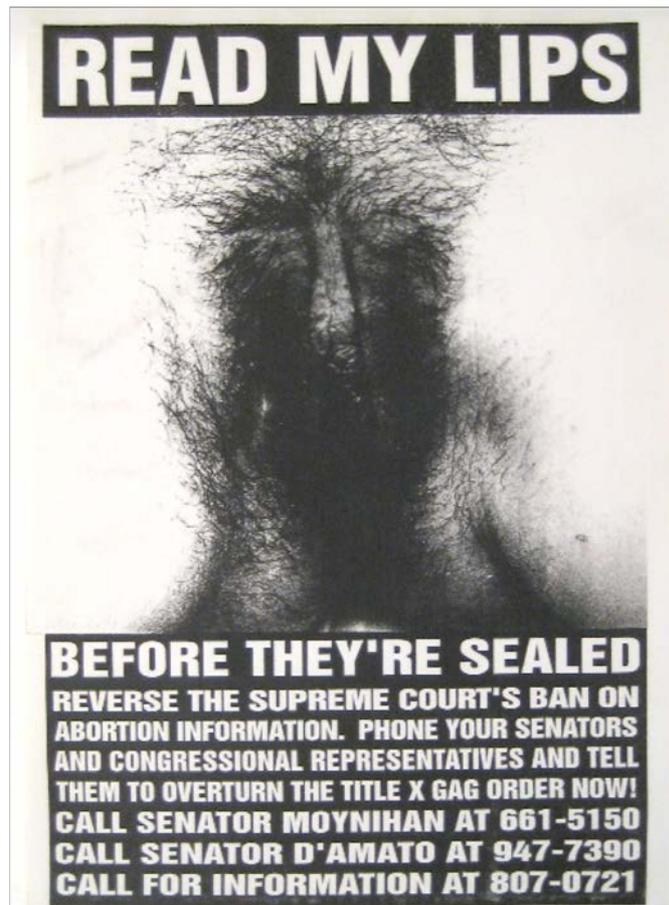


Figure 4.4. Gang, 'Read my lips before they're sealed' (1992). [Photocopy, 17" x 11"]  
Visual AIDS, New York City.

with, in the context of the so-called AIDS crisis and its devastating effects, “a dyke”, “a person with aids” and a “fag”. It continues in this vein with each demand structured by the device “I want”: “a black woman for president”... “someone with bad teeth”... “someone who crossdresses and has done drugs and been in therapy”. The device prefigures each of its possible candidates the text imagines, some of who become legible through hate crimes (“had a cross burned on their lawn”), others by what they lack (“someone with no air conditioning”) and others by their humility (“someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, who has made mistakes and learned from them”). Only the last few sentences break this rhythm to strike a more reflective tone as Leonard concludes: “And I want to know why this isn’t possible. I want to know

when we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught”. Leonard, an artist who was involved in ACT UP New York, circulated a manifesto on the streets of New York in the lead up to the primaries.

In a short piece of writing on Leonard’s manifesto, Michael Warner aligns it with similar strategies employed within cultural activism in the struggle against government neglect in its response to AIDS. Leonard’s text, he explains is ‘emblematic of a kind of street politics commensurate with this period of history of lesbian and gay activism’.<sup>29</sup> Leonard wrote the text at a time when, in the early 1990s, she was involved in AIDS activism through her participation in political groups in New York including ACT UP, Fierce Pussy, and Gang. Eichhorn considers the strategies employed by Fierce Pussy within her study of the relationship of the Xerox machine to agit-prop political activism, writing that the group were ‘occupying public spaces, or actively engaging in the production of lesbian-centred counter-publics’.<sup>30</sup> Eichhorn links the wheat pasted poster interventions that Fierce Pussy made on the street with the manifesto ‘Queers Read This’ in which the right to public life was demanded against the “right to privacy”. At the same time that Leonard was involved in contributed to material activist cultures on the street, she began to gain institutional recognition for her photographic work.<sup>31</sup> In 1992, Leonard intervened in Documenta IX, hanging photographs of cunts alongside paintings at the former Neue Galerie in Kassel, Germany. The act challenged, starkly,

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Warner, ‘Queer and Then?’, *The Chronicle Review*, 2012

[<www.chronicle.com/article/QueerThen-/130161/>](http://www.chronicle.com/article/QueerThen-/130161/) [accessed 25 August 2015].

<sup>30</sup> Kate Eichhorn, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century*, p. 140.

<sup>31</sup> Recognition from the art world was something that Leonard felt deeply ambivalent about. In an oral history interview conducted by Sarah Schulman as part of the ACT UP Oral History Project, initiated by Schulman with filmmaker Jim Hubbard, Leonard reflects “I remember actually being really torn, because it took a lot of time and energy, and I would think like, “Well, I want to go to the darkroom, but there’s this protest. Where do I go?” Like not having enough hours in the day to do everything. I alluded to this earlier, but the kind of more quiet, thoughtful, somewhat abstracted nature of my early work felt almost in direct competition with what I was doing in ACT UP that was so immediate. In truth, a lot of the time I thought, “This is ridiculous. Why the fuck am I an artist? I should become a nurse or something. I should do something useful with my life. This is ridiculous. I’m a complete dilettante.”

the lack of visibility of women within Western patriarchal institutions, in this case the museum. Though her involvement in collective politics has sometimes appeared at a remove from her often-subtle, solo-authored photographic work, there was also, as Tara Burk has argued at length in relation to many artists who were also members of ACT UP, crossover between the two.<sup>32</sup> The images that adorned the gallery walls at Documenta IX were directly influenced by those prepared for a campaign initiated by members of the group Gang. Produced in 1991, an image of female genitalia adorned with the slogan “READ MY LIPS / BEFORE THEY’RE SEALED”, utilised double entendre to suggest the body was speaking out against a ban on abortion information implemented by the senate (and riffing off the Gran Fury poster referenced at the beginning of this chapter). Disseminated under similar conditions, Leonard’s manifesto counters the extreme censorship of the Reagan administration by organising a politics around subjects who had been produced as abject or other by the state.

Leonard’s ‘I want a president’ was distributed at a time when Myles made the seemingly improbable attempt to register as a presidential nominee. Reflecting on what kind of politics of representation Leonard’s manifesto invests in, Michael Warner notes that the claim it makes for homosexuals to become part of the institutions of the state (“I want a dyke for president”) seems to imply a politics that might retroactively be named as homonationalism.<sup>33</sup> Though he never pursues this thought further, Warner’s wording is useful: ‘*seems to imply a politics*’.<sup>34</sup> Through the multiple subjects it invokes, Leonard’s manifesto works to disrupt the logic of the two-party political system at a time when gay and lesbian politics in the early 1990s as queer activism came to court

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<sup>32</sup> Burk, ‘Let The Record Show: Mapping Queer Art and Activism in New York City, 1986-1995’.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Warner. My emphasis.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

mainstream acceptance.<sup>35</sup> This increasing emphasis on equality figured for feminism as well as in gay and lesbian politics. Against this shift, the multiple demands of Leonard's text seem to complicate rather than bolster the model of representation through which, in the U.S., individuals secure their mandate to govern. In this light we might situate Leonard's manifesto alongside other radical separatist polemics produced by queers at this time, for example 'Queers Read This', attributed to Queer Nation, or 'The Dyke Manifesto', published by The Lesbian Avengers. As her stated desires for political representation, for 'Presidents', accumulate through the text, they expose the limitations of equality politics for feminists and queers. Through the multiple subjects it invokes, Leonard's manifesto refutes the very terms of the two-party political system in the US and exposes how that system undermines the politics of self-determination sought by AIDS activists.

Rather than outline a linear narrative of progressive rights discourse, the temporalities of Leonard's text are more complex. They do not attempt to stake a claim predicated on privileged access to institutions of power. Rather the demand that Leonard's manifesto makes undermines itself through its own insistent, perhaps even childish, refrain: "I want". The stubbornness of the child as it repeats its impossible and unanswerable request until it is blue in the face can be shown to counter progressive narratives of political change. The brattish quality of this central rhetorical device of Leonard's manifesto invokes the dismissal often made, by both the Right and the Left, of utopian politics as naïve (being a politics that literally wants too much). The time of Leonard's childish rhetoric returns us to is to a moment before we 'learnt otherwise'. Materialising the image of the child in relation to Leonard's text produces the possibility that we might seek to return to the past in order to learn again but this time

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<sup>35</sup> Sarah Schulman discusses this shift in gay and lesbian politics in the 1990s at more length in *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Life during the Reagan and Bush Years* (London: Routledge, 1994). p. 269.

along different lines. As such the text suggests a return to a prior moment in order to move forward, it undoes its own promise of a progress narrative predicated on futurity.

In her essay 'Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations' (2000) Elizabeth Freeman discusses the figure of the young girl in the context of her argument that generations are limiting models upon which to base accounts of queer and feminist politics. Writing there that references to the girl in riot grrrl activism of the early 1990s 'seem to epitomize Eve Sedgwick's suggestion that a genuinely queer politics must refuse to abject even the most stigmatized child-figure from formulations of adult political subjectivity'.<sup>36</sup> This 'girl-sign', she writes, 'acknowledges an uncontrollable past, the uncontrollability of the past, its inability to explain the present'.<sup>37</sup> Like the invocation of the child in the gay, lesbian and women's liberation manifestos that I discussed in my previous chapter, Freeman registers the girl as a fleeting yet charged presence on the landscape of early 1990s political activism. She does so in the context of a broader discussion relating to political generations, one that is resonate with both Bordowitz's 'The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous' and with Leonard's own manifesto.

If 'I want a president' recalls, through its various rhetorical turns, bodies that have been othered by dominant political systems, it also establishes itself within a lineage of manifesto forms through which marginalised groups have sought a collective voice. Here it is also worth noting that Leonard's manifesto does not look like the other kinds of materials that were circulated in relation to the AIDS crisis but rather is reminiscent either of the low-fi zine production of the riot grrrl movement or even of the manifestos distributed in the context of the 1970s. Similar to the DIY aesthetics employed by Fierce Pussy, the one page hand typed script looks more like Valerie Solanas's manifesto than the works that Gran Fury and other groups were producing

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<sup>36</sup> Freeman, p. 741.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

contemporaneously at the time. By 1991, much of Gran Fury's work was being produced on early word processing technology and typewriters sales figures were falling. Looking like it has been hastily run off on a typewriter (replete with errors) and then Xeroxed, it would be a mistake to think that text and design of 'I want a president' were only a consequence of limited resources. Leonard is an artist whose creative process is meticulous and deliberate, knowingly crafted to speak both to a queer and feminist tradition of manifesto writing. Her association with artists like Laura Cottingham, whose lesbian feminist interventions in queer art I discussed in the previous chapter, as well as her collaborations with women's group in ACT UP New York, locate Leonard in a tradition of feminist organising as much as emergent queer struggle.

For Freeman, the affective relationships we hold to past moments of political struggle do not simply imply nostalgic investments but rather accept 'the mutually disruptive energy of moments that are not yet past and yet are not entirely present either'.<sup>38</sup> This offers a useful frame to think of Leonard's 'I want a president' within a genealogy of feminist activism that returns us to the women's movement and the feminist art practices of the 1970s. Beyond permitting us to map genealogies of political activism and the influence of earlier moments of liberation politics upon AIDS activism contextualising Leonard's manifesto thus also helps us to understand how the progressive mapping of linear history effect the possibilities for activism in our present. The imaginative possibility held in the past image of the unschooled child is paired in Leonard's manifesto with another who cannot possibly belong to our future, that of the lover or friend who has died from AIDS exacerbated by government neglect. The transformation of grief into a political strategy has underpinned activist responses to the AIDS crisis, by emphasising that no AIDS-related death need be judged inevitable.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 742.

Although the desire to keep the dead with us is a tragically futile one, indeed perhaps because it was such, a politics organised around grief insisted that AIDS deaths were wholly and totally avoidable. Here again is registered a stubborn refusal of the terms of the present, a refusal to move on. The demands of Leonard's manifesto can thus be read as a material consequence of her proximity to the early years of the AIDS crisis, as one who 'lives lived in the shadow of an epidemic'.<sup>39</sup> Turned toward the future, the manifesto simultaneously refuses to consign the past to history as a political imperative, even if it is a futile demand. Indeed, especially because it is.

### **future sex acts**

The temporalities that Leonard's manifesto puts into motion resonate with 'GOOD LUCK... miss you' (Fig. 4.1), a manifesto distributed by the group Gran Fury in 1995. The text was written and circulated as a two sided paper slips for the exhibition *Temporarily Possessed: The Semi-permanent Collection* at the New Museum (15 September – 17 December 1995). This was the final exhibition that Gran Fury participated in as an active group; the manifesto was their parting gift. Manifestos often signal the beginnings of political movements or the formation of groups. Invested in the new, they have typically been used by historians to track the emergence of ideas, avant-garde aesthetics or generational divides. But the texts discussed throughout this chapter reveal that manifestos also speak to history in specific ways, both through the historic claims that they make to self-determination and through the mobilisation of the past in the present. The manifestos that this thesis explores, rather than foreground only investments in the idea of the future, also show the historic returns that have been central to queer social movements. Produced not to announce the beginning of a group

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<sup>39</sup>J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

but rather the end of it, 'GOOD LUCK... Miss you' aptly describes the considerations of temporality that this thesis suggests manifestos direct us toward.

Designed digitally and printed as an off-set two sided flyer, 'GOOD LUCK... Miss you' strikes an apocalyptic tone in its first line. 'Life at the end of every century is typified by fear and anxiety'.<sup>40</sup> It goes on: 'Apocalypse theories abound: nationalism and xenophobia encourage isolation. Urban violence, economic decline and AIDS have contributed to a reactionary environment where progressive thought is anathema'.<sup>41</sup> Written in 1995 and intended to be their last collectively authored work, Gran Fury's manifesto responded to the AIDS epidemic eight years after ACT UP New York officially formed. In the text, Gran Fury set out a brief history of their collaboration that are worth repeating here. The group were formed in Autumn 1987 after Bill Olander, a curator at the New Museum, invited members of ACT UP to use the front window space of the museum as part of their political activism. A number of members of the larger group took up the invitation and this became the installation Let The Record Show, an important event in the history of AIDS cultural activism. In 'GOOD LUCK... Miss You' he group write that 'Afterwards, many of us continued to meet; the project's enthusiastic reception confirmed our feelings that more work needed to be done exploring the political and social dimensions of the AIDS crisis'.<sup>42</sup> These subsequent meetings outside of ACT UP allowed members of the group who were artists and designers to employ their skills, 'which streamlined the process of working in the large weekly meetings'.<sup>43</sup> Over the course of its life, the group that became known as Gran Fury comprised a shifting constellation of artists including Marlene McCarty, Tom Kalin, Mark Simpson and Loring McAlpin, who were key members of the group for the

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<sup>40</sup> Gran Fury, 'Good Luck... Miss You' (1992). New York Public Library. Manuscripts and Archives Division. MssCol 3648, , n.p.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

time it was active.<sup>44</sup> Gran Fury formed out of the material necessity to develop visual strategies of organising around the AIDS crisis in the U.S. at a time when ‘culture is run on carefully crafted words and images. They are given tremendous authority, and have the power to shape society's responses’.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike their better known works that employed stark slogans and slick graphics, ‘GOOD LUCK... Miss you’ represents a somewhat verbose offering to the public. It was available to audiences of *Temporarily Possessed: The Semi-permanent Collection* as a takeaway flyer. As the manifesto outlines, by 1995, the world had changed from the one that Gran Fury emerged into:

The circumstances surrounding AIDS activism have radically changed since its beginning in 1986. Both the Executive Branch and the Congress have changed hands. America is in "decline". Communism is "dead". Internationally, politics have moved further to the right, and the citizenry of the United States has become more insular<sup>46</sup>

The manifesto tracks political shifts that have taken place since 1986, the year before ACT UP was established in New York City. Those shifts also represent changing contexts relating to the awareness surrounding AIDS and the availability of information in mainstream venues. However, the manifesto makes clear that, ‘Within the last two years, studies (conducted largely at the initiative of the gay and lesbian community) have revealed that the current efforts to prevent HIV transmission among self-identified gay men are failing, in spite of significant advances made to promote condom use’.<sup>47</sup> The manifesto thus takes up the peculiar task of disbanding a collective group, one closely associated with the most powerful activism surrounding the AIDS crisis, and the recognition that the on-going effects of that crisis continue still.

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<sup>44</sup> In total there were eleven members. They were: Elovich, Avram Finkelstein, Amy Heard, Tom Kalin, John Lindell, Loring McAlpin, Marlene McCarty, Donald Moffett, Michael Nesline, Mark Simpson and Robert Vazquez

<sup>45</sup> Gran Fury, n.p.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

‘GOOD LUCK... Miss You’ raises two considerations relating to failure. On the one hand, the manifesto highlights the continuing inadequacy of the response to HIV and AIDS by government and medical institutions. On the other, it turns to toward the failures of its own strategies. The text reflects upon the group’s visual activism, which they write has steadily shifted from an urgent political response to something that feels like ‘a signature style, a convenient product for the art world to use to fulfil its desire to "do something" about the AIDS crisis’.<sup>48</sup> This damning self-reflection relates to increasingly intimate relationships with art world institutions along with the group’s increasing contacts with a European context. Offering a parallel narrative to the *Read My Lips* exhibition in Glasgow in 1992, the group’s inability to grasp the specific conditions surrounding local experiences of the crisis caused them to feel ‘handicapped’.<sup>49</sup> Alongside this open discussion of the changing contexts for their work, and subsequently at least one project, in Montréal, that ‘backfired’, the group also allude to the more ambivalent figure that Bill Clinton cut as President compared to Reagan and Bush: ‘while not providing strong leadership for the AIDS crisis, is not easily demonized, and does not make openly hostile or stupidly misinformed remarks about AIDS’.<sup>50</sup> Recognising these various issues, Gran Fury assert that ‘though it may seem to many that the activism spawned by ACT UP had died, it has not. It has shifted focus’.<sup>51</sup>

Under the sub-heading ‘Future Sex Acts’, Gran Fury’s manifesto concludes by setting out a future for AIDS activism that, as with Bordowitz’s writing discussed earlier in this chapter, works to engender the survival of queer sex. This struggle is one geared toward the complex emotional needs necessitated by a community that has experienced crisis, and loss, on an unprecedented scale. The argument Gran Fury set out

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

here outlines a programme that allows future sexual exchanges and intimacies to be imagined despite the associated risks. 'GOOD LUCK... miss you' makes its political claims in relation to desiring bodies. Upon these it locates its sentiment for the future. The urgency of the text is precisely in finding a way for future attachments to be possible, not for the sake of survival through biological reproduction but for the sake of survival that is queerly writ through pleasure and, like Leonard's manifesto, the political necessity of an on-going relationship to the past. Through the multiple temporalities of the manifesto form, 'GOOD LUCK... miss you' makes possible a form of grief that takes bodies into the future through its transformation into action. Like Bordowitz's desire to have unprotected sex even at risk of infection, Gran Fury refuse the pathologising future tense of healing that Colman alerts us to, instead forging more complex temporal registers. Looking back to a time when sex without fear of infection was possible, it sets out a programme in which desire is not couched in terms of illness and fear. Printed on a pink pamphlet and distributed on the Day Without Art, an annual action organised across various venues, cities and countries to coincide with World AIDS Day on the 1 December. There were always difficulties for Gran Fury, of working within the context of art institutions. Crimp stresses that the group realised that 'no work made within the confines of the art world as it is currently constituted will reach these people. Activist art therefore involves questioning not only of the nature of cultural production but also of the location, or the means of distribution, of that production.'<sup>52</sup> Likewise, the deferred future of the manifesto form operates through failure even as it sets out to speak in an ardent and unfaltering tone. For Jack Halberstam, failure is placed in opposition to the 'scenarios of success that that depend upon "trying and trying again."<sup>53</sup> In this sense, the ellipsis in 'GOOD BYE... Miss You' is filled with meaning. When words fail us it is often the case that only action will

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<sup>52</sup> Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002), p. 37.

<sup>53</sup> Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 3.

do. Gran Fury advocate for a programme that is not pathologising to sick or destructive behaviours, that accommodates for desires to have unprotected sex despite the risk of infection. Made at a point when drug cures were looking less and less likely, their programme is located necessarily outside of the tense of curing, it cannot *wait* for that. In the US a ‘pink slip’ signifies the termination of employment. In other words, it is a sign of redundancy. Announcing itself redundant at the moment of its issue, Gran Fury’s pink slip demonstrates how things remain radical or disruptive precisely because they refuse (or otherwise cannot) work under the present system.

### **AIDS in the time of art history**

Gran Fury’s graphics recently began to circulate, online and also in a series of exhibitions dedicated to the group. Responding to this renewed visibility of AIDS cultural activism that had initially been produced in 1980s, artists Vincent Chevalier and Ian Bradley-Perrin produced a poster on which was written the slogan: “Your nostalgia is killing me”. The poster features a computer-generated image of a bedroom replete with wallpapers by Keith Haring and the group General Idea. Alluding to the cultural enclave of the teenage bedroom, the walls are covered in posters produced in the 1980s in the context of the epidemic. Reminiscent of a curated show of print ephemera, the artefacts include Gran Fury’s ‘Read My Lips’ poster alongside a ‘SILENCE = DEATH’ poster, black with the image of a pink triangle on it. They also include an image from a United Colours of Benetton advert – famously featuring an image of a normative family (mother, father, daughter) gathered around the hospital bed of an emaciated man (his name, David Kirby, 1957-1990) – and a controversial photograph of pop star Justin Beiber sporting an ACT UP T-Shirt. Chevalier and Bradley-Perrin, two HIV positive young gay men, produced the poster in recognition of the renewed circulation of images, which they feel function both to aestheticize and depoliticise histories of AIDS

struggle. Responding to the changing context for AIDS activism, as Gran Fury did in ‘GOOD LUCK... Miss You’, the poster reacted to the way in which a circulation of past images of struggle became equated with the idea that the crisis belonged to the past.

Chevalier and Bradley-Perrin’s poster responded to a broader context cultural projects that have explicitly foregrounded the legacy of AIDS cultural activism associated with ACT UP New York. Along with the long term oral history project undertaken by Schulman with filmmaker Jim Hubbard,<sup>54</sup> in the past few years, several exhibitions have revisited the legacy of this moment, including *ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987–1993*, co-curated by Helen Molesworth, Maisie K. and James R. Houghton at The Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts and the Harvard Art Museum in 2009 and at White Columns in New York in 2010. In the U.K., materials from ACT UP have been included in *Disobedient Objects*, at the V&A in 2014 and a more modest exhibition, *A Public Resource*, at Cubitt Gallery, London, in Winter 2016. Like *Read My Lips* at Tramway, more recent examples of exhibitions foreground issues relating to public space, and once again, a fraught negotiation of the “outside” and the “inside” within a different political climate. Perhaps these projects need be differentiated from the uncritical circulation of images that Chevalier and Bradley-Perrin critique in their poster. Nonetheless, they also raise potential issues relating to the ways that political movements are historicized. Showing nostalgia to be one mechanism through which politics is consigned to the past, Chevalier and Bradley-Perrin reveal the material consequences in such lapses (or fantasies) of remembrance.

In this chapter, I have argued that manifestos produced by artists in the first decade of the AIDS crisis, have mobilised the past in specific ways. The consequence that this idea might have to history is written through the discipline of art history as it

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<sup>54</sup> The two collaborated on the film *United in Anger: A history of ACT UP (2012)*, which took as its focus the work of ACT UP New York).

shifted in relation to the crisis in the 1980s. As with art practice, the idea of the polemic also helps to frame the way that AIDS and art history intersected in the 1980s. Perhaps best represented by the special edition of *OCTOBER*, discussed earlier in this chapter, AIDS cultural activism contributed a realignment of art with politics. It also prompted foundational developments in the intersecting fields of queer studies and art history, where I locate this study. An event in the year before Crimp edited the special edition of *OCTOBER* allows reflection on his ‘first foray into talking about my subject position as a gay man writing criticism in the art world,’ during a series of discussions took place at the Dia Art Foundation in New York.<sup>55</sup> The proceedings are recorded in a small book, number one in the Dia Art Foundation Discussion in Contemporary Culture series. Edited by Hal Foster, the book includes transcripts of talks that took place within the six-week series between February and March 1987. The first two events in this series, related to the subject of “the cultural public sphere” and included presentations by art historian Thomas Crow, artist Martha Rosler, art critic Craig Owens and Douglas Crimp. Figured around the interconnecting ideas of art and politics, audiences and publics, the four papers (and speakers) responded to one another throughout the event. In his paper, Crimp responded to a presentation the week before in which the art historian Thomas Crow had, in Crimp’s opinion, blamed the ‘current market domination of art on a balkanization of political struggle that issued from the New Left in the 1960s’.<sup>56</sup> Crimp continued that ‘I don’t think we can begin, then, by assuming that we know what the stakes are for all of us in this room. There was a button that people in the gay movement used to wear that said, “How dare you assume I’m a heterosexual”. And I guess that’s what I’d like to say to Tom Crow: How dare you assume that my stakes are the same as yours’.<sup>57</sup> Identifying a problem of recognition, Crimp shows how generational models in the art historical writing of movements, the

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<sup>55</sup> Crimp and Danbolt.

<sup>56</sup> *Discussions in Contemporary Culture: Number 1*, ed. by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

ones that allow for Crow to consign political struggle to the past in a move that will be familiar to many, threaten the legibility of politics in our present. One occlusion the Crimp identifies here is of feminism. For Crimp, feminism was critical to his own political consciousness. ‘Around the time that I was reading these first “gay liberation books”, I was also reading feminist books. I read Kate Millett, Germaine Greer – the early books of second-wave feminism. It was very easy to read those as being about yourself if you were gay. When you read analysis of misogyny or patriarchy, as a gay man you understand your relationship to it easily.’<sup>58</sup> Here he traces a line in his own work between feminism and gay liberation, a marker of a temporal anomaly that throws into disarray Crow’s reference, in Crimp’s words, to the “balkanization of political struggle that issued from the New Left in the 1960s”.

In the context of the late 1980s and early 1990s, works like those presented in *Read My Lips* were characterised by a sense of urgency compatible with the emergence of queer politics. Produced at a time of perceptible crisis, which is the time of the present, these exhibitions contributed to a collective writing of that crisis into history.<sup>59</sup> The curatorial issues surrounding print ephemera are the focus of an essay by Burk that makes case studies of two exhibitions of Gran Fury’s output that happened at Harvard and White Columns New York. Reflecting on these methods of distribution, Burk writes that ‘Particularly in the first fifteen years of the AIDS epidemic (1981 – 1996), ephemera (including poster, fliers, stickers, T-shirts and buttons) informed mass publics about HIV/AIDS... an important outcome of each show was the contingent nature of

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<sup>58</sup> Crimp and Danbolt.

<sup>59</sup> The political dimensions of melancholia were key to these exhibitions. For example, Fierce Pussy produced the work *Get Up Everyone and Sing*, a series of language based interventions to coincide with the presentation at White Columns. Comprised of a series of statements that began ‘if he/she were alive today’ such as ‘if he were alive today you’d would be going dancing later’ or ‘if he were alive today he’d still be living with AIDS’, these slogans struck a more melancholic tone than the statements that adorned posters produced by Gran Fury.

activist ephemera.<sup>60</sup> For Burk, the use of ephemera is closely associated to the urgency of political struggles, that it ephemeral objects can be easily and quickly produced to react at times of crisis. Burk's essay explains the ways that ephemera came to circumscribe contemporary experience and queer experience. Though she does not mention manifestos, her account of AIDS activist art reflect upon the ways that encounters with print ephemera, including manifestos frame our interactions with histories of political struggle.

There is one last exhibition I would like to attend to here. Held at the Ritzy Cinema in Brixton between 1st - 31st March 2016, the small exhibition was organised by members of ACT UP London. This was not, however, the same ACT UP group that had been formed in London by Watney and others years earlier. Instead the group formed of younger activists came together to address ongoing issues of AIDS in 2015. Since then they have undertaken numerous actions especially concerning the availability of PREP, a preventative treatment for communities at high risk of getting AIDS. Recent actions have utilised strategies of struggles past whilst also using new media platforms. On their blog, various graphics from Gran Fury and ACT UP, found on the internet, are used to illustrate posts about their activity.<sup>61</sup> A renewed sense of urgency characterises what the group refer to as a 'second HIV silence', one which is told through notes to editors and press releases as much as manifestos. Reminiscent of *Read My Lips*, the exhibition at The Rizy represents a starting point for artists and activists in London. Not only moving between New York and U.K. however, it also closes the distance between then and now in order to inspire a new generation of AIDS activism. In the exhibition, amongst Gran Fury materials, copied or ripped off the

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<sup>60</sup> Tara Burk, "From the Streets to the Gallery: Exhibiting the Visual Ephemera of AIDS Cultural Activism," *Journal for Curatorial Studies*, 2 (2013). p. 34.

<sup>61</sup> See: <https://actuplondon.wordpress.com/>

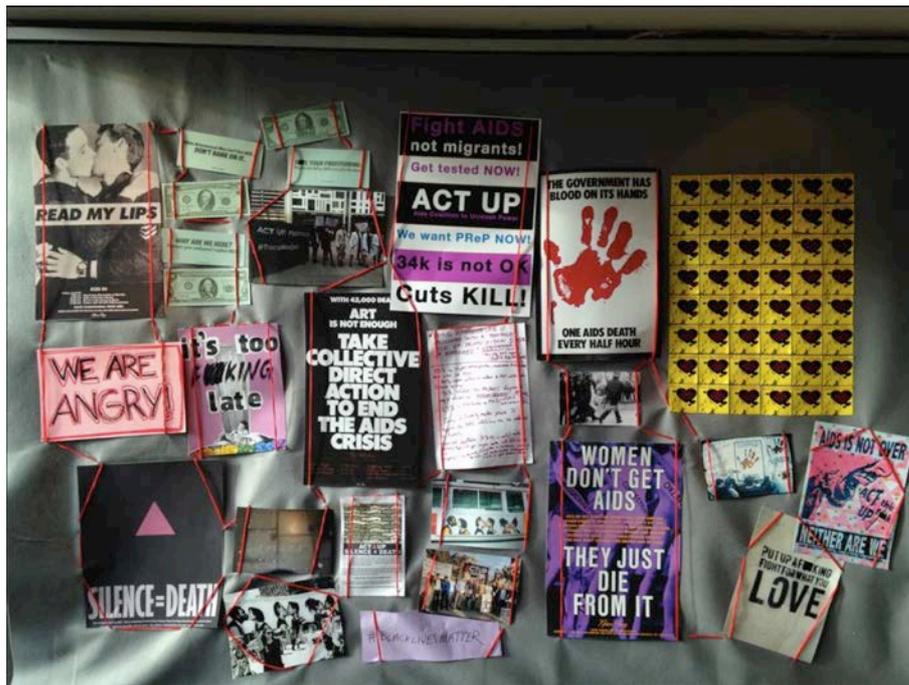


Figure 4.5. Documentation from ‘AIDStravaganza – love and rebellion’, Ritzy Cinema, Brixton, 1-31 March (2016). ACT UP London.

internet, were new posters, a couple of handmade sign including one that reads ‘Black Lives Matter’. The group make the interesting move of using political materials from the 1980s in order to address what the exhibition text describes as “the common mistaken belief that HIV was resolved in the 1980s”. A new manifesto outlines the aims of the group:

*We fight to challenge the stigma that still surrounds HIV.*

*We believe in the liberation of sexuality and sex positivity.*

*We are feminist women and pro-feminist men.*

*We believe that race, culture, religion; misogyny, sexism and homophobia; poverty, poor education; being told you’re no good, you’re useless, are important issues to an understanding of the oppression that individuals with HIV face.*

*We fight for migrant rights because we see war, invasion, terrorism; pollution and drought caused by global warming as the prime cause of migration. We believe that positive migrants should be able to access the same free HIV services that we have.*

*We urge you to come out and invite you to overthrow your inhibitions by being active instead of the passive spectator.*

The emphasis on the active rather than the idea of a passive spectator implies a kind of viewership linked to politics, suggestive of the legacies enabled through the temporalities of AIDS manifestos and the new manifesto published by the group.

Meeting a prominent AIDS activist two or so years ago to talk about this research, he mentioned to me that a “young man” has been to see him to speak about reforming ACT UP. The older activist was deeply critical of this intention, suggesting along the lines of Gran Fury’s manifesto that now more than ever new invention is required. Yet that would be to ignore the other possibility that Gran Fury produced through their manifesto. Tracing the temporalities that are utilised by manifestos such as those by Leonard, Gran Fury and Bordowitz, I have attended to the ways that each of these texts attempts to mobilise histories in order to opening up different possibilities for thinking political generations in the present. Thinking of AIDS polemics in the time of art history, it might be more interesting – or politically necessary perhaps – to consider instead the idea of an art history that continues to be written in the time of AIDS polemics. To understand the temporalities at work in these texts is to understand the way that time has been put to work against queer subjects in ways that continue to elide them. The manifestos discussed here do not neglect the past in their desire to turn to the future and demand of us that we continue to turn to our own present in the accounts that we produce as historians.



Figure 5.1, Banner made by Nicola Guy for 'I want a president' collective reading in London, 6 May 2015

**5. EPILOGUE:  
ZOE LEONARD'S 'I WANT A PRESIDENT' IN THE FUTURE TENSE**

**1992/2015**

*I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for vice president and I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place where the earth is so saturated with toxic waste that they didn't have a choice about getting leukemia. I want a president that had an abortion at sixteen and I want a candidate who isn't the lesser of two evils and I want a president who lost their last lover to aids, who still sees that in their eyes every time they lay down to rest, who held their lover in their arms and knew they were dying. I want a president with no airconditioning, a president who has stood on line at the clinic, at the dmv, at the welfare office and has been unemployed and layed off and sexually harassed and gaybashed and deported. I want someone who has spent the night in the tombs and had a cross burned on their lawn and survived rape. I want someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, who has made mistakes and learned from them. I want a Black woman for president. I want someone with bad teeth ~~and an attitude~~, someone who has eaten ~~that nasty~~ hospital food, someone who crossdresses and has done drugs and been in therapy. I want someone who has committed civil disobedience. And I want to know why this isn't possible. I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.*

On the 6 May 2015, the evening before the last U.K. General Election, about fifty of us gathered in Trafalgar Square to read aloud Zoe Leonard's 'I want a president'. As we read, we alternated between Leonard's manifesto and a revised version based loosely on the original text. As individual voices were carried in and out of audibility, the demands they shaped became markers for two different, geographically and temporally remote, locations. Multiple iterations of "I" fell in and out of unison; readers lost their place only to find their pace again among the others. Some chose not to read, mingling with our group or else standing on the peripheries with the crowd who had stopped to watch, bemused or interested by the sight. For an hour we carved out a space in the city, stood together if not always in sync. As we read, the papery bodies of the text threatened to disintegrate in heavy rain.

The collective reading of Leonard's text in London is one of a number of similar events to have been organised internationally since 2010. The series of readings were initiated by a group of Swedish artists, Malin Arnell, Kajsa Dahlberg, Johanna Gustavsson and Fia-Stina Sandlund, in Stockholm. The four artists, who have a history of collaborating with one another, came across Leonard's text as a postcard reproduced in the U.S. feminist genderqueer journal LTTR.<sup>1</sup> That year, in the lead up to the Swedish General Election, they invited friends to read the text aloud as an act of public resistance against the homophobic and racist Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats) who were expected to gain more seats in parliament that year. This first reading took place in Sergels Torg, a public square in the centre of Stockholm and the location where mainstream parties campaign in the lead up to elections. During the reading of Leonard's text, the square filled with a more disparate group of individuals, connected not through party politics but through Stockholm's intersecting queer, feminist and art scenes. Then, as with the recent reading in London, the group alternated between

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<sup>1</sup> The acronym has stood variously for Lesbians to the Rescue and Listen Translate Translate Record.

Leonard's text and a new version, this time translated into Swedish. Nearly two decades after Leonard first distributed the text on the streets of New York in the lead up to the presidential primaries in which Bill Clinton became the democratic nominee, the manifesto was repeated in a different time, place and language.

Dahlberg explains that the initial reading was organised with a sense of urgency, the invitation was 'sent [...] out to people that we knew in Stockholm [...] it was very spontaneous too, we didn't get the police permission'.<sup>2</sup> Although never intended to be anything more than a single event, a number of subsequent readings have been organised at the invitation of various individuals and groups internationally including in Madrid (2011), San Juan (2012), London (2015) and Washington D.C. in October 2016, with a further one scheduled, at the time of writing, for New York later in the same month.<sup>3</sup> Each collective reading organised since the initial invitation in Stockholm rearticulates Leonard's text in the present. Such a statement is obviously true but no less important. Inviting others to reiterate the demands of Leonard's text, the series of collective readings emphasize the temporalities already written into the manifesto, as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, ones that mobilise affective registers of grief to make a series of demands for the future. Congregating in a city square, the series of collective readings also work to remake manifesto's claim to the public sphere anew.

A persistent line of inquiry returned to throughout this thesis has focused on the relationship between history, aesthetics and queer politics as read through the manifesto form. Considering how manifestos have circulated in relation to queer social movements emerging in New York from the 1960s onward, I have attempted to show

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<sup>2</sup> Kajsa Dahlberg, in conversation with the author as part of the exhibition *Inessential Fathers: An invitation to read together* at Archive Kabinett, Berlin, 17 September 2014 (co-curated with Nicola Guy).

<sup>3</sup> Readings have taken place in Stockholm (September 2010), Tallinn (June 2011), Åhus (September 2011), Copenhagen (September 2011), Madrid (November 2011), Helsinki (January 2012), Paris (April 2012), San Juan (November 2012), London (May 2015 and July 2015) and Washington D.C. (October 2016).

the ways that the temporalities of these forms have proved crucial to the historic claims made by various groups within the rubric of queer history. Through the manifestos produced by groups associated with the gay, lesbian and trans liberation movements, a series of re-readings of Valerie Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto' and the polemics produced by groups associated with ACT UP New York during the early years of the on-going AIDS crisis, I have suggested that the mobilization of the past has been a central facet of these movements. This becomes legible through the manifestos I discuss, namely through the ways that they are invested in to disrupt mechanisms of social reproduction. With this in mind, my final chapter turns to consider the act of reading of a text 1992 in a public square in 2010 and in doing so attempts to trace a lineage of queer struggle, one that continues to invest in the disturbing qualities of the manifesto form.

In the collective readings that are the focus of the chapter, Leonard's manifesto, once distributed on the street, is re-inscribed into public space. As I have already noted, this happens at a temporal and spatial remove from the time and place in which it was first written and distributed. Reinvesting in the space of a public square, historically associated with modern conceptions of the public sphere and democracy, the collective readings underscore the investment that Leonard's manifesto seemingly makes in the U.S. Presidency. As was touched upon by the previous chapter, Leonard's manifesto was written against the backdrop of the AIDS crisis and the climate of cultural activism represented by groups like ACT UP New York, of which she was a member. Turning to ACT UP and associated groups, I have argued that investments in polemic forms can be tracked within strategies of protest that sought to mobilise through media and street politics. In this context, Leonard's manifesto performed a rhetorical claim for the highest public office in the U.S. Distributed on marches in the lead-up to the election, it corresponded to a rethinking of the public sphere at a time when, as Michael Warner

has written, the concept of the social was under radical renegotiation, a consequence of the neo-liberal policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations in the U.S. and Thatcher governments in the U.K.<sup>4</sup>

Spoken collectively in 2010, or 2012, or 2016, Leonard's manifesto finds meaning against a different political context to the one it was originally written in. I have argued that the text once found meaning within the new cultural activism emerging in the context of the AIDS crisis but also in the reorganisation of the public sphere undertaken by neo-liberal government policy in the 1980s. Now, it finds meaning against the legacy of both of these political projects. On the one hand, the legal recognition surrounding certain queer subjects has shifted dramatically as a direct result of AIDS activism. The increased recognition is reflected in a range of policy changes, most recently, in the U.S., the sanctioning of same sex marriage as well as the acceptance of trans people to serve in the military. On the other, the financial crisis ongoing since 2007-08, fuelled by the continuing ideological shape of neo-liberal policy, threatens to dismantle entirely the basis upon which post-war welfare programmes were established. As I go on to explore in this chapter, both of these have significant effects on understandings of the public sphere, in ways that register through the re-reading of Leonard's manifesto. The readings occur at a time when queer and feminist art practices have a degree of visibility within the art world. The readings, organised by artists or at least facilitated by networks that are in part art world ones, represent an investment in the political dimensions of art as well as the aesthetic dimensions of politics. This investment is signalled not only by the seemingly simple gesture of organising an event outside of the gallery but also in the genealogy the project maps, as the organisers of the project locate themselves – and by extension the readers – within a lineage of queer activist art to which Zoe Leonard is indelibly associated.

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<sup>4</sup> Warner.

## **out from the cold**

Whilst manifestos are often spoken about in terms of their writers, they have less often been addressed for their readers. If we think of the manifesto as a platform upon which a claim is made to a political voice, readers are necessary agents in the transmission of its address. Distributed at political demos in the form of leaflets, reproduced in zines, circulated in books and online, manifestos are forms of printed and digital ephemera that demand readers. Taking their readers into account urges that we consider not only the rhetorical claims of texts but also the networks through which manifestos accrue meaning beyond the intentions of the author. Observing that reading is to some degree always already a social practice helps to foreground the manifesto as a relational form. It also works to align the form with the political operation of other kinds of ephemera produced by and within counter-cultural movements.

Thinking about a manifesto through its readers allows consideration of an encounter between four artists in Sweden and Leonard's manifesto in the pages of a feminist zine. In 2006 Ginger Brooks Takashashi, a member of the New York-based collective LTTR (2002-2008), came across Leonard's manifesto taped to the older artist's fridge.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently Takashashi and her collaborators published it in the form of a small postcard, two copies of which were available in the fifth edition of the LTTR journal (2006). The fridge is the place at the heart of the home where we sometimes place things close to our hearts (a photograph of a lover, a postcard sent from elsewhere). The appearance of the manifesto within a domestic space is richly suggestive of the way that Leonard's manifesto takes up ground between personal and public spheres. The postcard format provides a metaphor for thinking about the circulation of Leonard's text. Reflecting on this movement, from the private setting into

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<sup>5</sup> Emily Roysdon in correspondence with the author, August 2015.

the public sphere, allows a line to be traced between Leonard's text and its subsequent reception.

The movement of Leonard's manifesto from fridge to publication describes a far more complex operation than the idea of moving from a private domestic space to public sphere first implies. Print ephemera produced within queer social movements circulates within both private and public systems of exchange.<sup>6</sup> In this way Leonard's manifesto is returned to circulation through various private transactions (for example between friends, through economic exchange in bookshops or zine distros or during research at a library).<sup>7</sup> The proximity of both Leonard and the members of the LTTR collective to the art world also means that manifesto has accrued visibility within another kind of institution, one that is at a remove from more DIY practices. In her essay 'LTTR: The artists' publication as a medium for performing a queer utopia', Rebecca Vreeland maps the venues within which the magazine was distributed:

The journal was printed in runs of 1,000 copies, distributed primarily at launch parties organised by LTTR, and at independent booksellers such as Printed Matter in New York City. As their project expanded, LTTR exhibited the journal at venues ranging from more alternative spaces such as Artists Space in New York City to mainstream venues such as the Generali Foundation (Vienna), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, and Documenta 12 (Kassel, Germany)<sup>8</sup>

Vreeland describes the movement of LTTR through a series of independent and mainstream venues as well as across continents to cities networked more by economies

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<sup>6</sup> Red Chidgey, 'Free, Trade: Distribution Economies in Feminist Zine Networks', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 35.1 (2009), pp. 28–37.

<sup>7</sup> The networks through which LTTR was distributed were foregrounded in the recent exhibition, "WE are LTTR" at Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm (23 May – 27 September 2015). Curated by Maria Lind with four former members of LTTR's editorial collective, the exhibition was accompanied every week by tours of the show with artists and groups, including Malin Arnell and the Norwegian queer curatorial group FRANK, who were invited to reflect on their relationship to the journal. These tours were an integral part of the retrospective that looked back to the recent history of LTTR.

<sup>8</sup> Rebecca Vreeland, 'LTTR: The artists' publication as a medium for performing a queer utopia', in *Theorizing Visual Studies: Writing through the Discipline*, ed. by James Elkins and Kristi McGuire (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), p. 155.

of contemporary art than they are by underground print cultures (Vienna, Kassel). Vreeland's list also enables us to track the visibility of queer and feminist practices through the period that the magazine was in operation, from 2002-2008. This timeframe is an interesting one since it reflects a period when attention was (re)turning to the currency of feminist and queer practice. Perhaps most perceptible through major exhibitions such as *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, curated by Cornelia Butler at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*, organised by Maura Reilly at the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, this moment has been commented upon by Catherine Grant, Annie Fletcher and others.<sup>9</sup> Grant in particular has assessed the contribution of LTTR to the reappearance of queer feminist practice in the academy, a legacy that a recent retrospective exhibition at Tensta Konsthall attempted to consolidate.

The inclusion of Leonard's manifesto in LTTR coincided with the reappearance of feminist and queer practices in the art world, which since the early 1990s largely neglected these histories and politics.<sup>10</sup> This gap returns us to the issue that Douglas Crimp encountered when at the Dia Foundation in 1987 he was confronted by colleagues who consigned the political dimensions of art to the past at the very moment that AIDS cultural activism was emerging. In her article 'Fans of Feminism: Re-Writing histories of second-wave feminism in contemporary art' (2011) Grant attends precisely to how such an issue of generational oversight plays out through contemporary feminist

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<sup>9</sup> See Catherine Grant, 'Fans of Feminism: Re-Writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art', *Oxford Art Journal*, 34.2 (2011), pp. 265–86 and Annie Fletcher, 'On Feminism (Through a Series of Exhibitions)', *Afterall*, 2008  
<<http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.17/feminism.through.series.exhibitions>>.

<sup>10</sup> In her essay 'Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics' Helena Reckitt argues that, whilst artists were increasingly drawn to thinking about relational or social practice in the 1990s, feminist art histories were elided from the curatorial and critical discourses that surrounding them. See Reckitt in Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, *Politics in a Glass Case Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgression* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013). See also Jones.

practice in relation to art associated with the Women's Liberation Movement.<sup>11</sup> Writing there about the re-interest in feminist and queer practice, she introduces the idea of the fan to explore the way that a younger generation of artists, including members of the LTTR collective, revisit histories of queer and feminist cultural production in their practice. Although some of the artists she interviews for her article do not identify with the figure of the fan, Grant's proposal helps to complicate the primacy of the mother-daughter relation in the charting of feminist 'waves'. This is important since it allows Grant to open up the queer dynamics that exist within feminist politics and history making. Recalling the appearance of Leonard's manifestos in the pages of LTTR thus requires that we consider a network of relations that are not only geographic but also connected through histories of queer and feminist cultural production.

This idea of queer and feminist art histories framed another presentation of Leonard's text in 2010, the same year that the reading in Stockholm took place. Ridykeulous, the collaborative practice of artists A. L. Steiner and Nicole Eisenman, which discussed earlier in this thesis, included 'I want a president' in their exhibition *Readykeulous: The Hurtful Healer: The Correspondence Issue* held at Invisible Exports, New York in 2010. (The exhibition was re-installed in 2014 as *Readykeulous: This is what liberation looks like™* at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia). As I alluded to in my discussion of their video *Times Square S.C.U.M. MANifesto*, Ridykeulous's creative projects draw out the queer dynamics of feminist art history calling attention to the ways that these have largely been neglected in existing accounts. *Readykeulous: The Hurtful Healer: The Correspondence Issue* included various works and print ephemera, moving Leonard's manifesto from the street to the gallery. This exhibition of a piece of print ephemera from a history of AIDS cultural activism is not quite like the kinds of exhibitions I discussed in Chapter Four since its stated ambition

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<sup>11</sup> Grant, 'Fans of Feminism: Re-Writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art' p. 276.

was to foreground contemporary political affinities. However, the exhibition of Leonard's text still raises similar questions to the observations made by Tara Burk relating to the way that ephemera from AIDS protests – and also by extension queer and feminist social movements – finds its way into the gallery.<sup>12</sup>

Conscious of the dangers of institutionalising queer and feminist political histories – but similarly aware of the ease with which these histories are ignored by institutions – Ridykeulous are attuned to the ways that their artistic labour is instrumentalised by public and private institutions alike. This is clear in their knowing titles, such as *Readykeulous: This is what liberation looks likeTM*, as well as the installation of work. For example, Leonard's manifesto appeared unsigned and pinned with the prize of a rosette to the gallery wall. Both things allude to the artists' knowledge that the issues surrounding the re-contextualisation of queer protest in a gallery. That 'I want a president' occupies a somehow ambiguous place in relation to Leonard's own practice is also important to note here. Given that the text was not intended to circulate as an artwork, my own discussions with Leonard have often returned to the question of authorship, which she claims as an artist over the text. Though the manifesto was not without its own kind of audience while it was pinned to Leonard's fridge, it now finds a substantially larger and more diverse audience as an artwork in a gallery. Through the intervention of artists, rather than curators, the manifesto is represented as part of a body of work belonging to Leonard. In the Ridykeulous shows, it is awarded with the most precious of gifts in North American contemporary art practice – a prize.

There are different ways of approaching the irreverent gesture that facilitates an encounter with Leonard's text in a gallery setting in which liberation is packaged and made palatable for an art world audience. Even the knowing joke and tongue-in-cheek

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<sup>12</sup> Burk, 'From the Streets to the Gallery: Exhibiting the Visual Ephemera of AIDS Cultural Activism'.

attitude assists in this function. Despite the antagonistic or disruptive possibilities that manifestos continue to offer, the positioning of this material within institutions nonetheless means that it is subject to forms of capital associated with the art world. Writing on the way that curating establishes publics around art works, Lara Perry alerts us to the way that ‘institutions, artists and curators can be complicit in fostering these different forms of capital value even as they deny them, challenge them or refute them’.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, with reference to this last point, perhaps it is precisely because they do. Perry’s interest as a feminist is not in the ways that art might provide space within which women to ‘engage in dialogues with one another about their social labour’.<sup>14</sup> Rather, she alludes to the ways that the feminization of the exhibition format withdraws it from the circulation of profit, significantly devaluing the work of both artists and curators. Perry starkly figures the problematic relation between social reproduction and the visibility of feminism within the gallery. Building upon this, I would argue that the relation Perry reveals threatens to be elided by the way artist-curators such as Ridykeulous produce feminist and/or queer critique as they simultaneously allow ephemeral objects case off from histories queer struggle to come into visibility within the exhibition.

It is interesting to consider how we might extend Perry’s argument to think about how works associated with historic moments of queer and feminist politics find audiences in the present. In the case of Leonard’s manifesto, the object now accumulates cultural capital from its historic association with an instance queer struggle. However, for the purposes of this study, I am more interested in Ridykeulous’s reinvestment in the manifesto as a disruptive force than pursuing this line of critique

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<sup>13</sup> Lara Perry, ‘Public Service Announcement: On the Viewer’s Role in Curatorial Production’, *On Curating*, 27 (2016), 93 <[http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-29-reader/public-service-announcement-on-the-viewers-role-in-curatorial-production.html#.V\\_6cipMrLEY](http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-29-reader/public-service-announcement-on-the-viewers-role-in-curatorial-production.html#.V_6cipMrLEY)>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Perry gestures to a broad definition of that category to include anyone self-identified as female, though I wonder how the argument might extend differently to the uneven access of trans women to institutional roles.

(urgent though it is). Like Laura Cottingham's writing about Solanas and the 'SCUM Manifesto' in the early 1990s, Ridykeulous's attentiveness to Leonard's text offers up cues for understanding the role of the manifesto in contemporary queer feminist practice more generally. Framed by the curatorial concerns of Ridykeulous, in these two exhibitions Leonard's manifesto is brought into focus as another footnote to feminist art histories that have historically been neglectful of the contribution of lesbian artists. Alongside other polemics that often appear in Ridykeulous's projects, Leonard's manifesto is given status for its potential to disturb these existing histories of feminist art. The manifesto allows for their intervention within those histories to take place, speaking as it does from the position of object of rather than author of those histories. Ridykeulous privilege the manifesto as one form that can intervene in the venues and canons of art history without being fully assimilated into its institutional structures.

The intergenerational nature of Ridykeulous's engagement with 'I want a president' is significant here, especially in relation to the recent phenomenon of archival practice in contemporary art. I have often wondered how younger artists provide legibility for the work of older artists that has had uneven institutional visibility. Or conversely, how reference to more established artists allow for less well-known projects to accrue certain kinds of social capital linked to visibility within the art world. Perhaps this is not quite the right question to ask of recent projects that revisit 'I want a president'. More interesting is the consideration such a gesture allows for artists to self-consciously position themselves within genealogies of marginal or underground cultural production – including those who “were there” – in ways that create cultural value. This returns to the invocation of someone like Solanas in contemporary art as a form of institutional critique that also helps to establish an explicit political identity for an artist. In this way, when 'I want a president' is re-presented by Ridykelous, it registers the political dynamics of Leonard's manifesto and in turn invites us to consider how

political genealogies are mapped through manifesto forms.<sup>15</sup>

Thinking through the appearance of Leonard's manifesto within a magazine or the exhibition offers a point of departure for thinking about the material networks through which Leonard's text has travelled and relatedly the work that it has been put to: from AIDS activism in New York in the early 1990s to Leonard's fridge in her New York apartment; through the distributed networks of a lesbian feminist collective and its print journal to the hallowed gallery spaces of the contemporary art museum. The movement from public to private to public again signals the kind of life that feminist art has had, whereby pockets of public recognition open up but not for long. In the collective readings of Leonard's manifesto, public visibility also reflects value that is accrued through the authorship of Leonard, a much better known artist now than she was in 1992. At the same time, the reappearance of Leonard's manifesto allows us to think about the limits of a critique along the lines of economic relation alone. The conditions upon which works enter public institutions might be increasingly feminized but gaining access to this sphere is an uneven process, one that continues to be demarcated along lines of class and race as well as gender. Leonard's manifesto has had the kind of life that often characterises ephemera and the ways it circulates within queer and feminist communities, albeit with greater proximity to the art world. The examples discussed above attempt to foreground the way that ephemera, attached to particular temporal and spatial coordinates, might be a disruptive force, one that can be deployed to alter existing accounts of feminist or queer (and feminist and queer) histories. The privileged relationship of manifestos to the idea of disruption mean they are a paradigm example for reflecting on the process. Not wishing to reify the place of print ephemera in political histories, what is interesting is that in all of these projects is that the manifesto form continues to be invested with the potential to disrupt notions of public life and to

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<sup>15</sup> On the generative possibilities of feminism, Iris van der Tuin, *Generational Feminism: New Materialist Introduction to a Generative Approach* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

disturb forms of historical knowledge.

### **queer feminist translation**

Instead of investing in the spaces of the museum, the collective readings of Leonard's text that this chapter is interested in reinvest in the street as a site for the circulation of political materials. An invitation to the artists to present the project within the immense Turbine Hall at the TATE Modern precipitated a discussion about how and where the readings should take place. Declining the invitation to stage a reading within the gallery space, the artists instead implemented a set of rules that sought to maintain the peripheral quality of any further readings.<sup>16</sup> Yet a reading that occurs on the street does not necessarily evade the issues of private capital bound up in "public" art institutions. When we read in Trafalgar Square in 2015 for example, we were asked to move two meters since our chosen spot represented "private" space. (We did move, which still feels like a shame—had we continued something else might have unfolded). If the move out of the gallery presupposes that we can evade the institutional relations that such venues represent, interactions within "public" spaces such as inner city squares quickly make one aware that any easy distinction between public and private is currently impossible.

The collective readings of Leonard's 'I want a president' maintain some of the spirit of the original manifesto but are differentiated from the initial intentions of the text. In Stockholm, as well as in the other cities in which readings have taken place, the text is distributed as it was then, within a collective political situation, but now it is also

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<sup>16</sup> The invitation was made as part of the project at the event *Civil Partnerships? Queer and Feminist Curating at the TATE Modern*, 19 May 2012. The organisers of the project were alert to the issues of representing queer feminist works within a space like TATE. Of this ambivalence, if not antagonism, toward increased visibility within art institutions, Lara Perry, one of the members of the Leverhulme International Research Network on Feminism and Curating, said 'as feminists we feel really strongly about the representation of our politics in a public sphere which has in general denigrated them' in 'Feminist Networks in the Art Museum: Inclusion, Expansion and over-Identification', in *All My Independent Women* (London: Goldsmiths University Special Collections, 2012).

refigured as a score to orchestrate an instance of collective speech in the present. As well as stipulating that the manifesto not be read in the gallery but in the street, Arnell, Dahlberg, Gustavsson and Sandlund established a series of other rules, which create a blueprint for the readings. Alongside the stipulation that the readings should always take place in a public space with a historic connection to political speech such as a town square, the artists suggest that they should always occur in relation to a general election; that the reading be repeated for at least for an hour; and that a translation of the text be read alongside the original.<sup>17</sup> These instructions are available on a website that serves a function rather like a handbook, maintaining the DIY attitude of the initial public reading but also, perhaps, something of the context of political organising within which the manifesto originally appeared.<sup>18</sup>

Each reading necessitates that Leonard's text be given over to a kind of translation. This translation is not only one that shuttles between languages but also one that anchors the text to a new set of temporal and spatial coordinates. Sometimes this process has meant that small changes have been made to original text so that the meaning of its rhetoric, what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak called the sense of the "rhetoricity" of a language, can be preserved. For example, in the first reading to take place the line "I want [...] a president without air conditioning" was changed to "a prime minister without central heating" (albeit in Swedish language) in order to acknowledge a meteorological difference but also they allow the issue of class implied by Leonard's line to be heard in Sweden. When I began organising the reading in London, in discussions with the four artists we regularly referred to this process as translation. The term implied that a new version of the text be written based on Leonard's rather than

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<sup>17</sup> There are differences between the various readings that have taken place. For example each reading has coincided with a general election, with the exception of London, July 2015 (organised by artist Alia Farid)—though it should be said those of us on the Left in the U.K. were still reeling from the election result from two months previous. In Tallinn three texts were read: the original in English and two translations, in Estonian and Russian respectively.

<sup>18</sup> The site is accessible at: <https://iwantapresident.wordpress.com/>

that the text would be transcribed in a new language. The reading in London was the first time that such a version was produced. It was created collaboratively during a series of discussions: during a public seminar at Archive Kabinett, a gallery in Berlin; during a break-out session at Feminist Durations, a conference co-organised by curator Helena Reckitt and academic Andrea Phillips; during an informal dinner organised with my sister Nicola Guy at Flat Time House, the archive of John Latham, where she was working at the time; and through an online document that enabled a number of us to continue to adapt the text remotely. Following these events, I synthesised various versions of the text to produce the one that we then read in Trafalgar Square on the 6 May 2015. This new text took Leonard's manifesto as a template and followed the rhetorical device she had originally developed. It also reflected the discussions that took place during each of the occasions listed above, maintaining some of the statements that still felt relevant, for example "I want a dyke for prime minister" whilst changing others to reflect our own context, for example, "I want an immigrant for prime minister" and "I want a prime minister who never crossed a picket except on the way to have an abortion". The final text that we read is reproduced below in its entirety:

*I want a dyke for prime minister. I want an immigrant for prime minister and I want someone with aids for prime minister and I want someone who has debt and I want someone who watched their council estate bulldozed and replaced with luxury flats. I want a prime minister who never crossed a picket except on the way to have an abortion and I want a candidate who isn't the lesser of two evils and I want a prime minister who lost their last lover to suicide, who still sees that in their eyes every time they lay down to rest. I want a prime minister with no access to legal representation, a prime minister who has stood in line at the DWP, who has a chronic illness and who had their DLA withdrawn, who has been unemployed and sexually harassed and gay bashed and deported. I want someone who is a migrant worker, who had no choice but to leave their own children to work in a private household and who survived an abusive employer. I want someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, who has made mistakes and learned from them. I want a prime minister who believes black lives matter. I want someone who was stopped and searched, someone who couldn't afford their care home fees, someone who is trans and has done drugs and is still on the waiting list for the mental health service. I want someone who has*

*committed civil disobedience. And I want to know why this isn't possible. I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a prime minister is always an elite, always a john and never a sex worker. Always a boss and never a labourer, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.*

Before I go on to discuss the act of rewriting the text in relation to the idea of queer feminist translation, I feel it is important to note that Leonard has raised concerns with me over the use of the term “translation” to describe the process undertaken for the project.<sup>19</sup> In brief and erratic correspondence over the past two years, Leonard has identified some of the complexities of the project, reflecting upon the initial reading and how it became a “wonderful blueprint for rethinking the text and using it in different contexts.”<sup>20</sup> When I shared a version of this text with her, prepared for a book chapter, Leonard responded that:

the [...] thing I would add, or change, is to clarify that we did not ever actually “translate” the text. It was not translating, but rather they wrote a new version of the work to suit the new context, using my original as a kind of template [...] my original text would always remain as i wrote it and be reproduced in English in its original format, and from there they could use the structure as a template or even just a jumping off point for the writing of their own version for each country, city, context, situation<sup>21</sup>

For Leonard, my description of the process of rewriting as creating a “translation” was inaccurate and raised certain issues surrounding the authorship of the text: “I wanted my authorship of the original text to be acknowledged. women’s authorship (author-ity?) is so often undermined, or rendered anonymous”<sup>22</sup> This acknowledgement of women’s authorship was key, not only in order to acknowledge Leonard’s authorship of the original, but also to allow for the autonomy of Arnell, Dahlberg, Gustavsson and Sandlund (and latterly those others who engaged with the project).

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<sup>19</sup> Zoe Leonard in email correspondence with the author, February 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Zoe Leonard in email correspondence with the author, February 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Zoe Leonard in email correspondence with the author, February 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

In what follows I continue to use the term translation to unpack precisely those issues that Leonard alluded to in our correspondence, particularly relating to the way that rewriting transforms the text into another that she can (or will) no longer call her own. My own understanding of translation comes from theorists associated with post-colonial writing, for example Zygmunt Bauman, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak.<sup>23</sup> All of these thinkers address the inadequacies of translation in their investigation of cultural conditions that extend beyond considerations of language. Bhabha, for example, discusses the subject of cultural translation in *The Location of Culture*. Rather than focus on the translation of one language to another (though this is a fundamental to the development of his thought), Bhabha's concept of cultural translation looks at the appearance of a person from one culture within another. Particularly focused on the movement of migrants to the "West" from elsewhere, Bhabha foregrounds the idea of untranslatability, something that he adapts from Walter Benjamin. In the moment of untranslatability – that which cannot be properly translated from one culture to another – Bhabha locates a moment of resistance that '*at the interstices* is infused with that Benjaminian temporality of the present which makes graphic a moment of transition, not merely the continuum of history; it is a strange stillness that defines the present in which the very *writing* of historical transformations becomes uncannily visible'.<sup>24</sup>

The idea that translation creates a rupture on the scale of Benjamin's conception of history in the present, is written differently by Spivak with particular consideration of feminist politics within the field of translation.<sup>25</sup> Her concern is more directly applied to the translation of a text from one language to another but like Bhabha is focused on the

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<sup>23</sup> See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Oxon and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004) and Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture as Praxis* (London: Sage Publication, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Bhabha, p. 321. Original italics.

<sup>25</sup> Spivak.

movement of a text from the periphery to a cultural centre as it is adapted from an author's mother tongue into, for example, English language. In her essay 'The Politics of Translation' (1993), Spivak writes that the process of translating a text is about much more than language; it is about the relationality of the text to a world within which it has meaning. The translator of a text, Spivak urges, need be open to the risk of translation but not only to the risk of violence that might become the text through translation. Rather she figures translation as the most intimate act of reading in which the translator necessarily risks the fraying of the self as she submits wholly to another's text. Acknowledging Leonard's concerns, I wish to argue that the ethical demands that Spivak makes of translation might help us to navigate potential slippages that occur between Leonard's authorship, the text, the younger artists, the organisers and the chorus each time a reading is organised.

When we organised the reading in the UK, we often referred to the process of re-writing the text as a form of 'translation' precisely to indicate the ways that we wished to listen to the demands of Leonard's text out of time. More broadly it became a way to acknowledge the ethical demands of working with historic materials of queer and feminist art. Perhaps the change that occurs in the process of translation is most aptly summarised by Bauman, who says:

No act of translation leaves either of the partners intact. Both emerge from their encounter changed, different at the end of it from what they were at its beginning – and so with the translation left behind the moment it has been completed, in need of 'another go' – and that reciprocal change is the work of translation<sup>26</sup>

As my conversations with Leonard alluded to, translation is an act of displacement that risks rewriting an object on terms other than its own. Spivak's theorising of the politics of translation continues to hold here; the process of translating a text is about much

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<sup>26</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture as Praxis* (London: Sage Publication, 1999), p. xlvi.

more than language, it is also about the relationality of the text to a world within which it has meaning.<sup>27</sup>

The process of translation that takes place in the rewriting and subsequent reading of Zoe Leonard's text out of time is not, however, quite like the exchange that Spivak describes between the subaltern writer and her translator. The reading of a text produced in the context of the New York queer scene also threatens to reinscribe the domination of U.S. practice in canons of queer art and queer theory. It threatens to but perhaps it does not. Mathias Danbolt has written on the way that a queer politics emergent in New York and other US cities in the early 1990s has come to matter from outside of the language and location of its antecedents.<sup>28</sup> Focussing on the repetition of the chant "We're Here, We're queer" at a political march in Copenhagen in 2008, Danbolt explores the anachronistic quality that the term queer produces as it is invoked by a largely Scandinavian population. Demonstrating how histories of lesbian and gay activism in New York in the early 1990s are held within a collective imaginary of protestors on a march happening twenty years later, Danbolt accounts for the shifting meanings that accompany the translation of discourses across borders.

The movement of the collective readings across various countries figures the project as a nomadic proposal, one that we must recognise as being enabled through feminist, queer and art world networks. The fantasy that the project seemingly embodies, to move across borders, risks positioning artists as imperfect ciphers for the precarious movement of workers as a consequence of global systems of capital. Angela Dimitrakaki asks that we be attuned to the risks of such a proposal, instead recognising

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<sup>27</sup> Spivak.

<sup>28</sup> Mathias Danbolt, 'We're Here! We're Queer? Activist Archives and Archival Activism', *Lambda Nodica*, 3-4 (2010), 90-118.

the privileges of free movement that are accorded to certain bodies above others.<sup>29</sup> Whilst it is important to recognise that the networks that allow the readings to cross borders are largely connected to the privileged movement of certain artists internationally, the emphasis that the project places on translation is a crucial consideration if we are to understand the political imperatives underpinning the readings. Foregrounding the specificity of language and its contexts, the readings seemingly enact an ethical gesture that is ephemeral in the sense that it is both temporally and spatially situated. In doing so, they reflect an anti-universal feminist politics. The collective readings give shape to a public, one that is organised not only by art world connections but also more informal ones, perhaps through queer and feminist organising, which is also paralleled by Zoe Leonard, both a queer feminist activist and a well-known artist, who was becoming better known at the same time that she wrote the text. The two things are not entirely separate, as I showed in the previous chapter, the relationship between the art world and the sphere of AIDS activist organising is complex. The collective readings tune into a complex of imaginative investments that characterise art and politics, investments that the manifesto form invites us to consider.

The translation of the text so that it speaks to the present rather than in another language has been a particularly important aspect of the readings that have taken place in London and latterly in Washington D.C. Figuring the process that occurs as Leonard's text is rewritten through the idea of translation allows for the temporal and spatial disruption that occurs when a text is translated not only into another language but another time to be recognised. Translation implies a temporal as well as geographic operation that helps us to understand the way that translation might function in relation to history. As the text once sought to break with the conditions within which it was produced, the translation serves to expose ambivalence of the present to the past. The

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<sup>29</sup> See Angela Dimitrakaki, *Gender, artWork and the Global Imperitive* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

various kinds of identity, made and remade within the text, do not constitute a fixed form in any sense. Nonetheless, their invocation reveals the limits of our historical present and its continuing animosity to certain configurations of identity. Understanding this process as translation requires that we consider the difference that respeaking a historic text in the present makes. Based upon another text, the process undertaken for the collective readings is iterative. It produces a generative proposal, one that leaves neither the original text nor the new one fully intact. Not bound by linear conceptions of political generations, the rereading calls upon the Benjaminian qualities of history, a wish that the past might flash up in the present in order to do something. This brings me to think of Diane Chisholm's idea of "queer constellations" again. Whether she wants it or not, Leonard's authorship is necessary to the collective reading, for Leonard stands in for the imaginary of a queer political moment that continues to have meaning in the present.

### **that which we cannot not want**

Zoe Leonard's manifesto appeared within a context not only of the on-going AIDS crisis but also, in the U.S. of extreme police brutality particularly relating to the high profile case of Rodney King, a Los Angeles taxi driver who was filmed being beaten by the LA P.D. Leonard's manifesto also falls into relief against the closure of queer spaces, for property developers in New York a convenient consequence of the AIDS crisis.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the stronghold of neo-liberal ideologies within U.S. and U.K. governments eroded post-war welfare initiatives in ways that determined the very nature of public life along highly financialised lines. What does the past reveal when respoken in our present? As Zoe Leonard's manifesto seemingly makes a claim to the public sphere through its demand 'I want a president', the collective readings allude to an

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<sup>30</sup> See Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*.

investment in public space that might itself be problematic. The act of re-speaking Leonard's manifesto inscribes the text into the public sphere, doubly investing in ideas of recognition that are linked to visibility within mainstream politics. At the beginning of this chapter I alluded to two contexts that frame the initial circulation of Leonard's manifesto, suggesting that it spoke simultaneously to a broader context of AIDS activism but also to the dismantling of the public sphere by the Reagan and Thatcher administrations. In the recent collective readings, the text finds new meanings at a time when certain queer subjects have achieved recognition within certain legal frameworks as well as a perceptible crisis in the public sphere engendered in part by the economic crash of 2007/8.

Throughout this thesis I have shown that the claims manifestos make to politics are closely related to conceptions of the public sphere, intimately bound to its corollary of public space (though Rosalyn Deutsche shows us that these two are imperfect parallels of one another).<sup>31</sup> The claims they make to history produce complex spatial and temporal registers, supporting the production of counter-discourses and through them counter-publics. The publics that come into visibility through manifestos produced in the context of queer social movements have, along with other identity-based social movements, shifted the very terms that conceptions of the public sphere rest upon. How in this context does the project work contribute to remaking of the public sphere anew? How, as an act of history making, could it, finally, allow us to think about action in the present or will us toward a future?

In order to address these questions, the idea of a public implied by the collective reading needs to be interrogated. The readings raise questions regarding the investment of queer struggle in the politics of representation and in recognition within existing

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<sup>31</sup> See Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996).

frameworks. In the same way that the desire to see a dyke become president seemingly reinvests in an institution that has historically marginalised queer subjects (why would we want a president at all?), the collective readings could be seen as a recapitulation to the normative spaces and processes of party politics. This investment is in opposition to the difference that queer politics emerging in the context of the AIDS crisis sought to make, a politics that becomes legible through texts like ‘I want a president’ and other manifestos discussed throughout this thesis such as ‘Queers Read This’ or the ‘Dyke Manifesto’.

Writing about the kind of identity politics that is represented within Leonard’s text, Warner has suggested that the explicit wish for a dyke to become president might retrospectively be named homonationalist. This term was coined by Jasbir Puar in her writing on the ways that queer identities have been realigned within nationalistic institutions from the 1990s onward, foregrounding the ways that certain queer subjects are incorporated into the nation-state.<sup>32</sup> The idea of homonationalism needs to be separated from the desires bound up in the figure of the gay refugee finding a home in San Francisco, or of a ‘queer nation’, as imagined by queer struggles in the context of the 1970s and 1980s. Likewise, turning to Leonard’s text in the previous chapter, I spent time unpacking the impossible desire that lies at the centre of the text. I suggested that the demands of the text must be interpreted as a refusal of the way things are that works backwards – in relation to grief – as much as it did forward, in relation to the joint on-going queer and feminist struggles surrounding AIDS and government homophobia.

To read, as Warner suggests, the text as homonationalist is to retroactively frame the text within a post-AIDS political landscape, whereby it might be possible to imagine

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<sup>32</sup> Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

a dyke as president, but is much harder to imagine a broad political alignment with the intersectional politics advocated by queer social movements past and present, an intersectional politics that is illuminated by many of the manifestos explored in this thesis. In this way, the refusal to perform the reading of Leonard's demands in a gallery, connected as such spaces are to forms of both private and public economic and cultural wealth, does not mean that the collective reading refuses the conditions of a public sphere now entirely subject to the mechanisms of capitalism. While, in Chapter Four, I argued that Leonard's manifesto represents a far more pluralistic form than the idea of homonationalism could ever allow for, the investment that the collective reading makes in an idea of public space at present could threaten to produce such a normative politics of recognition.

Importantly, given the consideration of time that has been returned to throughout this thesis, homonationalism is invested with a linear model of progressive politics.<sup>33</sup> The account it engenders for history charts an even line that sees certain queer subjects progressively gain greater recognition in existing legal frameworks. Here, the process by which some queer groups are assimilated into society, enacts a form of historical forgetting, one that not only elides the crimes of governments in the past (many of who continue to serve in governments present) but also works to obscure on-going abuses perpetuated by those governments. For example, governments engaged variously in waging imperialist wars internationally, and enacting crippling agendas of austerity at home, are able to hide their ideological character behind the claims to more liberal forms of politics.<sup>34</sup> The strategic recognition of certain queer subjects makes it easier to hide systematic oppression that nation states are built upon, since it allows those in power to signal sympathies toward liberal agendas (even using those liberal agendas as

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<sup>33</sup> See Heather Love *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Various people have written about this but most recently Jacqueline Rose

a means to legitimise right wing, imperialist policy). In the peculiar character of our own political present a statement like ‘I want a dyke for president’ is more ambiguous than it was in 1992. The insidious relation between queer recognition and government demonstrates toward the way that a bastardised form of identity politics is mobilised in ways that perpetuate the marginalisation of some subjects, for example economic migrants, and not others.

The claim of queer rights discourses to recognition within existing legal frameworks creates a double bind, one that has limited the possibilities set out within the manifestos produced within gay liberation and subsequent queer social movements and which continues to limit on-going claims for queer political agendas in the present.<sup>35</sup> Judith Butler and political theorist Wendy Brown have both used Spivak’s formulation, “that which we cannot not want”, to describe this process. The notion that we are limited in the demands we make, by the conditions that they are made within, is a useful one for thinking of the limitations of working with an existing text as the basis for political speech. Butler explains this bind thus:<sup>36</sup>

in turning to the law, one runs the risk of becoming broken by the law. And the struggle then to regain “standing” and “voice” becomes one that cannot be done alone, requiring as it does collective support, if not a social movement. And when this happens – and we know that very often it does not – we see the importance of grounding any appeal to the law within a social movement that sustains a critical relation to the law (and the risks of becoming deconstituted, abjected, precisely through the liberal instrument one needs)<sup>37</sup>

Butler emphasises that any claim to legal recognition needs to be produced within a collective context that simultaneously produces a critical analysis of the law, or

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<sup>35</sup> This double bind has been explored by various thinkers and activists, notably through the Against Equality project led by Ryan Conrad, Karma Chávez, Yasmin Nair, and Deena Loeffler. See *Against Equality: Queer Revolution Not Mere Inclusion*, ed. by Ryan Conrad (Oakland and Edinburgh: AK Press, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Spivak.

<sup>37</sup> Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

otherwise risks ‘becoming broken by the law’. We might wonder why, if such critical analysis is possible, we would continue recourse to legal frameworks. Brown addresses this in her suggestion that given high levels of precarity experienced by women in the U.S. and elsewhere, ‘certainly rights *appear* as that which we cannot not want’.<sup>38</sup> Brown signals toward the bind: our political desires are limited by the horizon represented by Spivak’s formulation.

With this in mind how do we differentiate the wants of Leonard’s text as they are read out loud in a public-cum-private square and the wants which we cannot not want, ones that create a double bind in light of strategic adoption of certain liberal agendas by right wing governments. Considering once more the translation of the text between the past and present, from one geographic location to another, there is one aspect of the collective reading that I have not yet discussed. The reading, which we might understand to create a vertical relationship with the past, also creates a kind of horizontal affinity in the present. To think of horizontality as a plane in queer politics is immediately to invoke the idea of solidarity, or of sisterhood (if one comes to queer politics through feminism), or even brotherhood (if one is to come to queer politics through the homosocial spaces that Michel Foucault so beautifully considered in his writing on bath houses). The horizontal encounter with readers is the result of an invitation to join, that one has either made or responded to, or both. It is shaped not by a choral invocation of “we” but of multiple “I”s spoken simultaneously.

The act of translation present in the reading produces, not only a new version of the text in another language, at another time and another place, but also a durational choral invocation of a written text. The text is distributed, as it was then, within a collective situation, but now the text is refigured as a score to orchestrate a new instance

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<sup>38</sup> *Left Legalism/Left Critique*, ed. by Janet Halley and Wendy Brown (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). p. 421. Original emphasis.

of collective speech. The repetition of a piece of printed ephemera, produced by an artist two-decades earlier, formulates an ephemeral – in the sense that it is both temporally and spatially situated – articulation of public speech. At heart of this ephemeral speech act is an ethic along the lines that Sara Ahmed outlines, one that permits us to recognise the ‘difference and otherness embedded within feminist communities’.<sup>39</sup> Thinking of recognition as something that exists between members of the chorus, also including the various bodies that are invoked through the text, differentiates the reading from a request for visibility within existing legal frameworks. Instead it engenders a form of recognition that wills a new social relation into being, if only for the brief time of the reading. Such a statement might be meaningless if it did not exist within a context when new identity-based movements and affinities are emerging. For example movements such as Black Lives Matter<sup>40</sup> or in the U.K., Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants and Sisters Uncut, are founded upon the premise of intersectional politics.<sup>41</sup> All of these movements bring with them imaginative attachments to longer histories of struggle. All hold within them critiques of the limitations of law. To invoke them here is not to suggest that these movements are the same, nor that the readings are comparable in scope or size, but to acknowledge the emergent affinities predicated on intersectional politics of difference at present.

In May 2015, as in the U.K. we were reeling from first news of the Conservative victory, the original and updated versions of Leonard’s text were shared online, along with images, videos and recollections about the reading in Trafalgar Square. Photographs that circulated showed the damp and curled reproductions of the manifesto, with words sometimes only barely legible. Next to an image of the text clutched in a fist

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<sup>39</sup> Ahmed, *Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism*, p. 53.

<sup>40</sup> Of note here are the intersections between histories of Black and queer civil unrest that inform the political strategies employed by Black Lives Matter: See: <http://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>

<sup>41</sup> Named after the group Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, made famous in the BBC feature film *Pride, Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants*.

posted on Facebook, a friend wrote: “Wants. Feeling hoarse and cold and moved”. The repetitions of the manifesto out of time keep insisting on the legibility of the past in the present but they absolutely do not represent a politics that stands still. Like the shadow of the child that torments the wanting demands of Leonard’s text, looking back does not articulate a desire to return to the way things were. Rather it seeks to understand the ways that things could have been and still can be different. The repetition of the manifesto moves us to understand that, far from being bound to their own present that is itself now past, the desires that the text traces for a future are ones which resonate over time and that are still profoundly resonant today. That we continue to turn ourselves toward the desires of our inherited political past as another place where difference becomes possible is the demand that the time of the manifesto makes of us.

Thinking about the reading through the framework of translation finally allows a reconceptualisation of the manifesto form to take shape in relation to the aims of this thesis. Against the terms of a programme, that is always in risk of solidifying, the idea of translation holds the disruptive characteristics of the manifesto form. If we can think of the manifesto as a text that is always already enacting a process of translation – as it simultaneously tries to be in (more than) two places at once – perhaps we can understand how, now, manifestos continue to answer a desire within contemporary intersectional political movements. Thinking of a present that is still unfolding finally requires that we turn to the idea of difference. The manifesto, moving between past, present and future tenses, often simultaneously, and inviting readers to take up a space, for a time, is all about difference. Always shuttling between one place and another, the manifestos discussed throughout this thesis have not only been invested with the possibility that they might transform the conditions of production. Rather, they are invested with the potential of disturbance whereby, like a text that has been translated, the present becomes different from itself. Far from a representing a political form that

solidifies the relations that move us from one place and another, the manifesto form allows us to chart the non-linear process at heart of such a remaking the political present anew.

### **history in the future tense: conclusion**

Throughout this thesis, I have made the claim that investments in the disruptive potential of the manifesto form signal toward the various temporalities at work within queer politics. Considering how manifestos have circulated in queer social movements, I have paid close attention to the aesthetic registers of politics that manifestos make visible. Seeking to understand the ways that manifestos invest in the future from the place of the present, I have set out to consider the ways that manifestos invoke non-linear temporalities, temporalities that potentially unsettle progressive accounts of history. In doing so, I too have invested in this disruptive character of the form in order to indicate toward the ways that histories of queer social movements might be produced. Suggesting that we turn to manifestos in order to pursue accounts of queer politics that challenge accepted epistemologies, this thesis has foregrounded important intersections that occur between queer and feminist, and to a lesser extent, Marxist and anti-racist politics. Taking the manifesto as a call to action in the present, I have tried to understand what it is manifestos demand of us as historians.

In Chapter Two I considered how manifestos produced within the context of gay, lesbian and trans liberation make legible the claims that those movements made to public visibility. Arguing that manifestos were fundamental in establishing emergent networks that permitted such visibility amongst gay, lesbian and trans people, I have attempted to show how the form provided discursive frameworks through which new collective identities could emerge. These collective identities were shaped not only by an analysis of the material conditions of oppression surrounding queer life in the

present, though this was important, but also, but also in relation to historic identities. Looking at the temporalities that gay, lesbian and trans liberation manifestos put into motion, I discussed how the disruptive characteristics of these forms are tied to complex articulations of time. Through particular reference to the figure of the child, but also with reference to longer histories such as lesbian feminist invocations of the figure of the amazon, these manifestos intervened in dominant modes of social reproduction. Considering this alongside literal reproduction of print ephemera, as it is produced, distributed and revisited in archives, I drew links between the dynamics of material cultural and the field of queer studies. Attending to the subject of history, I have explored the ways that manifestos might offer alternative histories of the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, displacing the idea that these movements sought recognition within existing legal framework in order to consider the radical dimensions of political thought in those decades and how it contributed to an expanded conception of the post-war public sphere.

Turning to Valerie Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto', a manifesto that is difficult to situate within histories of liberation because of its relation to time, this thesis continued its investigation of the ways that manifestos have been invested in to disrupt forms and norms of social reproduction. Consideration of the ways that the 'SCUM Manifesto' has been cited within cultural practices spanning five decades, allows us to think of the ways that Solanas's manifesto is imagined as a disruptive force. Exploring the way that the manifesto was received upon on its publication, and particularly how it contributed to radicalisation within the Women's Liberation Movement, I suggest that the disruptive force of Solanas's manifesto is linked to her own inability to settle within a particular time. This was explored through a re-reading of the manifesto to video performed by feminists in France in 1976; through citations of the text in the 1990s by lesbian artists as a self-consciously "queer" politics came into visibility; and through examples of

contemporary artist moving image in which the rhythms of the 'SCUM Manifesto' threatens to fall flat, but in the end do not. Against a backdrop established by Solanas's own issues surrounding the authorship of the text, I foregrounded the act of reading as in itself a disruptive historic practice. Informed in these examples by the temporalities of manifestos, consideration of Solanas's 'SCUM Manifesto' out of time allows for the queer dynamics of feminist visual practice and cultural history to be addressed.

In Chapter Four, I turned to the place of the polemic, as a rhetorical form, in the cultural activism surrounding the AIDS crisis. This line of thinking explored the way that the idea of the polemic was invoked in order to curate and critique artworks and other cultural artefacts that were produced by artists and groups associated with ACT UP New York. Describing the various ways that time was imagined within these works, I turned to the manifesto form in order to consider the political dynamics of these temporalities. Unpacking this relation, I demonstrated how, once again, manifestos were invested in for their potential to disrupt progressive narratives of history, this time in dialogue with the temporalities of grief, urgency and the chronic that surrounded the crisis in its first decade. Through manifestos by Gregg Bordowitz, Zoe Leonard and Gran Fury, I considered the overlapping investments in art, more broadly aesthetics, and politics in order to make legible the issues and consequences of government neglect. Looking at how these manifestos not only made demands for the future but also looked to the past as a political necessity, I finally turn to the recent archival practices in which manifestos and graphics produced during the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s are represented in different forms of exhibitions. Foregrounding the increasingly polemical tone adopted by art history as a consequence of those early years of the crisis, I begin to wonder what revisiting these manifestos as historic sources demands of us now.

Earlier in this epilogue, I continued my emphasis on acts of reading and distribution surrounding the cultural histories of AIDS activism in the present. Considering a series of collective readings of Zoe Leonard's 'I want a president' I discussed the reappearance of the text through the readings organised internationally since 2010. This is framed through consideration of the reappearance of the manifesto recently in the feminist genderqueer periodical LTTR and a series of exhibitions curated by Ridykeulous, invites new audiences, and by extension publics, to engage with the works. Turning to the idea of translation as a means to understand the way that the text is revisited in the context of the readings, I suggest that the difference translation makes can help us both to understand the reappearance of a text from 1992 in the present but also to think of investments in the manifesto form more generally. Contrasting the claims of the text to political visibility in the early 1990s to a backdrop political transformations since, I engaged with the way 'I want a dyke for president' resonates in a context that has unevenly accorded rights to certain queer subjects within legal frameworks. Suggesting that the reading engendered by Leonard's text in fact produces an ethical gesture predicated on difference, the manifesto falls into relief against new intersectional queer, Black and feminist struggles.

As I alluded to in my introduction, the desire to disrupt the mechanisms of social reproduction that constitute historic knowledge has been central to histories of queer social movements from the 1960s onward. This desire is explicitly stated in the numerous manifestos produced in the context of gay, lesbian and trans liberation and can be charted through investments in manifestos that parallel and proceed those liberation movements, for example in the context of the Women's Liberation Movement in France in the 1970s; in the first decade of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and early 1990s; in the emergence of queer politics and art in that context; through contemporary works by artists working with moving image; and during collective readings of a

manifesto first distributed in 1992, two decades later. In each of these examples, the manifesto form is invested in not only for its disruptive potential but also as a claim to the public sphere. The new identity-based groups that emerged in the context of the 1960s, which I have attended to in relation to Fredric Jameson's conception of the 'right to speak in a collective voice', contributed not only to renegotiation of collective politics but also to a reorientation of history. This not only registers in the historic claims of subjects to the public sphere but also in the practices, methods and possible subjects that constitute history as a discipline. Expanding the conditions of what could be attended to within the field of historic study, the queer social movements have produced accounts of lesbian and gay life that mesh with the foundational contributions of the women's movement to historic study. Not only were these accounts concerned with revisiting marginalised practices but also with shifting the very terms upon which such histories were written on. In this context, manifestos can be understood as interventions into forms of historic knowledge, ones that still remain marginal to academy.<sup>42</sup>

This research was undertaken at a time where various artists and scholars are turning to historic sources. As writers like Eichhorn, Cvetkovich and Grant suggest, this is not only with the desire to consider the material networks through which marginal practices have been produced. Nor does it seek only to produce alternative accounts of history in the present. Rather, many projects have been undertaken, for example by artists discussed here like Nina Wakeford, Renate Lorenz and Pauline Boudry, and Ridykeulous, with the stated desire that histories perform as Benjaminian dialectic, disrupting the terms of our present. Here, through consideration of the manifesto form, I have shown this idea of disruptive to be inherently linked to practices of queer politics

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<sup>42</sup> None of these interventions are quite like the disparate field of texts that I riffled through during the past four years, but they can perhaps be seen, as Mandy Merck wrote of Laura Mulvey's essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, as manifestos in and of themselves. See Mandy Merck, 'Mulvey's Manifesto', 22.3 66 (2007), 1–23.

emerging since the late 1960s. Tracking the disruptive accounts of histories that manifestos produce, allows recognition of connections between histories of queer and feminist struggle.

In a recent publication edited by Amelia Jones and Erin Silver, *Otherwise: Imagining queer feminist art histories*, the still nascent character of an undertaking to read intersections between queer and feminist politics and practice is made clear. The book, which attempts to reconcile what the editors render as an incompatibility between queer and feminist practice, through the polemic designation of queer feminist art history, reproduces a genealogical encounter between queerness and feminism, in which queerness occupies the future while feminism seemingly belongs to the past.<sup>43</sup> Neglecting more marginal practices that might fall under an expanded rubric of queer feminist art, such as those I have tried to address here, the book fails to address productive encounters between queer and feminist politics, ones that might challenge the narrative that lesbian feminism is the essentialist (m)other of queer theory.

Here through an extended consideration of the manifesto form, I have sought to challenge this invocation of political generations. Taking up the non-linear patterns of the manifesto, this study has been invested in the already queer dynamics of feminist history. It has sought to recognise contributions made by feminist history to broader understandings of the multiple occurrences, ephemeral practices and peculiar instances through which manifestos give rise to historic and cultural shifts. The will of the manifesto – or rather the will of the manifesto writer/reader – to disturb epistemologies means that the form often represents complex investments and desires, returns and futures, that can be charted within histories of queer social movements. In their own desire to shift the terms of history, a possibility appears that they might themselves

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<sup>43</sup> Jones and Silver.

disturb our own present, a risk that Laura Doan suggests queer historiography be open to.<sup>44</sup>

In the lead up to the U.S. presidential elections, a curator, Saisha Grayson, contacts me regarding a reading of Leonard's manifesto outside of the White House.<sup>45</sup> On 16 October 2016, a group of us gather near to read in front of the White House in the context of a bitter election campaign, where 'I want a president who isn't the lesser of two evils' means even more than it might when Bill Clinton was running for election. Simultaneously, Leonard's manifesto resurfaces elsewhere. Visiting the Chelsea High Line before I return back to the U.K., I visit a billboard size poster of the Leonard's text that has been installed so that it is visible to visitors along the park. Seeing it brings the thesis full circle, looping back to the image of the advertisement plugging self-storage for queers that I included in my introduction. Another peculiar constellation, I am not quite certain what the two things mean alongside one another. As I have discussed, the shifting conditions of public space at present are paralleled by emergent affinities and activist groups. Yet there is perhaps another more insidious link between art and politics that is signalled by the installation of Leonard's poster along the High Line, a development that has contributed to the rampant gentrification of that area.<sup>46</sup> Now erected for consumption for a public that is mostly comprised of tourists, the manifesto risk losing meaning that it accrued in systems of exchange underwritten by queer and feminist politics.

In a different way, the collective readings helpfully signal toward the reappearance of the manifesto as a legible cultural form at times of perceptible crisis. Recognising the mechanisms at work that restrict possibilities in our own present,

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<sup>44</sup> Doan.

<sup>45</sup> Saisha's process has been illuminating for this thesis and we have been emailing back and forth about her reading, based on the London. See [link to website]

<sup>46</sup> Jeremiah Moss, 'Disney World on the Hudson', *New York Times* (New York, 22 August 2012), p. A25.

manifestos allow us to glimpse the edges of our own time. The adoption of certain forms of liberal politics by the Right is a worrying character of the historical present. In such times, the ephemeral appearances of the queer past are not like traumatic returns. Rather, manifestos, so attuned to rupturing their own conditions of production, also work historically, opening us to what the queer theorist Eve Sedgwick so beautifully characterised as the ‘profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities that the past [...] could have happened differently from the way it actually did’.<sup>47</sup> But perhaps I should keep my word here and end with Monique Wittig rather than Sedgwick. Wittig, who Diane Griffen Crowder writes, ‘does not want her works to be read as manifestos’, returned to history over and over again in her work.<sup>48</sup> The women in Wittig’s *Les Guérillères* are trying to remember something but the book is not about the failures of these women to hold onto their own histories. Instead it is about the work that is done to erode marginalised voices. ‘He has invented your history’, Wittig writes, urging the characters in the book to remember. ‘Make an effort to remember’ she writes. ‘Or failing that, invent’.<sup>49</sup> Returning to manifestos allows us, not only to consider, the forms of speech they produced but also the mechanisms through which dominant historical narratives are aggressively enacted. Working to disturb these mechanisms through strategies of imaginative invention, ones that mobilise the past in the visions they carve for the future, manifestos remind us that history is always open to change.

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<sup>47</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 146.

<sup>48</sup> Diane Griffin Crowder, ‘Universalizing Lesbian Materialism’ in *On Monique Wittig: Theoretical, Political and Literary Essays*, ed. by Namascar Shaktini (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 82.

<sup>49</sup> Wittig, p. 89.



Figure 5.2. Zoe Leonard, 'I want a president', installed at the High Line, New York.  
Author photograph.

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Lesbian Herstory Archive, New York City

New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York City

Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York University, New York City

Visual AIDS, New York City

