



Stains and Remains: Liveliness, Materiality, and the Archival Lives of Queer Bodies

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ABSTRACT

This article places itself at the centre of a complex debate between scholars of new materialism and feminist theory. Feminist scholarship has been forcefully critiqued by new materialists for its ‘flight from the material’ that may have foreclosed vital attention to ‘lived material bodies and evolving corporeal practices’ [Alaimo, Stacy, and Susan Hekman. 2009. “Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory.” In *Material Feminism*, edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, 1–20. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 3]. Through my own encounters with bodily remains and stains in LGBTQ archives, I develop the lens of liveliness to argue that such bodily matter animates and is animated because of its archival context. Liveliness offers a novel approach to new materialism as a productive means for feminist scholars to articulate how matter itself, including bodily matter, is animate and imbued with a particular kind of vitality and affective force. Approaching these archival records as lively emphasises how feminist scholarly research and practice in archives can be guided by and interrelated with the materiality of the bodies, objects, and spaces that constitute them. Liveliness in turn illustrates how archives themselves are vigorous and changeable.

Introduction

In the small reading room at the GLBT Historical Society, I sift through a records carton that is awaiting archival processing. The carton is brimming over with artefacts and ephemera including keys, fliers, t-shirts, and candles for a commemorative march. Here, amongst the messy residue of lives lived by Harvey Milk and his friend and lover Scott Smith, I pull out a manila envelope. Handwritten large letters in black marker on the envelope’s fore side is ‘Harvey Milk’s Pony Tail’ (Harvey Milk and Scott Smith Collection of Artifacts and Ephemera). Perhaps with such an explicit label, it should have felt less surprising than it was that a peek inside the envelope did indeed reveal the thick, dark brown locks of Milk’s shorn ponytail. This encounter between my own body, Milk’s bodily matter, and the archives itself is startling. These locks, seemingly both dead and alive, trouble and move me because of the queer body that is actually present here in the archives. The disappearance of human bodies from archives and the things they collect, arrange, describe, make

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accessible, and preserve is not unexpected. Archives hold deep communion with the dead, but they are not morgues that are literally engaged in anatomising corpses. Touching Milk's shorn locks sets off my ongoing hunt for the queer bodily remains and stains in archives. In this paper, I consider the archival materials – the bodily traces, fragments, and fluids – that I discovered as lively. Approaching these records as lively emphasises how my interpretation of these objects is guided by and interrelated with their very materiality. Liveliness in turn illustrates how archives themselves are vigorous and changeable.

The detritus matter of queer bodies in archives matters quite a lot to feminist scholarship and practice. Feminist scholarship has been frequently and sharply critiqued for its 'flight from the material' (Alaimo and Hekman 2009, 3). A significant group of scholars aligned with new materialist movements assert that this 'flight' has foreclosed the possibility of sustained scholarly attention to 'lived material bodies and evolving corporeal practices' (3) within feminist theory and praxis (Barad 2003; Coole and Frost 2010; Grosz 1994; Sobchack 2004). There is no scholarly consensus on whether such a flight from material and corporeal realities has really occurred. Another group of leading feminist scholars asserts just as vehemently the opposite position. They argue that feminist theorising and practice has never turned away from the material and that the assertion that it has is in itself a wilful and dangerous act of forgetting (Ahmed 2008; Bruining 2013; Sullivan 2012). By reading together new materialist works and critiques of new materialism by feminist scholars, I assert that new materialism can be productively understood as more than just a mere corrective to a perceived or real lack of attention to the material in feminist thought. New materialism can instead be generatively understood as a response to and a means to contend critically with evolving and emerging understandings and forms of materiality. It also offers an approach to relations that defy textual representation. Turning new attention to the presence of bodily matter in LGBTQ archives and collections with a lens informed by new materialist scholarship and its critiques ensures that feminist scholars are bringing due attention to both the material, the corporeal, the affective, and to their interrelations. This project takes on a critical urgency amidst a contemporary moment characterised by frequent and meaningful shifts in understandings and experiences of the material, the bodily (Stephens 2014, 197), and the affective. Feminist engagements in archives and the encounters they provide with queer bodily synecdoches – with their blood and their hair – offer promising possibilities for contending complexly with 'the entanglement of matter and meaning' (Barad 2007) throughout feminist research and praxis in and with archives.

It is a due attention to the category of liveliness that the presence of bodily matter in LGBTQ archives and collections contributes to feminist engagements with archives and materiality. Liveliness articulates how matter itself, including the bodily matter, is animate and imbued with a particular kind of agential and affective vitality. Through the lens of liveliness, the relations of archival records, the space of the archives, and the other actors (human and non-human) involved can be understood as moving, changeable, and interrelated constructions. This enables a focus to be put on the translations of matter and meaning that those relations produce. This article begins by developing the concept of liveliness from a reading of new materialist literature. Then it introduces discussions of materiality in feminist new materialist literature and in feminist critiques of new materialism. Next, the article moves through two acts that are grounded in two moments of encounter between my body, the lively trace elements of queer bodies captured within

LGBTQ archives and collections, and the social, physical, and technological space of the archives. These are relations that defy simple textual representation. The first act examines the rusty remains of dried red blood on Milk's garments in service of addressing the affects and the intimacy of archival collecting and the significance of the materiality archival space to feminist archival encounters. In the second act, I return to the presence of hair in archives. A queer man's sampling of his sexual partners' hair allows for an exploration of the affects of disgust and intimacy wrought by the very materiality of this bodily matter. In each act, it is the lens of liveliness that opens the possibility of conceptualising these archival materials, spaces, and the bodies at work in them as agential forces. Liveliness brings to light pressing concerns around archival collecting, materiality, language and text, and affect. By embracing in their engagements with archives these uncanny human remains and stains, feminist scholars can shift and enrich their approach understanding archival practices and research beyond the linguistic. Through the lens of liveliness, feminist scholars embrace affect, queer bodies and embodied experiences, and acknowledge the changeable set of material conditions that constitute archives.

Liveliness, or 'The pulse of the archive'

'The pulse of the archive', as anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler so beautifully terms it, equates the Dutch colonial archives that are her subject with a body whose pulse quickens and slows in response to colonial fantasies and fears (2010). Here, I take that notion of an archival pulse quite literally, examining the traces of the blood that once pulsed through the veins and arteries of queer bodies and the hairs they grew. These materials from human bodies are transformed into matter when separated from their creators' living physical bodies. I propose that these traces of bodily matter are themselves animate, imbued in a new way with a kind of vitality or liveliness. It is that vibrant liveliness that I find intriguing, troubling, and provocative about this blood, those hairs. Liveliness as developed through a reading of new materialist literature reaches beyond conventional understandings of the concept. Liveliness is most often used to describe the very quality of being alive. In relation to the liminal cases of human bodily remains in archives addressed in the following acts, once blood or hair are shed and thus separated from their role as parts of a living human body, they are not typically understood as living things. Rather than that being confined to a traditionally accepted living human or non-human agent, liveliness in this article is employed to describe a larger vigorousness and vivacity in feeling, activity, intensity, and sensation. Liveliness is understood here to encompass objects and spaces as well as human and non-human bodies.

Liveliness is a concept that emerges from a reading of new materialist literature. New materialism names in William Connolly's (2013, 399) words,

a series of movements in several fields that criticise anthropocentrism, rethink subjectivity by playing up the role of inhuman forces within the human, emphasize the self-organizing powers of several nonhuman processes, explore dissonant relations between those processes and cultural practice, rethink the sources of ethics, and commend the need to fold a planetary dimension more actively and regularly into studies of global, interstate and state politics.

The movements that together make up new materialism are informed by a number of theoretical strands including actor network theory (Latour 2005), biophilosophy (Ansell-Pearson 1999; Massumi 1996), philosophical posthumanism (Braidotti 2013), quantum

physics (Barad 1996), Spinoza and Deleuze's monism (Clough 2008; Fox and Alldred 2014), and feminist and queer theories (Braidotti 2006; Grosz 1994; Haraway 1997). Jussi Parikka describes new materialism as that which forces scholars, 'To come up with elaborated ways to understand how perception, action, politics, meanings (and, well, non-meanings) are embedded not only in human and animal bodies, but also in much more ephemeral, but as real, things – even non-solid things' (2012, 97). As a scholarly approach, new materialism shifts away from an anthropocentric focus on the implications of social processes only for human bodies or subjectivities. The ontological focus of social inquiry thus moves away from purely individual entities to a focus that instead emphasises relationality. Such a focus on relationality includes an emphasis on movement and transformation. Nothing remains entirely static. For example, Latour (2005) writes about 'translations', which he describes as the shifts or movements of materials and meanings from one form or space to another as the product of such ongoing relations among actors. New materialism is characterised by attention to how the animate and the inanimate affect and are affected by one another (DeLanda 2006, 4). Work in this vein is often framed as a return to questions of materiality that have been neglected within contemporary critical theory, including feminist theory.

It is by bringing together the theorising of agency, vibrancy, movement, and animacy by Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, and Mel Y. Chen that I develop the concept of liveliness. The work of these scholars examines the relations between animate life and inanimate matter as part of the larger conversation of new materialism. Barad asserts that materialities have 'agential' force (2003, 812). Matter is transformed from something provided for human body-subjects to perceive to an understanding of humans and matter as mutually constitutive. In what she terms an 'agential cut' between subjects and objects (2003, 815, 2007, 133), Barad conceptualises meaning as possible only through such relations, rather than in addition to them. In other words, humans and matter are co-constituted through the process of 'making themselves intelligible to each other' in their inevitable and intra-active relations (Barad 2007; 185 as quoted in Taguchi 2013, 712). This decentring of human meaning-making means that not only perceiving human body-subjects can act intentionally, orient themselves, and have agency to know themselves. Intention is distributed and emerges in complex networks of human and non-human material agents that include historically specific sets of material conditions (Barad 2007). Barad's work moves scholars towards a different kind of interpretation that is 'provisional and interrelated with its object' (Jones 2015, 25). In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett (2009) develops a theory of matter that she terms 'vital materialism'. As she articulates it, things including dirt, discarded plastic bottle caps, and landfills act as agents with productive power. 'Thing-power', Bennett writes, is 'the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects' that are both large and small (2009, 6). Her theorisation frames humans and nonhumans, or subjects and objects, not as mutually exclusive categories but as fundamentally cooperative and co-constitutive. In emphasising interactions among the various and changing human and non-human actors, her work highlights how things, objects, spaces, and people are in a state of constant flux. Bennett's work on materialism serves as an inspiration for Chen. In *Animacies*, Chen (2012, 2) examines 'how matter that is considered insensate, immobile, deathly, or otherwise "wrong" animates cultural life in important ways'. Chen turns attention to the development of the concept of animacy in and across fields including linguistics, disability studies, queer theory, gender studies,

and critical ethnic studies. Animacy is ‘a quality of agency, awareness, mobility, and liveness’ (2012, 2). Chen begins from the position that matter is animate. In a chapter titled ‘Lead’s Racial Matters’, Chen employs the example of a recent ‘lead panic’ in the United States surrounding toys with lead paint made in China. Lead is ‘a highly mobile and poisonous substance that feeds anxieties about transgressors of permeable borders, whether of skin or country’ (Chen 2012, 15). Chen shows how in this case animacy actually becomes transformed into property of the lead itself. This scholarship suggests that there are meaningful gradations to the category of the living. For Barad, Bennett, and Chen, humans and objects are fundamentally and crucially interrelated. Liveliness names that complicated relationality between bodies, objects, and spaces, imbuing all as agents in the productions of activity, feeling, and sensation. These are relations that encompass, but reach beyond, the province of textual representation. Liveliness offers a productive non-linguistic approach to ways that materiality resists language. For the archival realm, feminist engagements through the lens of liveliness promise new and sustained attention to the vigorousness and changeability of archives. Such a shift in perspective is crucial while archives are often and potentially associated only with dead things and a state of stasis.

Liveliness, feminism, and new materialism

Feminist scholarship and new materialism have a complicated and often conflicted relationship. There is a significant body of often contradictory and disparate feminist works within new materialism. Bennett’s theorisation of the ‘vibrancy’ of matter and Barad’s development of ‘agential realism’ are frequently cited as examples of the ‘material turn’ in feminist theory (Stephens 2014). Much of the new materialist feminist scholarship critiques earlier feminist work. This critique is centred in the perceived endemic ‘neglect of ... material phenomena and processes’ in critical, cultural, and feminist theories (Coole and Frost 2010, 3). These fields commonly privileged, according to Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, ‘language, discourse, culture and values’ over the material (2010, 2). Coole and Frost argue that concentrating on ‘language, consciousness, subjectivity, agency, mind [and] soul ... as idealities fundamentally different from matter’ and sets them up to be ‘valorised as superior to the base desires of biological material or the inertia of physical stuff’ (2010, 2). In another example of this position, Elizabeth Grosz argues that feminist scholars need to “return” to concepts of nature, matter, life’ because ‘we have forgotten the nature, the ontology, of the body’ (1994, 2). These scholars exemplify the numerous and sharp critiques of feminist scholarship leveraged by new materialist scholars (Alaimo and Hekman 2009; Barad 2003; Coole and Frost 2010; Grosz 1994; Sobchack 2004). New materialism provides for these scholars a corrective to feminism’s neglect of the material and the corporeal through ‘materialist modes of analysis’ and ‘new ways of thinking about matter and processes of materialisation’ (Coole and Frost 2010, 2).

Another group of feminist scholars rejects altogether the claim that feminist theory has ignored the material. These scholars point to feminism’s long engagement in the study of the complex and mutually constitutive relationship between body and culture, materiality, and language. Feminist scholars have, for example, engaged in the study of numerous bodily fluids, including tears (Elkins 2001; Lutz 2001), menstrual blood (Bobel 2010; Rosewarne 2012), breast milk (Giles 2003), and female ejaculate (Bell 2010). Sara Ahmed (2008)

argues that debates about materialism have never ceased to play a central role in the direction of feminist theory. She places materiality at the centre of feminist theory's self-orientation. The new materialist claim according to Ahmed reproduces a 'familiar or even habitual anxiety that feminism and poststructuralism have reduced "everything" to language and culture ... and have forgotten the "real" of the real world, or the materiality of what is given' (2008, 25). The claim that feminist theory has ignored, neglected, or forgotten the body as 'a real, living, physical, biological entity', Ahmed argues, is itself an act of forgetting (2008, 25). She writes that calling for a return to biology, for example, can only be done by wilfully neglecting the plentiful feminist work already done on the biological and from the perspective of feminists who have expertise in the biological sciences (Ahmed 2008, 27). A number of scholars including Nikki Sullivan (2012) and Dennis Bruining (2013) have built on Ahmed's problematisation of the claim of feminism's fight from the material.

The heated debate about the place of the material within contemporary critical theory, and within feminist theory in particular, makes this a timely subject for feminist scholars. Following Elizabeth Stephens, I contend that these seemingly irreconcilable positions can be 'productively reframed' (2014, 197). This reframing is urgently needed while as feminist scholars we are living and working in a cultural context where materiality, animacy, and the corporeal are being rapidly redefined in terms both cultural understandings and lived experiences (Stephens 2014, 197). For example, when considering biopolitics, Paul B. Preciado writes that the contemporary body is no longer 'a passive living material but an techno-organic interface, a techno-living system segmented and territorialised by different political models (textual, computerised, biochemical)' (2013, 108). In this same vein, artists and researchers Catts and Zurr (2011) have examined the new types of living systems that currently being developed in scientific labs. As they see it, these laboratory productions are creating entirely novel forms of matter that can best be understood as 'semi-living' or 'partially alive'. These examples point to a larger argument that the human body is in the process of 'being actively remade by new regimes of pharmaceuticals and biotechnologies' (Stephens 2014, 198). This work calls into question cultural and scientific understandings, practices, and definitions of matter, materiality, and animacy. By reading together new materialist works and the critiques of new materialism by feminist scholars, I argue that new materialism can be understood as more than just a corrective real or perceived inattention to materiality in feminist scholarship. Rather, new materialism can be generatively understood as a response to and a means to contend with shifting forms of materiality and relations. Materiality in this view is considered both as changeable and as firmly grounded in the contexts of history, culture, science, and politics.

In the two acts that follow, I offer glimpses of my encounters as a queer and feminist scholar of archives with the remains and stains of queer bodies, their blood and hair, within the context of LGBTQ archives and collections. Both acts include relations, corporeal, and material that defy traditional means of textual capture. In each act, it is the lens of liveliness that opens the possibility for conceptualising these archival materials, the archival space, and my body as agential forces. Liveliness captures the complex intra-relations and co-constitution of all these agents and their roles as producers and as productions of feeling, activity, intensity, and sensation. Considering archival materials as lively emphasises how my research and interpretations of these records are guided by and related

to their materiality. Liveliness in turn illustrates how archives and its practices are vigorous and in flux.

Act I: blood relations

It was my encounter with the uncanny presence of Harvey Milk's ponytail that prompted me to dig deeper into his collection at San Francisco's grassroots community-based GLBT Historical Society. Milk was a gay rights activist and the one of the first openly gay officials elected to a major office in the United States, that of San Francisco Supervisor. On 27 November 1978, he was assassinated at San Francisco City Hall, along with Mayor George Moscone, by fellow former Supervisor Dan White. Milk is the subject of a number of biographies, documentaries, and a major motion picture. He has become a gay icon. The collection at the GLBT Historical Society is made up of Milk's personal artefacts and materials collected about him by Scott Smith. At my first visit to the collection, it was housed in a series of records cartons awaiting archival arrangement and description, what is known in the archival practice as processing. It was in one of these boxes that I uncovered further bodily traces of Milk. The dried rusty red-brown remains and stains of Milk's spilled blood mark his white undershirt, boxers, and handkerchief (Harvey Milk and Scott Smith Collection of Artifacts and Ephemera).

Milk had been wearing what had become with political success his usual attire, a blue suit, the day he was killed (Jones 2011). The bloodstains I found are the result of the two bullets that violently entered Milk's brain and the three that entered his body that day in a City Hall office. The bullets forced their way through the body of the suit and into the body of the living man (Jones 2011). In turn, Milk's blood, the synecdoche of his living body, retraced those same bullets' routes, emerging outward from the wounds to mark each layer of his clothing and the outside world indelibly. These bloodstains serve as a material marker of the violence that transformed Milk's human body from living to dead. The particularity of the blood's materiality and the specificity of the context in which I encountered it move me deeply. The blood is matter that animates and is animated because of its archival context.

Strangely enough, this archival encounter was not actually my first meeting with Milk's blood. On a visit to the GLBT Historical Society's then newly opened International Museum of GLBT History, a few years earlier, I had stood in a gallery stilled in front of Milk's blood-stained suit. The Society had staged exhibits in the small galleries connected to their archives for many years prior to the opening of the new, larger, and much more public space. It was in this new museum space where I encountered the suit. Located in the heart San Francisco's Castro District, the Museum is as noteworthy in its very physical presence as the exhibitions it holds. The exhibit of the suit in the glass vitrine was three-dimensional and I could and did position myself multiply around the case. The suit I saw exhibited under glass was limp without Milk's body inside. A curatorial hand meant that it was carefully folded so as to display prominently its bullet holes and traces of blood. The placard attached to the case included a quote from Milk's recorded premonition that read, 'If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door'. The visibly fraying fabric around the hole marking each bullet's entry point and in turn the blood marking its exit were both shocking and striking in their presence in that initial moment of encounter. It is quite literally the only object from that gallery I can

recall seeing now. However, a public encounter behind glass in a busy gallery was one that allowed for me to distance myself from the object and the encounter's entanglements. After exiting back out that afternoon onto 18th Street, it would be years before I stopped to consider that blood again.

My encounter with Milk's bloodied once white and now rather dingy undergarments in the box in the archives was a very different experience of the materiality of Milk's blood. It was an intimate experience shaped by the intimacy of the space of the archives. Visitors to GLBT Historical Society's location on the third floor of a rather unremarkable office building were not drawn in by the venue; they came for the records and to see and touch their history. The users of this archives are often community-based and queer. Like them, I was there seeking some combination of records and connections. In the archives, the clothing and Milk's blood are potentially always available for display. However, unlike in a gallery setting, the object in the archives is more often on retreat from the collective gaze in a box on a shelf in closed stacks. In particular, there is an intimacy in doing research with unprocessed materials. This is a distinct physical experience of lifting items from the box onto the table one by one for examination. It also opens different kinds of affective engagement when opening a box without any real preview of what is to be found there. As I lift this fabric, taking in its bloodstains the materiality of that blood, even dried and long ago shed, I feel a bit nauseous. Between the intimate contact with undergarments and the materiality of the blood itself, there is an experience of real horror here. This is the feeling that lacked in my public encounter with Milk's remains. I have an intimate experience of horror in the archives that blatantly refuses pure intellectualisation. For me, it is this materiality that allows me to feel that this is the real blood of a real body, of a real man. Touching these garments and the bloodstains is contact that transforms my understanding and experience of Milk. The materiality of the blood in the archives transforms him from icon to man, creating a new relation between us.

Blood, the red fluid that flows in the arteries, capillaries, and veins of humans and other vertebrates, carries oxygen and nutrients to, and carbon dioxide and waste metabolites away from, the organs and tissues of the body (Oxford English Dictionary). Symbolically, blood describes a number of embodied and fleshy appetites. Blood also serves as metaphor for states of passion and heightened emotionality that are characterised by rage, boldness, and courage. The contextual information, knowing that Milk's blood had been violently shed in such an impassioned state, also shapes my reading of these archival objects. Blood is a substance that is linked both materially and symbolically to life, sex, disease, and difference. In the additional context of queer history and life, blood is an oft-pathologised substance intimately linked to the AIDS crisis and resulting paranoias, hatred, and stigmatisation of LGBTQ persons and persons living with HIV and AIDS.¹ Blood is understood both as the inherited characteristic and as the vehicle of hereditary characteristics that distinguishes members of a particular family from others, making and marking blood relations. It is a different kind of blood relation, a queerer lineage of family and community, which relates Smith and Milk, as well as Milk and me.

The liveliness of this blood brings to the fore a complex and an intimate relation that is defined by something more than shared biology. Smith was Milk's partner in many of senses of the term. Together, they founded and ran Castro Camera. They had a romantic relationship over a number of years that included and was outlived by a close friendship. Their partnership also extended to the political realm. Smith was a powerful activist in his

own right and played a key role in the Coors Beer boycott. It was the Coors boycott that put Milk front and centre in one of the earliest public displays of political power and organising by the gay community. Smith also organised and managed a number of Milk's campaigns for public office (Shilts 1982). After Milk's death, Smith served as one of the executors of his estate (Sward 1995). He also devoted much of his time to serving as head of the Harvey Milk Archives (San Francisco Public Library 2003). Smith's queer collecting impulses and his appraisal of this bodily material as of enduring value crucially shapes the collection that is available to me.

Smith's decision to save the remains of Milk's body, including his bloodied garments, is significant. The blood guided his archival impulses as much as it does my interpretations of the objects and practices at play in the archives. His collecting choices reflect an ongoing intimate and corporeal relationality with Milk, and Milk's physical body. After the investigation into Milk's death was complete, the clothing in question was released to Smith. It was then boxed and put to rest beneath Smith's bed (Jones 2011, 386) for nearly 20 years. The ongoing intimacy of Smith's body, sleeping just a few feet above the bloodied garments, speaks powerfully to an affective relation that extends beyond clear bounds between life and death. Smith maintained and preserved these traces of Milk's body in his home until his own death in 1995. The collection was donated to the Society in 2002 by Smith's estate. The suit and other clothing arrived at the archives on someone's lap, in a non-archival banker's box, wrapped in butcher paper and threatened with mildew (Hinton 2011, 22). It is only Smith's archival practices that enabled its very survival.

Smith's actions of collecting and preserving the bodily remains of an absent partner are not without precedent. Maryanne Dever (2010) analysed the similarly queer collecting practices and materiality that shape aristocrat and screenwriter Mercedes de Acosta's collection. Dever begins with a description of item 80 from Box 23, an envelope 'on the front of which is written "Greta's foot Sept. 1958"' (163). Inside is a pencil tracing of movie star Greta Garbo's foot extending across two small sheets of unlined notepaper. Dever reads this 'foot' along with the letters, telegrams, cards, and ephemeral artefacts for absence, materiality, and intimacy. Other scholars had been disappointed by the lack of explicit messages of love between Garbo and de Acosta; however, Dever compellingly argues that intimacy is not to be found in just such forms. Intimacy here is evidenced in the collection as a whole and in de Acosta's 'obsessive assembling, ordering and preserving of the unfolding paper trail left by Garbo' (166). De Acosta not only preserved letters and telegrams from the star, but also the blank florists' cards and mailing labels. In short, she saved nearly anything Garbo's hand could have been presumed to have touched, including the 'aforementioned traced outline of her foot that was sent so that she might buy Garbo some slippers' (166). It is archival collecting that gives their often tense, desirous, and intimate relationship 'a continuing material form' (167). Like de Acosta, Smith saved both the mundane and the extraordinary objects of Milk's existence. In both cases, a physical intimacy with an absent loved one is maintained through the acts of collecting and preserving their bodily traces. The presence of Garbo's foot and Milk's blood in LGBTQ archives and collections also lends credence to Ann Cvetkovich's assertion that queer cultures often leave behind 'ephemeral and unusual' traces, as they are communities formed around intimacy, sexuality, and other affects (2003, 8).

Others in City Hall that day heard the shots fired, but Milk and White were alone in an office. There are no pictures, no video of the event. Transformed in that moment, the

bloodied garments are the surviving witness. In their materiality, they intervened in the event and continue to do so in the archives. Milk's blood brings to life the complex set of relations that make up any relation. Smith was deliberate in his desire and acts to ensure that this material evidence was preserved to resonate and relate for posterity. Milk's bodily traces survived because a queer and intimate relationality between two men. In the context of the archives, the blood produces new sets of queerly intimate relations. The affects produced by the blood's materiality in the archives and my body's ability to be affected disrupt any presumed control of subject over matter.

Act II: locks of love

Vero Romano di Roma. Gladiator. Stalwart. Thief. Cost: ap. 7500 lira, one wrist-watch. Still ... it is nice to think that the band once around my wrist now encircles those strong steel tendons of his, and that from time to time those sardonic mocking cold young eyes rest on the dial, where I had looked ... (Samuel Steward Papers)

Beautiful face, charming, tall. Link: Wilcoxes' party. Loved sailors. Joined Merchant Marine, June 1952. (Samuel Steward Papers)

Both of the entries above are included on the fore side of the index cards that make up Samuel Steward's 'Stud File'. On the reverse of these two particular cards affixed with now very yellowed scotch tape are small samples of pubic hairs. The tape that has held these hairs on the appropriate card more than a half-century does not cover them entirely. In both cases, the curly, coarse, and brown hairs stick out determinedly, leaving space for them to be caressed or examined. My affective response lies somewhere between disgust and attraction. I question whether to run my fingers over the curling stands. It is a casual comment from an equally casual acquaintance about the surprising appearance of this pubic hair in the archives at Yale University that piqued my interest in Steward's collection. Many months later, I travel up to visit the Stud File at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The collection does not disappoint. Steward was a writer and English professor who left academia to become a tattoo artist, erotic writer, and pornographer (Spring 2011). The Stud File is a card catalogue that is stored in a specially made green metal file. The index cards within it chronicle in detail Steward's sexual life from the 1930s through the 1960s. The File is but one relic of Steward's vast project of documenting, classifying, and quantifying his queer sexual existence. On the cards, Steward carefully and meticulously tracked and quantified information about his partners, as well as locations, dates, sexual acts, accessories, and releases. He developed his own complex, nuanced, and idiosyncratically queer classification system. On each of the cards, as seen in the examples above, Steward also offered a narrative comprised of gendered, racialised and racy remarks on the bodies and personalities of the many men and a few women with whom he was sexually involved and the activities and pleasures they shared. He included, on occasion, in the File as well a small trove of hairs trimmed from a partner's pubic region and in a single instance from the gentleman's head as well. The hair itself is material, but the strength of my reactions to it is also material. As Sara Ahmed theorises, some emotions have 'weightiness' and 'feelings are, in some sense material; like objects, feelings do things, and they affect what they come into contact with' (2004, 85). Affects are thus not an inherent quality of a particular object, but rather are attributed to them as a result of the interrelationality between objects and others. The unfixed affects of these hairs

depend upon sensuous contact, touch, and proximity, in this case the relations between my body and them.

It is the annotations on the index cards that attach the pubic hairs to a narrative. One of the cards with a hair sample reads in full on the fore, 'M___, Bob'. Chicago. 28-II-50. Mysterious past, the Lincoln Blackfoot Club. Actually, a plain-clothes cop and as queer as they make 'em. That is, if his sucking my cock makes a man queer. He did – twice'.² Employing the code key I found elsewhere in Steward's collection, I can decipher the details contained on Bob's card. On the upper left-hand side the 'S' means the subject had a small penis, while the 'Tn' next to it means that it was also thin. The number '9' on the top right side of the card means that he was classified by Steward as 'trade'. Another set of numbers on the card's right side indicate the order of the card within the File itself. In the upper middle of the card, the dates of their encounter, 28 February 1950, and the place, Chicago, are noted. Steward also notes just above the narrative numerically the activities that they engaged in that day. Here the '66' is code that he was browned and the '69' means that the sexual actions engaged in were reciprocal. Steward's brief narrative description of the person and the encounter occupies the bottom of each card. Though the inclusion of pubic hair is a less common practice, this single card is in many ways representative of most in the Stud File in its format, tone, and typed contents.

Hair grows out from individual follicles below the surface of human skin. Taking in nutrients, the hair bulb produces new hair cells, which divide rapidly in order to produce the new cells. Maturing those cells move up through the root in a process called keratinisation in which they are filled with fibrous protein and lose their nucleus. That moment of loss marks that hair cell as no longer alive (Murphy 1998, 2). By the time the hair shaft becomes long enough to protrude stubbornly beyond the skin's boundaries, it is merely fibre made of keratinised proteins. Hair is thus a waste product of human bodies, much like urine, menstrual blood, and the other dead skin cells that we shed routinely. The growth of hair cells requires energy that comes from the burning of glucose, which requires the presence of oxygen. Once in death the human heart stops pumping oxygen around the body in the blood, this energy supply ends and so does the cell division that drives hair growth. Once divorced from the organic life and growth of the living body, the hair is thus frozen in its materiality as an unchanging thing. It stands out of time as it materialises that which is past and can survive into perpetuity to be preserved from decay in ways in which the body in its entirety will not (Hay 2014, 335). Hair has both gendered and sexual associations. Hair on the head, the face, and the rest of the body carries meaning through its styling, texture, length, and colour. That the hair in Steward's Stud File is mostly pubic hair is also significant. Pubic hair emerges only with the human body's transition through adolescence into adult sexual maturity carrying significant connotations of sexuality.

In spite of his detailed sexual recordkeeping, Steward left no notes, or at least none that has survived both the collections many decades in storage before arriving in the archives (Spring 2011) and its time in the archives, regarding the hair samples. There is no numerical code assigned in particular to mark those cards that include hair. Yet, a survey of the cards that include pubic hair samples indicates that nearly all of them include the code '9' on the card's top right side. That '9' identified Steward's partner as 'trade' and thus classified their interaction as having had an economic as well as a sexual exchange.³ It will likely remain impossible to know precisely what impulse prompted Steward to collect and keep such samples. However, the hairs serve as enduring and enticing evidence of sexual

intimacies and sexual documentation practices. In the context of the File, the hair has had and continues to have both a private and public functionality. The File began as project for Steward's private pleasure and writings. It was also source material for his published erotic works and more public efforts at documenting sexual life (Spring 2011). Steward had begun the practice of tracking and classifying his sexual life well before he began working with sex researcher Alfred Kinsey. Through Steward's long collaboration with Kinsey, the File becomes public in another sense, transformed into the site of and inspiration for scientific discovery and production.

When I visited, the Beinecke was closed for renovations and its collections were accessible in a reading room in the Sterling Memorial Library. The Sterling is a main library befitting in its grandeur such an esteemed institution of higher learning. Along with its grand gothic architecture, there is carved into nearly every surface, whether plaster, stone, or wood a design intended to 'remind the viewer of the dignity and significance of learning in general and of libraries in particular' (Yale University Library 2014). The reading room I visit thus serves to make the pubic hair even stranger and more pleasing in its uncanniness. From my place at a long wooden table, I peak at the materials in front of the scholars sitting around me. As expected, my fellow researchers are here to see items from the Library's impressive collections in Medieval, Renaissance, and eighteenth-century Europe, nineteenth-century imperialism, and American literary culture. This context matters as pubic hair boxed in an archive is not the same as the strands of hair caught in the bathtub drain or the wastebasket of a local waxing salon. It is because I am in this archives, and in an archives at all, that this pubic hair feels notable. Hair as with other body parts is an everyday object that we are habituated to and thus garners little attention. When divorced from everyday contexts, hair is 'made strange as tactile, silent material' (Lutz 2011, 135).

That the bodily fragments are hair matters to the way I read and the way I am affected by them. The signifying effects of hair make it seem simultaneously living and dead. That hair occupies that liminal space between life and death is due to a number of factors. The visible hair on the living human body is actually made of dead cells. When plucked from the body, hair maintains visible in precisely its same form. Hair also has the ability to long outlive the body from which it grew. Hair is also associated with complex and contradictory affective responses, including notably disgust (Eichhorn 2014, 82). In psychology, disgust is understood as an experience with four key elements: a facial expression, an action of attempted distancing from the offending object, nausea, and a feeling of revulsion (Rozin and Fallon 1987: 23). In this field, disgust is an emotion with a central function. It is something felt in the service of avoiding contaminant, disease, and pathogens (Curtis, De Barra, and Aunger 2011; Oaten, Stevenson, and Case 2009; Rozin and Fallon 1987; Schaller and Park 2011). This perspective is used to explain the objects that become commonly subjects of our disgust; these include 'human waste and other effluvium' as well as things that are 'greasy', 'sticky', 'discoloured', or 'malodorous'. All of these factors are associated with infectiousness (Strohming 2014). Such physiological work on disgust is foundational to Ahmed's cultural analysis of what the emotion of disgust actually does. She describes disgust as 'deeply ambivalent, involving a desire for, or an attraction towards, the very objects that are felt to be repellant' (Ahmed 2004, 84). This description of messy space between desire and repulsion describes precisely my own reaction to the pubic hair in Steward's File and my protracted debate over whether to reach out actually and touch the hair itself.

Hair is also associated affectively with the desire for and the pleasures of intimacy. Desire, in contrast to disgust, ‘pulls us towards objects, and opens us to the bodies of others’ (Ahmed 2004, 84). Intimacy is most simply defined as closeness, a familiarity in knowledge, in action, in observation, or in language, that in the words of Lauren Berlant actually ‘builds worlds’ (1998, 288). Intimacy, whether psychic, emotional, physical, institutional, or sexual, is a central aspect of queer life. Usually, intimacy is conceptualised within ‘zones of familiarity and comfort: friendship, the couple, and the family form, animated by expressive and emancipating kinds of love’ yet intimacy transcends the private into the public world as something to be protected, manipulated or besieged by institutions, the state, and the very ideal of publicness (Berlant 1998, 288–289). Sexual intimacies typically defy archival capture. As Cvetkovich observes, there is an ‘invisibility that often surrounds intimate life, especially sexuality’ (2001, 110) not least because ‘sex and feelings are too personal or too ephemeral to leave records’ (112). Steward’s collection of wiry tendrils and their accompanying documentation thus bring rare and valuable material substance to queer sex and sexuality. These are the remains of men whose experiences are often silenced by the overwhelming archival preservation of the voices of the dominant. Each curly hair requires a process of recontextualising through the collection, that once accomplished allows for a reading of archival absences around sex and intimacy. As an agent, this hair produces and is produced by an affective relationality. It documents and demonstrates the ways that bodies come into contact with other bodies and with objects. Overwhelmed by the intensity of even the sensuous proximity to these hairs, I pull my hand away from the hairs without actually touching them.

The potential of liveliness for feminist engagements with archives

My encounters with the stains of Milk’s blood on his suit and undergarments and the pubic hairs cultivated and collected in Steward’s collection begin to illustrate the potential of liveliness for feminist engagements in archives. Liveliness as a lens is developed through a reading practice that draws together new materialism and feminist critiques of new materialism. Liveliness calls for a consideration of these queer bodily traces in LGBTQ archives and collections as material, agential, animate, and vibrant actors. Considering the records as such in turn leads to a rethinking of the interrelations and mutual constitution of my body, the archival space, and the objects themselves through our relations. Decentering humans as the sole source of agency brings to light the importance of the intra-relations of actors, objects, infrastructures, and discourses in producing matter and meaning. Approaching archival records as lively agents emphasises how a researcher’s interpretations, my interpretations, of these objects are shaped by and interrelated with their very materiality. As a lens, liveliness also illuminates how archives as spaces are vigorous and in flux. A rereading of bodily and other matter through liveliness holds the potential to extend feminist engagements with archives into vital concerns of feeling, activity, intensity, and sensation.

By bringing together new materialist literature and critiques of such scholarship in this article, it becomes clear that new materialism has productive potential for feminist scholars. New materialism offers more to feminist scholars than just a means to counter to a paucity of attention, whether it is real or imagined, to matter in feminist research and theorising. Rather, new materialism can be better understood as a powerful response to and a means for

scholars to contend critically with evolving and emerging understandings and forms of materiality in this contemporary moment. The material structures through which matter, including our human bodies, is constituted are rapidly shifting. Techno-scientific and biomedical 'progress' has exceeded human intentions and narrow interpretations of animacy. As Felix Guattari put it, we are in the midst of a period marked by 'profound and irreversible changes' to understandings of what constitutes life (2009, 29). These changes are taking place across global and intimate scales. Such shifts promise not only to redefine the human, the corporeal, and the animate, but also to redefine the conditions for thought and practice. Feminist scholars, including those engaged with archives, will need to be deeply engaged with questions of matter and materiality in such a landscape. New materialism offers a platform for such feminist work. As it attends in a deliberate and significant way to the agency of material, including especially that of non-human actors, new materialism offers a means to developing insight on the constitution and meaning of worlds, social and physical.

In both acts above, it is an engagement with materiality that offers me a means to contend with affect in my archival engagements. Through a lens of liveliness, archival affects can be taken up more impactfully by feminist scholars. New materialism develops an understanding of affect as a relational force that is not just the province of human actors. Affect is essential to the project of rethinking agency, as it animates the full 'multiplicity of relations that necessarily go into the make-up of any given relation' (Woodward and Lea 2010, 159). Affect disrupts the notion of an intentional and agential human subject in full control of the matter with which they engage. This happens across scales of engagement, whether at the level of my disgust and desire to touch the pubic hairs, the circulations of affects between and constituting non-human agents or the mutual formation of archival records and the space. Liveliness holds the promise of reframing both subjects and objects in terms of their relations, of their volatile capacities to affect and to be affected.

Additionally, the lens of liveliness pushes feminist scholars to do more than just consider the agency of archival objects. As becomes clear in the acts above, the archives itself is an agent. Conceptualising the archives as agential in the relations that co-constitute matter and meaning leads to novel understandings of them as vigorous and changeable. This perspective challenges the common conceptualisation of the archives, even by scholars deeply engaged in them, as static, dusty, and the collectors of dead things and past times. Through new materialism, it is possible to understand that archives are actually in a state of constant flux, shifting with each new intra-action of the various and changing actors that constitute it. Feminist work has frequently focused only on the objects that are contained within the archives. A sole focus on objects happens at the detriment of considering the archives as a space, a set of practices, and a site for the intervention of agents, both human and non-human. Rethinking the power and potential of the archives as a space offers immense potential for newly understanding the archives as a vital space for contending with the 'legacies, epistemes, and traumas pressing down on the present' (Eichhorn 2014, 5). Within the archival turn in feminism, scholars have already begun to look to the past for new ways of negotiating a present in which political agency has been eroded. As shown by this line of inquiry, archives can serve as an important alternative source for legitimising alternative forms of knowledge, cultural production, and politics in the present (Eichhorn 2014, 5). However, it will require a scholarly engagement with the materiality of archival space to harness such potential.

Notes

1. Men who have sex with men and who are sexually active are still banned from donating blood in the United States out of AIDS-related fears (Bennett 2009).
2. Full names are included in the File. To protect their privacy, I have omitted last names of subjects in this article.
3. As a term, trade sometimes also is used to indicate a conflict between sexual orientation versus sexual activities engaged in.

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