Julia Wiker. From Indisputable Reality to Conscious Contention: Moving Beyond Modernist Conceptions of Evidence to a New Post-Postmodern Conception of Archival Evidence. A Master's paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2020. 116 pages. Advisor: Christopher A. Lee

This paper examines how modernist, Positivist ideas of objective, inherent, essential evidence, although challenged by postmodernism, have remained persistent in the archival field as well as in three humanities disciplines. It traces the emergence of the modernist archival concept of evidence codified by Jenkinson and Schellenberg, investigating how it was changed by the popularity of postmodernist theory and affirmed by the resurgence of evidence with the second generation of electronic recordkeeping, and how it incorporated new, diverse perspectives in the 2010s following the decline of these two strains of thought. The incomplete transition from modernist ideas of evidence is reflected in the author's examination of three other humanities disciplines: literary criticism, queer theory, and fan studies. The author then defines the modernist conception of evidence, using concepts popular in information science to explain its persistence despite the advent of postmodernism, and sets forth a new post-postmodernist conception incorporating insights from the three other disciplines examined in the paper.

Headings:

Archival theory

Evidence

Postmodernism

Literature—History and criticism

Queer theory

Fans (Persons)

FROM INDISPUTABLE REALITY TO CONSCIOUS CONTENTION: MOVING
BEYOND MODERNIST CONCEPTIONS OF EVIDENCE TO A POST-
POSTMODERNIST CONCEPTION OF EVIDENCE

by
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I. INTRODUCTION

"Who you are determines how you read the evidence; the footage does not 'speak for itself.'"

> *from* "Records and Their Imaginaries: Imagining the Impossible, Making Possible the Imagined" (Gilliland and Caswell 2016, p. 67)

Evidence has long been a key concept in archival theory and practice. From Jenkinson's vision of the archivist as a guardian of evidence, to Schellenberg's concept of evidential value, to the reemergence of evidence in the 1990s in the "second generation" of electronic recordkeeping (Cox 1994), evidence is important enough to archival practitioners and theorists that it is here to stay. However, the archival profession's conception of evidence has gone through a variety of changes, all the while maintaining traces of what it was to past generations of archivists. How has the archival profession's idea of evidence changed since the days of Jenkinson and Schellenberg? How did the rise of postmodernist theory affect it? And how has it continued to change—and not—into the 2010s and beyond?

I believe that the archival concept of evidence, though it was irreversibly changed by the infusion of postmodernist theory into the archival literature, has nonetheless always fallen back on, and retained, its modernist roots. Because of postmodernism's wide-reaching impact, especially in the humanities, this is not a phenomenon that is exclusive to the archival field. By examining the development of the archival concept of

evidence, as well as similar changes to the concept of evidence in three humanities-related fields—literary theory and criticism, queer theory, and fandom studies—I aim to provide insight into how conceptions of evidence across the disciplines have continually been haunted by traces of modernism, binarism, and essentialism even as they reject modernist ideas.

When I complete my analysis of each field, I will synthesize the concept of modernist evidence based on what I have garnered from my investigation into each discipline, using concepts from information science and information behavior research to aid in explaining why these fields have continued to be comfortable with modernist evidence. Then I will propose a new, post-postmodernist conception of evidence, drawing on insights from the four disciplines and from theories of information science, that both acknowledges that modernist conceptions of evidence are inescapable and calls on archivists to actively challenge these modernist roots and create a new face for evidence in their profession.

I begin my analysis by examining the archival concept of evidence and how it has changed and developed since the concept was first codified by Jenkinson and Schellenberg. I will first explore Jenkinson and Schellenberg's views and their bases in the traditions of history and law. Before analyzing the impact of postmodernist theory on the archival field, I will discuss and define the concept of postmodernism by looking at two influential theorists, Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, the latter of whom published *Archive Fever*, which spurred discussion of postmodernism among archivists. I will investigate the reasons behind the resurgence of modernist ideas of evidence during

the "second generation" of electronic recordkeeping, and lastly, I will examine how the

concept of archival evidence has changed in the previous decade.

II. ARCHIVAL EVIDENCE

What is archival evidence? Or what was it? Instinctually, archivists turn toward Muller, Feith and Fruin, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, and Theodore Schellenberg, the authors of three of the most widely read, cited, and used foundational texts in the archival profession (Tschan 2002, Cook 2013, Hohmann 2016)—*Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, colloquially known as the "Dutch manual"; *A Manual of Archive Administration*; and *Modern Archives*, respectively. Muller, Feith, and Fruin were the first to advocate for basic principles such as provenance, original order, and *respect des fonds* to ensure that the ability of the documents to serve as evidence was preserved. Jenkinson argued for these principles' use in guarding the impartiality and authenticity of records. And, guided by the same principles, Schellenberg built on Jenkinson's concept of evidence in formulating the concept of evidential value. Since the Dutch manual had significantly less influence[1] on American practice and theory (Gilliland 2014), I will focus primarily on Jenkinson and Schellenberg in their own words, as well as adding some insight from writers in the archival field who have analyzed Jenkinson and Schellenberg in more detail.

Jenkinson's perspective was first published in *A Manual of Archive Administration* (1922). He sees the archivist as responsible for the physical, but especially the intellectual, safeguarding of the evidence contained within records, a set of activities that Jenkinson terms "moral defence." In discussing the character of archives

themselves, Jenkinson asserts that archives are, by nature, both impartial and authentic. To this, Paige Hohmann (2016) adds two other characteristics discussed by Jenkinson, naturalness and interrelatedness.

Regarding impartiality, Jenkinson argues that archives were not drawn up in the interest of posterity, but rather in the daily activities of government. Jenkinson insists that the documents "themselves state no opinion, voice no conjecture; they are simply written memorials, authenticated by the fact of their official preservation, of events which actually occurred and of which they themselves formed a part" (p. 3). Hohmann (2016) clarifies that Jenkinson does not mean that the creators or the activities captured in the documents are the reason Jenkinson considers archives impartial evidence. Their inability to speak to the future, Hohmann writes, is what Jenkinson believes makes them impartial. Terry Eastwood (2004) notes that many records were, of course, created in the interest of posterity. He argues that Jenkinson understands this, as Jenkinson writes that "we can only go wrong owing to our own misinterpretation" (Jenkinson as cited in p. 42), enforcing his own argument that documents themselves are impartial.

Because they were not created in the interest of posterity, Jenkinson argues that archives are authentic. He trusts creators to be honest about the contents of records, assuming that the documents are true, accurate, and impartial because their creators depend on their accuracy. Jenkinson also relied on the ability of an unbroken chain of custody, maintained by a succession of archivists involved in moral defense, to preserve records' essential characteristics. He writes, "[i]t would appear that not only are Archives by their origin free from the suspicion of prejudice in regard to the interests in which we now use them: they are also by reason of their subsequent history equally free from the

suspicion of having been tampered with in those interests" (p. 12). Jenkinson was not completely naive. He acknowledges that forgeries and deception are possible, but also argues that "[a]t the same time we are to remember that both parties had an interest in detecting each other's malpractices; and that neither had any interest in deceiving us" (p. 15).

In order to properly guard authentic, impartial evidence, Jenkinson thus insists that archivists should refrain from intervention in the processes of creation and selection. He assumes that the creators will select what is worth preserving, rather than the archivist conducting appraisal (Tschan 2002, Hohmann 2016). This laissez-faire approach was likely influenced by Jenkinson's background in working with medieval documents, a scarce and precious resource (Eastwood 2004). His unwavering Positivist trust in the authority held by creators characterizes Jenkinson's perspective.

In *Modern Archives* (1956), Schellenberg distinguished between records' evidential value and informational value. Evidential value refers not to an unbroken chain of custody, but to the records' ability to reflect information about business transactions within the government, whereas informational value means the secondary value that a document could have to historical researchers in the future (Schellenberg 2003, p. 139). Schellenberg emphasized government records' reflection of business transactions, rather than the inherent impartiality and authenticity of archives for which Jenkinson argued. Despite these subtle differences in expression, Schellenberg's advisement that "[i]t is natural that an archivist, as an agent of government, should be first concerned to preserve evidence of how the government was organized and how it functioned" reflects Jenkinson's view of the archivist as a guardian of evidence (p. 139).

As Brothman (2002) notes, Schellenberg also draws on Jenkinson in reviving his term, "evidentiary," "to refer to the inextricable link between a document and the particular action that produced it" (p. 311). Schellenberg argues that the information contained in government archives about the functioning of the government was "indispensable" to the government and to researchers (p. 140). He argues that for those wishing to study a particular agency, those records evidencing an organization's functions would provide "the only reliable source" (p. 140).

Schellenberg also asserts that archivists could objectively determine what was and was not evidence, but they would have to decide how to limit the universe of possible records, rather than necessarily expecting the creator to do so as Jenkinson did. Schellenberg's pro-appraisal perspective was largely influenced by the explosion of public records during and after World War II (Tschan 2002). Schellenberg insisted the archivist should engage in appraisal from the point of creation. Even if Schellenberg advocated a more hands-on approach, evidence and guardianship, the ideas first codified by Jenkinson, still remain central concepts in his argument.

This "guardian" view expressed by Jenkinson and Schellenberg arose out of two influences, or perhaps two traditions (MacNeil 2001). The first is government recordkeeping. Jenkinson, Schellenberg, and Muller, Feith and Fruin were all government archivists (Cook 2013). As Terry Cook notes, "Archival science not surprisingly found its early legitimization in statist theories and models, and from the study of the character and properties of older state records. The resulting theoretical concepts have since been adopted by virtually every other kind of archival institution around the world, including even private collecting archives" (Cook 2001b). Jenkinson especially, but also

Schellenberg, placed major trust in the government's ability to accurately and impartially document its activities. This kind of documentary accountability has been standard practice in the Western world since the Middle Ages (MacNeil 2001, MacNeil 2006). Not only is the government expected to be accountable for its actions, it is also expected to guard the rights of citizens with the records in its archives (Ketelaar 2002, Caswell and Punzalan 2016).

However, the transition to this mindset was gradual. Heather MacNeil (2006) writes that Germanic law relied on the testimony of "external and perceivable symbols; it did not recognize any contrast or contradiction between outward expression and inner intent" (p. 315). This law influenced land transfers in medieval England, which were conducted orally in the company of friends and local individuals. Even when documents were used as testimony, both oral testimony and the knowledge of the jury were favored over the written word. But with the advent of documents and increasing literacy in the government, people no longer had to be present for such ceremonies, and the "evidence of authority" became the "evidence of things," coinciding with the seventeenth-century transition to rational Enlightenment thought. The shift to the "evidence of things" paradigm was augmented and amplified by the establishment of government archives, and the government and parties in litigation could now be held accountable through documentation.

The second tradition is historiography. Jenkinson, a historian by training, was well aware that the use of archives by historians was rapidly increasing in his time:

> [I]t is more than doubtful if any authoritative historical work will ever again be published without copious notes referring to verifiable manuscript sources, and it has become a recognized fact that such a work must be preceded by and dependent on the cumulative effect of a quantity of studies by other hands in

which settled opinion upon comparatively small points is based upon the
laborious examination and analysis of details in the Archives (Jenkinson 1966, p.
1-2).

Schellenberg's concept of informational value was heavily influenced by

historians' use of archives. Like Jenkinson, Schellenberg recognized that scholars,

especially historians, valued archives, but unlike Jenkinson, he encouraged archivists to

consider this secondary value of documents in conducting appraisal.

Furner (2004) discusses the influence of the fields of historiography and law on

the conception of archival evidence. In particular, Leopold von Ranke, the German

historian, established a school of historiography in which evidence was seen as "all there

in the document" without any intervention from the historian other than needing to

extract the "facts" (Furner 2004, p. 245). This conception of evidence was grounded in

the rationalism of the scientific method.

Based in these two traditions of government archives and history, archival

principles took on a Positivist, rational character to ensure the safekeeping of evidence.

Early archivists saw records as an objective reflection of what actually happened. The

authority and reliability of records "kept safe" by archivists remained a common thread in

archival practice and theory well into the twentieth century.

The Postmodernist Turn

One can argue that the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal marked the

beginning of the end of placing trust in public authority in the United States (Brothman

2002, p. 330). But archivists did not feel the ripple effects of these changes in the whole

of American society until about 1970, when historian Howard Zinn delivered an

incendiary address at the Society of American Archivists (SAA) annual conference (Ham

1975, Jimerson 2006). In his speech, Zinn criticized archival collecting as "biased towards the rich and powerful elements in our society—government, business, and the military—while the poor and the impotent remain in archival obscurity" (Ham 1975, p. 5). He lamented the lack of critical self-reflection on the part of archivists, primarily regarding their guise of neutrality to obscure their highly colonial, Westernized collecting strategies.

Zinn's SAA address was later published in *The Midwestern Archivist* as "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest" (Zinn 1977). In this essay, Zinn is critical toward the rise of professionalism in the United States, which he sees as a means of strict social control. Professionalism is often associated with neutrality, and political convictions are seen as inappropriate; according to Zinn, "[t]his neat separation, keeping your nose to the professional grindstone and leaving politics to your left-over moments, assumes that your profession is not inherently political" (p. 18). Zinn claims that professions are not neutral and tend to enforce the existing hegemony and power structures. He calls on archivists to abandon this guise of neutrality—not "politicizing" the profession but rather "humanizing" it—and to begin paying greater attention to the histories they have failed to capture (p. 20).

Shortly after Zinn's address, Gerald Ham (1975) asked archivists to critically self-reflect on their professional mission. Drawing on Zinn's and other criticisms, and faced with an expanding universe of documentation that now included digital information, Ham calls on archivists to become more active in documenting underserved populations, rather than idealizing themselves as neutral, passive guardians. Ham warns that if the archivist does not become actively involved in research, "the collections that he [sic] acquires will

never hold up a mirror for mankind. And if we are not holding up that mirror, if we are not helping people understand the world they live in, and if this is not what archives is all about, then I do not know what it is we are doing that is all that important" (p. 13). Ham thoroughly rejects the idea of archivists mere custodians of the documents in their care.

While Zinn and Ham were criticizing the American archival profession, Hans Booms posed a similar challenge to the German archival profession in 1972; Booms' essay was translated and reprinted in *Archivaria* in 1987. Booms was responding both to strict Prussian methodology and the East German archivist Hans-Joachim Schreckenbach's belief that socialist-communist ideology was the only correct ideological basis for a methodology of documenting society. Booms explores the idea of the formation of a "documentary heritage" discussed by Schreckenbach.

Influenced by philosophers, Booms writes that there is no way to objectively determine the value of a document, and challenges the idea that documents have an inherent value. Rather, he asserts that "the value of a particular item only becomes apparent when it is set in relation to something else and compared with that other item" (p. 82). Booms claims that "[a]rchivists, therefore, in fulfilling their role in the formation of the documentary heritage, hold the monopoly on an activity which dictates what kind of cultural representation of society, insofar as this is reflected by the public record, will be handed down to future generations" (p. 78). In Booms' view, reining the archivist's power means establishing standards for appraisal in order to properly represent the whole of the documentary record. Booms' analysis of archival appraisal is thus another early recognition of archival power.

Though Zinn's speech, Ham's response, and Booms' exploration of appraisal posed key challenges to the Jenkinsonian vision of archivist-as-impassive-guardian, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that postmodernism appeared in the professional archival discourse.

What is Postmodernism?

Since postmodernism is such an elusive concept, even to professors of literary theory[2], it is worthwhile to examine and define the movement. Postmodernism became popular among French literary theorists and philosophers from the post-structuralist and deconstructionist movements, such as the famously obscure Jacques Derrida, who wrote that everyone's view of the world was predicated entirely on the language they used, and that all meaning in spoken and written language was infinitely deferred and readers and listeners could not access any "original" meaning. Other deconstructionists included Jean Baudrillard, who invented the theory of hyperreality, and Jean-François Lyotard, who attempted to define postmodernism. In his essay "The Postmodern Condition" (1979), Lyotard defines postmodernism by situating it within the modern paradigms of knowledge, explaining how humans perceive and interact with knowledge, science, and society and how these concepts change with the transition from modern to postmodern ways of knowing.

According to Lyotard, the transition began as early as the 1950s, when the major nation-states entered the post-industrialist age. The advent of the postmodern condition was accelerated by the computerization of society and the growing prevalence of the "performativity" model of education and research. Rather than focusing on society's ideals, and the betterment of individuals as part of their own moral benefit and the benefit

to society's freedom, as in the earlier modern models of education and research, the "performativity" model encourages students to develop saleable skills that can contribute to the most efficient society. Lyotard writes, "The desired goal becomes the optimal contribution of higher education to the best performativity of the social system" (p. 50).

The "performativity" model emerges because there is no truth to be found in a postmodernist society. Lyotard explains the futile search for truth through the concept of "legitimation" of knowledge. Drawing a distinction between narrative knowledge and scientific knowledge, Lyotard explains that narrative knowledge is legitimated simply through the act of speaking, whereas scientific knowledge is built on dialectics, meaning that a statement can only be proven through the use of the language "games" (metadiscourse) existing within a certain field, making it recursive in nature. Because scientific knowledge is recursive, scientists must instead rely on narrative forms to communicate and prove what they have found. Lyotard writes that narratives "define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do" (p. 23), whereas "[a] statement of science gains no validity from the fact of being reported" (p. 26). Any scientific knowledge thus requires narrative explanation, in other words, a performance, to be verified.

In a world where truth does not matter, knowledge becomes commodified (p. 45). Those who can best communicate ideas are the winners, and that means the people with the most money—those in power—are the winners: "No money, no proof—and that means no verification of statements and no truth. The games of scientific language become the games of the rich, in which whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of

being right. An equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth is thus established." (p.

45). According to Lyotard, the universality of these language games also means that the

traditional barriers of discipline break down and disciplines begin to overlap: "The

classical dividing lines between the various fields of science are thus called into

question—disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the borders between sciences, and

from these new territories are born […] the respective frontiers of which are in constant

flux" (p. 39).

This trend toward interdisciplinarity seems to be reflected within the variety of

schools of thought contained within the postmodernist label or "umbrella." More

specialized schools of literary or philosophical thought, like critical race theory, queer

theory, neo-Marxist theory, and postcolonialism might all be considered part of the

postmodernist umbrella, sharing postmodernism's same tendencies toward relativism,

inclusivity, and suspicion toward grand narratives (Cook 2001). Terry Cook (2001), when

providing a concise yet thorough overview of postmodernism, notes that postmodernism

"is a series of postmodernisms, not all of which are mutually compatible" (Cook 2001, p.

19).

The postmodern condition, according to Lyotard, encourages an individualistic

"performativity" model in which every individual must abide by narrative rules

(metadiscourse) to express themselves in the language game. The decline of scientific

knowledge as a means of legitimation means that formerly rigid disciplines become laxer

and the overlap between disciplines becomes clearer. As mentioned in the previous

paragraph, postmodernism is often defined in terms of skepticism of or suspicion toward

grand narratives. This is because the overlap of disciplines and narrative legitimation means an increase in recognition that objectivity is no longer a valid or helpful construct.

Based on my reading of Lyotard, I will define postmodernism as the following:

- Rejection of metanarratives/grand narratives about the whole of society or phenomena

- Legitimation of knowledge through narratives rather than science

- Relativity and subjectivity being prioritized over objectivity, and the recognition of social practices formerly seen as having an objective existence as social constructions

- Interdisciplinarity and the blurring of disciplinary borders

Postmodernism Enters Archival Discourse

Postmodernist theory took off in the archival world in the 1980s and 1990s, notably among Canadian archivists. The majority of the articles that I read on the subject, or that Terry Cook cited in his 2001 overview of archival postmodernism, came from *Archivaria* or were written by Canadian archivists. Many Canadian archivists, most notably Brien Brothman, were some of the earliest writers to include postmodernist discourse in discussions of archival theory and practice.

Brothman (1991, 1993) tied the work of Derrida, Foucault, and Baudrillard into discussions of the social construction of archival practice. In his 1991 article, jumping off of the work of intellectual historians, Brothman explores the dualism of order and disorder within an archive, pointing out that original order and provenance are simply constructs intended to create order, and that organizational systems are not "organic" or real, but rather social. He encourages critical reflection on the "cultural meanings of

contemporary archival practice and the context within which these take shape and place, as well as contemplation of the particular social role that archives play in society" (Brothman 1991, p. 79). In his 1993 article, Brothman argues that archives and archivists are not objective, but are "accomplices to the staging of objectivity," and that a book, by concealing its footnotes, implies that it is not a patchwork of sources and research but rather an organic whole (Brothman 1993, p. 214).

Theresa Rowat (1993) discusses how archival tools reflect an impulse to standardize and modernize, despite that much of archival appraisal, description, and other functions contain many individual decisions reflecting the character of the archivist. Rowat criticizes the common notion that archives are somehow objective because they are from the past rather than the present. She also finds problematic the "rush" to document underserved communities without acknowledging the inherent bias in the tools used by archives. Rowat writes:

> Dismissed in the earnestness of this rush, are the acknowledgements of the inherent biases of the institution and the inherent characteristics of the archival record. The language of heritage documentation still carries the connotations of neutral witness. Yet, the government files in a state-sponsored repository are informed by the administrative structure in which they were created. (p. 202)

Rowat thus challenges archivists to critically reflect on the institutional tools that enabled oppression being used to document those same oppressed groups.

Joan M. Schwartz (1995) explores the application of diplomatics to photographic archives. Diplomatics, a discipline introduced most prominently to contemporary archival literature by Luciana Duranti, studies the "true nature," form, and origin of written archival documents, privileging not only the written record but also its objectivity. Schwartz uses her attempt to apply diplomatics to the Canadian National Photographic Archives as a lens to explore how photographs do not always "contain" objective ideas.

She uses the example of a fabricated photograph of Canadian mounted police at a battle that had shellfire painted on top of it, but was presented in a museum as a "real" photograph. Without knowing the context of that photograph, the museum made false assumptions about the purposes for which it was created and used.

Diplomatics, Schwartz argues, can thus be used very loosely to understand photographs as "discrete decontextualized moments" (p. 63). However, diplomatics was created for a very specific purpose, so it cannot be used rigidly without acknowledging the limitations that came from the time period and historical context in which it was used. In the same way, Schwartz concludes, that diplomatics was developed for specific purposes, our contemporary tools reflect our own purposes: "If we accept that archives are neither monolithic nor totalizing, but reflect and constitute prevailing concepts of records, memory, and truth, then we must recognize that what archives keep and what archives do is socially constructed, grounded in time and space" (p. 64).

Archivists Come Down with Archive Fever

Brothman's early work, with its discussion of the dualism of order and destruction, foreshadows the bombshell that French literary theorist and philosopher Jacques Derrida dropped on the archival world in 1996 with the publication of *Archive Fever*. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's discussion of the practice of archiving and the term "death drive" used by Freud, Derrida discusses the contradictory intentions inherent in the archive and in the process of archiving: simultaneous impulses to create (creating as archiving) and to destroy (the "death drive" or the archive fever). Derrida focuses primarily on the intentional death drive, but mentions that the looming threat of forgetting also drives us to archive, for "[t]here would indeed be no archive desire without the

radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression" (p. 19).

Derrida also mentions the role of transgenerational memory in preserving the archival impulse, though at the same time that the archive points toward the past, there can be no conception of the archive except what it will have been in the future: "It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come" (p. 36).

Though Derrida places shockingly little value on digital records (aside from email), he foretells a postmodern, post-paper world that archivists of the modern era both feared and knew to be coming: "[T]he technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future" (p. 16). Derrida questions whether psychoanalysis would have turned out the way it did if it were developed in a computerized age rather than through a (now incomplete) corpus of letters (p. 14). Derrida also points to the fact that throughout history, the archive has always been outward-facing, and commonly controlled by those in positions of power, echoing Lyotard. It is this outward-facing nature and "consignation" (collection of signs) that work together with the dual impulses to collect and to destroy, which form Derrida's "impression" of the archive.

After Derrida's dense discussion of archivization and consignation, the archival field was thrown into a postmodernist fever. Some who had prior interest in postmodernist thought or social theories of archives such as Brien Brothman, Terry Cook, Verne Harris, and Eric Ketelaar now had a convenient opportunity to advance their

postmodernist thoughts about the archivists and archival theory and practice. One by one, more and more archivists, from the United States to Canada to Europe to Australia, began to discuss the role of records as evidence in a postmodern, post-*Archive Fever* world.

Postmodern Evidence Is…

Archivists varied in their responses to Derrida and postmodernism. Some archivists asserted that postmodernist principles such as context and intertextuality had always been hallmarks of archival practice.

In her 1996 article, "Is There Room for Archives in the Postmodern World?" Carolyn Heald asks that very question, and if there exists such a role, "[h]ow can we avoid being overcome by the sheer volume of information and sinking at the same time into the philosophical quagmire of postmodern thinking that everything is relative, nothing is stable?" (p. 92). Heald displays immense confidence in archivists' ability; she argues that "good archivists" have always understood and documented the context behind records and not accepted records as absolute bearers of evidence. She also argues that "documents are needed more than ever, not because they have some objective and immutable status, but because our society has deemed them valuable; *we are a document-oriented society*. Documents are seen as the guarantee of rights and privileges in a democratic society" (p. 95, emphasis added).

But largely, the challenge posed by postmodernism was that of renegotiating the role of documents, evidence, and archives, especially in the face of rapidly changing technology. Archivists did not know what to make of the nascent digital environment, and there was disagreement over how to deal with new, digital record forms. The advent of the information age, as well as this new social climate, was brought to a head in the

1990s and the 2000s when archivists began to reformulate and discuss their conceptions of evidence, trust, and authenticity in light of postmodernism.

Terry Cook was one of the strongest advocates for the role of postmodern theory in archival practice. In "Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth" (Cook 2001a), he explains the complexities of postmodernism by drawing on major theorists like Derrida and Lyotard, arguing that postmodernism is a chance for open discussion about archival practice, rather than the navel-gazing that its critics contend that it is. Postmodernism, according to Cook, "requires a new openness, a new visibility, a willingness to question and be questioned, to count for something and be held accountable. Postmodernism requires archivists to accept, even celebrate, their own historicity, their own role in the historical process of creating archives, and their own biases" (p. 28).

In another article from the same year (Cook 2001b), Cook discusses how the archival profession continues to cling to outdated modernist and positivist foundations inherited from principles devised in government records. Archivists' conception of what archival records are, Cook writes, comes from the systems in which they are kept.

Tom Nesmith (1999, 2002) was also a strong proponent of postmodernist theory in archival science. Using the communicated nature of reality, a concept borrowed from deconstructionist theorists such as Derrida and Baudrillard, as a theoretical basis, Nesmith discusses the role of the archivist in shaping the way records and evidence are perceived. Nesmith writes, "[C]onsciously and by default, archivists create various interpretive possibilities, and thus, in effect, various new records" (1999, p. 144). The archivist creates evidence by interpreting the record through description and arrangement, Nesmith argues, and the fact that some records are saved inevitably puts some records

"on a pedestal" as "treasures" (2002, p. 33), equivalent to "the placement of a work in the literary canon" (1999, p. 144). However, the archivist's role as an intermediary has been largely ignored or kept out of discussions within the profession, to the point that archivists themselves have taken a "self-effacing" perspective toward their work, undermining their power to shape the record.

Nesmith also saw the practical applications of postmodernism. In his later article (2006), Nesmith discusses how archival principles and practice can be reformulated in postmodernist lenses. Regarding appraisal, he argues that appraisal is a process of contextualizing records through research, not just deciding what to keep and what not to keep. He returns to his earlier statement about how the missing records determine what becomes valued, not just because of the archivist's decisions but also because of the creators' and users' decisions of which records to keep and which to archive. In discussing original order, Nesmith echoes Brothman (1991) when he states that there is no way to know what the original order is or whether it has been disturbed by the creator before accession. He proposes a new concept called "received order," though he cautions that this concept might not be useful due to the archivist's need to rearrange records for the purpose of access.

The *fonds*, Nesmith contends, should not be about a complete picture of the records but about contextualizing the purpose and background of the records as they were accumulated and received. Reference and programming would draw on perspectives of the users to inform new ideas of the records. Description, as he previously argued, is a process of creation, not just of "objectively" noting what is there.

Brien Brothman (2002) returned to analyze how the privileging of the modernist conception of evidence has worked in tandem with the desire to render the work of the archivist invisible in order to afford the archivist a prestigious professional identity. Brothman discusses the difference between the "strong-sense" and "weak-sense" conceptions of the identity of the record or what constitutes "recordness," and how the most extreme "strong-sense" conceptions, as well as current trends toward postcustodialism and automated metadata capture, all work toward decreasing the archivist's need to mediate and interpret, thus making the documents more indicative of the creator's "intent." Brothman remarks that "views on appraisal ultimately reflect deeply held beliefs about professional identity—about whether archivists' role is primarily as record producers or primarily as record consumers, whether archivists are part of the corporate authorship-creator process or part of the consumer-interpreter process," (p. 327).

Another early postmodernist whose work gained traction after *Archive Fever* was Verne Harris. Speaking from the perspective of a South African archivist who witnessed the unauthorized government destruction of documents in apartheid-era rule (Harris 2000, Harris 2002), Harris has been extremely outspoken against modernist conceptions of the record and is one of the most prominent theoretical and postmodern-oriented voices on memory and evidence in the professional discourse.

Harris (1999) offered an early investigation of the current paradigm for electronic recordkeeping through the lens of *Archive Fever* and Derrida's concept of the trace. Harris suggests that the "recordkeeping paradigm" is one in which the archivist wields power over the documents and enforces a singular interpretation of them: "I am

suggesting that the *archon*[3], as an archetype, finds a fulsome twenty-first century embodiment in the record-keeper who keeps, or guards, evidence" (p. 14). Harris criticizes the binary oppositions implied by evidence-based recordkeeping, and notes how it excludes other formulations of the record not based in the Western concept of evidence-based law. The paradigm, Harris argues, tries to set boundaries between "text and context, data and metadata, form and content, evidence and memory, 'the event' and 'the event's recording'" that are only imagined and do not really exist (p. 13). Harris writes:

> [The paradigm] seeks to avoid the unavoidable—outside of pragmatic formulations, 'context' has no beginning and no ending; 'recording' has as much to do with forgetting and imagining as it does with remembering; 'the event', no matter how well recorded, ultimately is irrecoverable; a 'good'—reliable, valid, authentic and so on—record can tell a lie, a 'poor' record a truth; and the absence of a 'record' can tell as much of its presence (p. 13).

Harris thus calls on archivists to move beyond the paradigm of archives as sanctuaries of objective evidence to see the archives as a place where certain narratives are told, as a locus of story and memory.

In "The Archival Sliver" (2002), Harris further discusses his observation that archivists are unwilling to abandon the Positivist foundations to which they cling. He criticizes the formulations of archives as objective representations of human memory, remarking that all that is saved is a tiny fraction of what exists, and that in government archives, public records can easily be manipulated by the government to gain control. Acknowledging that his experiences have led to his viewpoint, Harris discusses the transition in South African archival theory from the destruction of public memory to a "transformation discourse" that sought to reclaim that lost memory by reaching into the

past to unearth the hidden narratives. But South African archivists, Harris argues, still cling to outdated modernist ideals.

Harris explains four ways in which archivists express Positivist tendencies. First, archivists still cling to grand narratives, thinking of archives as a way to illustrate "the story" of an overarching event or cultural phenomenon. He writes, "[t]he counter-narratives, even the sub-narratives, too frequently are excluded, and so we deny our audience the very space in which democracy thrives" (Harris 2002, p. 83-84). Second, oral history is not properly perceived as a documentary form, even though it is often the only way to capture cultures based around orality. Third, archival appraisal is still perceived as "simply about the building of a coherent reflection of 'reality' through the jigsawing of individual appraisals" (p. 84), despite that the archivist actively engages in the process of appraisal, and what is saved reflects the values and perspective of the appraiser. Harris' last point is that archivists still believe that their ultimate goal is "the detaining of meaning, the resolving of mystery, the closing of the archive" (p. 84). There is no room for multifarious interpretations, for layered narratives, when the archivist's objective is to make an absolute statement.

Harris concludes with a conviction that archivists, no matter where and in which archives they work, "are subject to the call of and for justice" because "the archive can never be a quiet retreat for professionals and scholars and craftspersons [sic]. It is a crucible of human experience, a battleground for meaning and significance, a babel of stories, a place and a space of complex and ever-shifting powerplays" (p. 84). Harris sees archives as sites of negotiation of power, fluidity of meaning, and process of interpretation.

Engaging with Derrida in a similar way to Harris, Eric Ketelaar first responded to Derrida in the essay "Archivalization and Archiving" (Ketelaar 1999), in which he discusses how archives are influenced by sociocultural factors, and plays on Derrida's term archivization by coining the term *archivalization*, the decision of whether something was worth recording in the first place, to precede archivization and archiving. In "Tacit Narratives" (2001), building on his contemporaries Nesmith, Harris, and Brothman, Ketelaar writes that the record is produced by its archiving just as much as the event produced the record. In a similar vein to Nesmith and his discussion of the re-creation of the record upon each new encounter, Ketelaar argues that the record, to use Derrida's term, is "activated" upon each new encounter. Ketelaar writes that we understand records based on their "semantic genealogy," that is, the chain of context by which we make sense of the records and the context in which they have been understood and used.

Ketelaar (2002) further explores the power of archives and the archivist. Using a scene from *Star Wars: Episode II: Attack of the Clones* in which Obi-Wan consults the Jedi Archives as a springboard, Ketelaar discusses how archives are both sites of totalitarian oppression and democratic liberation. Government archives keep tabs on citizens in a panoptic fashion, but those same detailed files can later be exploited by citizens to reclaim their rights, such as in post-communist democratic societies in which "thousands and thousands of people rush[ed] to the state archives where they hope[d] that the evidence they needed would be kept" (p. 230-231). In the same way that the documents can be liberating or prison-like, the archive can come off as a temple or prison, not only in its architecture but also in its procedures of surveillance for reading room use. As Ketelaar notes, "[r]esearchers […] have a legal right to consult public

archives, but that right is reconstructed inside the archives into a privilege, the granting of which has to be requested" (p. 234). These procedures help retain the power of archivists and their individual "balance of empathy and distance" (Cooley 1998 as cited in p. 236). Ketelaar asserts, however, that this does not mean that all archivists are tyrannical, more so that the archivist embodies a range of roles, and the wielding of power constitutes many of these performances (p. 237).

The roots of archives in the "objective" disciplines of history and law was also examined in the postmodernist wave of archival writing. MacNeil (2001) and Brothman (2002) examined how traditions of history and law informed the archival tradition. Furner (2004) and Meehan (2009a) note that archival description, like historical writing, is a practice of interpretation that relies on making inference from scant tidbits of information provided in documents.

Ciaran Trace (2002), examining several studies from the field of law and critical discourse analysis, explains how police records and other "official" records are twisted by the recorders to omit or falsify information that may not reflect the "truth" of the event. Such falsification begins with socialization in the profession on how to keep these records. For instance, in citing studies of police records, Trace draws attention to how non-prestige forms of language were attributed to the accused, or how some information in the record is ignored when making a conviction in juvenile courts. In almost any organization, Trace writes, records are created with an outward-looking intention, and they are not just passive byproducts of daily organizational procedures (p. 144). Trace argues that records are created "in anticipation of the uses to which they may be put" (p. 144) and often reflect a particular viewpoint or perspective within the organization. This

allows recordkeepers to gain control over the situation and show that their organization

operates cleanly. The record, Trace writes, "become[s] naturalized and thus invisible, an

assumed backdrop rather than active agent" (p. 158).

In Australia, Frank Upward (1996, 1997) and Sue McKemmish blended

postmodernist theory, citing Lyotard and Anthony Giddens, with a term first coined by

Ian Mclean to create the abstract, postmodernist concept of the records continuum.

Synthesized in the midst of the electronic information revolution, the continuum aims to

addresses issues that arise with the keeping of electronic records, particularly their

unstable form and ability to be easily transferred between owners. Upward notes that in

the continuum, records are primarily "logical rather than physical entities" (Upward

1996, p. 276). The continuum also draws from the Australian series system of

arrangement, which allows for multiple provenances (McKemmish 2011).

Upward defines the records continuum as a "space/time construct" based on four

axes, "identity, evidentiality, transactionality and recordkeeping entity" (1996, p. 277).

Each of the four elements reflects concepts that are integral to archival practice.

"Identity" represents the provenance of records; "transactionality" the functions and

transactions contained in the record; "evidentiality" the "trace of actions" within records

(1996, p. 290); and "recordkeeping entity" the storage of recorded information.

Time and space are important elements of the continuum. The continuum draws

heavily on the rejection of the records lifecycle (Upward 1997) and the concept of

postcustodialism—allowing records to remain with their creators rather than with

archivists, while archivists provide recordkeeping guidance. It posits that records see

many uses throughout their lifetimes and that some records may never be transferred to

archives. In true postmodernist fashion, Upward rejects binary oppositions when he states that the postcustodial approach need not be "non-custodial": "[P]ost-custodial approaches do not have to mean a rupture with the past, despite their de-emphasis of physical custody. Post-custodial approaches have grown out of a collapse in confidence in the coping ability of linear regimes of physical custody" (1996, p. 274).

In her 2001 review of the development of the records continuum model, "Placing Records Continuum Theory and Practice" (McKemmish 2001), Sue McKemmish recounts that Frank Upward, in developing the records continuum model together with McKemmish, was strongly influenced by postmodernism, particularly in his rejection of the records lifecycle (p. 346). She writes that the records continuum model is "underpinned by philosophical approaches and notions of metatheory that posit the possibility of persistent ways of thinking about recordkeeping and archiving, while acknowledging that they are essentially contingent activities" (p. 349). Upward frequently mentions the importance of questioning and reexamining current models of practice in light of new developments and trends (1996, 1997). Self-reflection is a key part of the continuum.

Not all postmodernist writings or writers, or writers or writings directly or indirectly influenced by postmodernism, in the archival literature responded to or incorporated Derrida's dense theory. Some were more practice-based than theory-focused. Margaret Hedstrom (2002) discusses how archives are not natural or neutral. She outlines how various formats have been privileged or deprivileged, specifically how documents have been privileged over oral culture and audiovisual material, although photographs have remained popular since they are, like Ketelaar (2001) discusses,

triggers of memory. Hedstrom is interested in how interfaces for description and access, such as finding aids or websites, are, just like archives and archivists, a reflection of a specific sociocultural environment. She calls on archivists to recognize their own power and how their interpretive acts shape users' perceptions of records.

Verne Harris joined Wendy Duff (2002) to examine the debate over fonds-based description versus series-based description, discuss the power of the archivist and of description to privilege certain viewpoints while obscuring others, and propose a "liberatory" descriptive standard. While acknowledging that "to classify is human" as stated by Bowker and Star in their book on categorization, *Sorting Things Out* (1999), Duff and Harris argue for a standard that does not "oppress" and instead "liberates." According to Duff and Harris, a liberatory standard would be: transparent, not seeking to hide the basis of its construction and "hospitable to deconstruction"; seek input from and include as many voices as possible; acknowledge the record as fluid rather than static; prioritize user needs; include the voices of the marginalized; and embrace multiplicity and ambiguity (p. 284-285).

Archivists have also challenged the types of materials that are considered evidence, pushing back against the profession's apparent bias toward records with recognizable documentary forms, especially government records. Adrian Cunningham (1996), whose background was in personal papers, reacted to the recent impulse to define the record as well as the government records bias in Australian archival practice and theory. Cunningham writes, "A consensus appears to have emerged which defines a record in transactional terms. This counter productively [sic] narrow concept of the record is to me symptomatic of the corporate myopia afflicting many of today's archival

theoreticians. It skirts the slippery concept of the evidential nature of records and excludes such non-organisational [sic] material as personal diaries and literary drafts, the 'recordness' of which to me is defined by their evidential qualities" (p. 22).

Sue McKemmish, in "Evidence of Me…" (1996), explores the various types of personal recordkeeping practices, and asserts that personal papers constitute evidence in the same way as government papers. She also incorporates insights from the records continuum perspective, arguing that personal records could transcend the private individual to become public collective memory and have purposes beyond their individual uses. McKemmish later contributed to Christopher (Cal) Lee's anthology *I, Digital* (2011) with an updated version called "Evidence of Me… in a Digital World" (2011), in which she revisits "Evidence of Me…," discussing new developments in continuum thinking such as parallel and multiple provenance, and how those developments were influenced by new technologies and the incorporation of indigenous and traditional ways of knowing.

Michael Launder (2002) uses information scientist Michael Buckland's article "Information as Thing" (1991) to argue that "even non-textual objects can be considered information sources" because humans can gather information from nearly everything (p. 69). Launder writes that, "[f]or an object to be relevant as evidence, it must meet certain criteria: it must be pertinent to the issue being studied; there must be a likelihood of its use as evidence, and its use as evidence must be important rather than trivial. There must also be a community of interest that views both the issue and the evidence as significant concerns" (p. 69). Michelle Caswell (2009) asserts that cellphone records could provide important evidence of everyday activities: "[w]hile cell-phone-generated [records] are

often viewed as ephemeral […] cell phones can also generate records of enduring value" (p. 135).

The postmodernist "burst" in the archival profession began to wane in the mid- and late 2000s as postmodernism was absorbed into the profession's larger cultural milieu. Rand Jimerson's address to the SAA annual conference, "Embracing the Power of Archives" (Jimerson 2006), provides an overview of what preceding postmodernists said. "Archives are not neutral or objective. We heard this before the postmodernists arrived, but they have reinforced our awareness of the problem," Jimerson states (p. 22). Drawing heavily on Ketelaar (2002), Jimerson discusses Ketelaar's assertions that the archive is a site of power, in which the researcher expects everything to be available or else it does not exist; the archive is a prison in which documents are held hostage from both researcher and archivist, and the documents' meanings are enforced by archivists who have the documents in their custody. To Ketelaar's list, Jimerson adds that the archive is a restaurant in which users have a free choice to interact with whatever documents they want. Of the archives as prison, Jimerson writes that "[t]he archivist wields a power of interpretation over the records in his or her custody—a term usually reserved for those arrested by the police—and thus controls and shapes the meaning of these imprisoned sources" (p. 27). This statement echoes not only Ketelaar's, but also Harris' and Trace's, assertions about archival power.

Also during the wane of the postmodernist burst, Geoffrey Yeo uniquely examined the definition of a record in his two-part article, "Concepts of Record" (Yeo 2007, Yeo 2008). Using a postmodernist framing, Yeo acknowledges that definitions are necessarily interdependent with other definitions and determined by the time, culture, and

space in which they are delineated. In "Concepts of Record (1)" (Yeo 2007), he discusses how archival literature often equates records to evidence or to the activities that they helped facilitate. Some archival literature sees records as "natural by-products," even though they may not always be "natural," as Trace (2002) wrote. Using logic and genus-species relation, Yeo takes this to mean that writers in the archival field see records as a "kind" of evidence, in the same way that a dog is a kind of animal. However, he acknowledges that disagreement over the meaning of evidence and how evidence is determined means that many archivists, and others outside the discipline, will reject the concept that records are a kind of evidence. The definition of records at which Yeo arrives is "persistent representations of activities, created by participants or observers of those activities or by their authorized proxies" (Yeo 2007, p. 337).

Yeo believes this definition will help address the concerns of the postmodernists who insist that the record is an inferior representation of the actual event. The record, he notes, cannot capture all of the inner feelings and mental processes of the recorder: "[t]he inner thoughts and feelings of the participants in an activity, their unstated assumptions, their tacit knowledge of the environment in which they operated are all unknown or at best obscurely hinted at in the surviving record" (p. 339). He characterizes the record as a *representation* for this reason, because "[n]o representational system captures the full complexity of the targets it seeks to represent" (p. 339). In his second article (Yeo 2008), a continuation of the first, Yeo explores several concepts influential in information science in relation to archives, such as Eleanor Rosch's prototype theory (the "prototype" record is a paper record, not an audiovisual or digital record, although Yeo says this will

change as we move into the digital realm), and Bowker and Star's boundary objects (records can serve multiple purposes and originate from multiple creators).

Jennifer Meehan (2006, 2009a, 2009b) similarly sought a reformulation of the archival concept of evidence. Meehan (2006), in discussing the evidence/memory dichotomy in the archival tradition[4], explains that evidence should be conceived of as a relationship between record and event rather than something inherently contained in the record. Evidence is created, Meehan argues, by the identification of relationships between documents and the use of documents for certain purposes. Meehan (2009a) builds on this argument by discussing how archival description is an interpretive process of arranging and interpreting pieces of evidence in order to form a larger narrative, and that the archivist is a mediator between the records and the meaning presented in the records' description. In Meehan (2009b), she emphasizes the importance of context in the appraisal and description processes, restating the ideas from her 2006 article.

The Modernist Undercurrent in a Postmodernist World

Despite the influence of postmodernism and the altered worldview that accompanies it, the turn toward postmodernism was accompanied by an inward search for the "foundations" of recordkeeping as emergent electronic forms of communication began to radically change and challenge the landscape of records and recordkeeping practices. David Bearman (1992) outlines two challenges posed to archivists by the new electronic environment: "First, it threatens to transform the relatively stable framework of bureaucratic organizations and to replace it by a type of organizational structure which is, at present, inchoate. Second, it is leading to new practices of communication and to new forms of records whose outlines are equally unclear. Each of these tendencies challenges

contemporary archival practice and forces us to re-examine archival theory" (p. 169).

Richard Cox (1994) similarly writes that "Archivists debated the relevance of archival

principles, […] and, hence, the role of archival programs in this age" (p. 280).

Faced with the failures of the "first generation" of electronic recordkeeping (Cox

1994) and the emergent electronic recordkeeping environment, with documents that were

mutable, unstable, and easily duplicated, and that had a lifespan dependent on hardware

and software, coupled with widespread changes in communication with the advent of the

Internet, archivists soon realized, as Reto Tschan (2002) writes, that "[t]he need for the

archivist's intervention in an electronic environment is essential, for passivity in this

respect may well result in records either not being preserved at all, or if preserved, being

technologically irretrievable" (p. 192). So practitioners and scholars working in the

archival field began to return to Jenkinsonian concepts of evidence and the archivist as

guardian.

At the forefront of this return to modernist Jenkinsonian ideals was Luciana

Duranti. Duranti, whose background was in the study of diplomatics, believed that using

ideas from diplomatics that had influenced Jenkinson would assure that electronic records

would exhibit both reliability and authenticity despite their technological dependence and

ability to be copied. In "The Archival Bond" (1997), she explains that evidence is

constituted via a relationship to an event that the user of that evidence wants to prove, a

view that originates in diplomatics. Although Duranti insists that evidence is constructed

through this interaction, she also refers to the document as "revealing" the evidence and a

record that "puts the fact into existence" or "provides proof" of it (p. 214). Duranti also

agrees with Jenkinson that evidence that was created consciously to serve as evidence would not be "admissible" (p. 215).

In "The Archival Bond," Duranti notes that "[t]he definition of electronic record is not different from that of any record, other than in the fact that it makes reference to its physical form and medium. However, the components of an electronic record may manifest themselves in new ways, and therefore need to be made recognizable" (p. 215). Working with Terry Eastwood and Heather MacNeil among others, Duranti helped head two different projects, the UBC-MAS project at the University of British Columbia where she was and currently is a professor of archival science, and the InterPARES Project, a collaboration between theorists and practitioners from several countries, to determine requirements for preserving reliable and authentic electronic records. Cox (1994) writes about a similar project that was conducted in the United States at the University of Pittsburgh to determine functional requirements for electronic recordkeeping.

In "The Impact of Digital Technology on Archival Science" (2001), Duranti discusses the findings from these two projects. She explains that if the archival profession is undergoing a paradigm shift, archivists should use "the whole of the archival knowledge accumulated through the centuries, and, as a result of the new connections and of the feedback process, old archival ideas would broaden and develop into new ideas rooted in the past and consistent with the old ideas" (p. 42). Duranti thus believes that by turning toward the past, new practices can be rooted in something we know while incorporating current knowledge about electronic records. Rather than completely

reforming archival science as a discipline, she argues it is necessary to ground electronic records practice in known theories and practices.

Writers in the archival profession have proposed both practical and underlying psychological reasons for this turn. David Bearman (1992) notes that for European archivists in particular, such as Duranti who was originally educated in Italy, diplomatics and the management of bureaucratic record forms was part of the European archival tradition, and that the uncertainty associated with the new electronic environment meant that such archivists relied on the foundations of what they knew. Bearman identifies diplomatics as the basis of one approach to confronting electronic records, which prioritizes identifying record forms worth preserving, and bureaucratic traditions as the basis of the other approach, which identifies transactions that are worth preserving.

Bearman (1995) further discusses how the concept of evidence helps unite archivists around a common purpose. Often, he notes, American archivists name archival functions such as description, access, and preservation as the goals of archivists, but although these are common archival activities, such functions don't reflect a "fundamental purpose," in other words, something that would justify the archival profession's existence. Broad social mandates such as memory and accountability, which Bearman credits to Canadian and Australian archivists respectively, are admirable aspirations, but do not specifically capture how archives help achieve that mandate. Bearman writes, "Evidence is the source of social and legal identity and significance. When archives are understood as evidence, numerous problems that archivists have struggled with are resolved" (p. 391).

If the purpose of the archival profession is to preserve evidence, Bearman argues, "then we need to know what constitutes evidence, how records can be designed to capture evidence, and how we will identify each record, as well as the comprehensive record" (p. 392). This need to know what defined evidence led to investigations of electronic recordkeeping practices and principles focused on preserving evidence like the Pittsburgh project, UBC-MAS project, and the InterPARES project.

Heather MacNeil, who studied the history of diplomatics and the use of records in government under Duranti, and participated in the UBC-MAS project, explores the psychological reasons behind the adoption of the oldest traditions of archival science. In "Trusting Records in a Postmodern World" (MacNeil 2001), she draws on her knowledge about the history of evidence as inference and records as evidence, explaining how modern recordkeeping was rooted in traditions that began in the seventeenth century with rationalist Enlightenment thought. Addressing the recent turn toward Jenkinsonian notions of evidence in archival theory, MacNeil writes:

> The desire to establish standards for ensuring the reliability and authenticity of records is a specific manifestation of a more general modernist urge to secure stable foundations for thought and practice. Our current preoccupation with setting standards for the authenticity of electronic records is symptomatic of this urge. Authenticity emphazises [sic] a return to the essential, the finding of centres [sic], the fixing of reference points, the certification of truth, and the privileging of the singular and definitive over the multiple and indeterminate. Amy Mullin has described authenticity as "the twentieth-century descendant of the virtue of purity." *And like purity, it valorises an ideal of order and stability, and the longing for uncorrupted origins.* (p. 42, emphasis added)

Brothman (2002) similarly notes that this modernist turn, both in archival science and in other professional fields, is not only a symptom of longing for a more stable and predictable past of recordkeeping, but also a sign of the increasing professionalization of the field and a move away from the "backwater" past of institutional and corporate

recordkeeping in which archivists felt powerless. Archivists are taking the new professional standardization as an opportunity, Brothman argues, to advance in the public eye as a profession operating on the same kind of evidentiary science as in the legal field. He writes that "status, power, and influence await those who can claim some expertise in the social management of evidence. The ability to 'manage evidence' rather than simply 'records' lends to record keepers, at the disciplinary level, an aura of legitimacy in the form of scientific authority and objective control, and, at the professional level, economic gain and social empowerment" (p. 329).

The turn toward modernist conceptions of evidence has a practical purpose, helping unite the profession around common practices that can ensure achievement of more abstract goals. It can be seen as a sign of the archival field's increasing professionalization and standardization, but also as a desire for stability in the face of an uncertain paradigm shift, as Duranti implies and MacNeil more clearly states.

Evidence in the 2010s and Beyond

Just as Jimerson, Ketelaar, and Harris noted in their postmodernist examinations of the profession, the archival literature recognized the power of archives in the 1990s and 2000s, though not in the way the postmodernist theorists might have hoped or expected. Moreover, neither postmodernism nor the advent of electronic records was the only challenge to the archival profession.

One of the biggest challenges that changed the way archivists viewed their work and their profession, especially in the United States, was posed by Dennis Meissner and Mark Greene in their 2005 article, "More Product, Less Process," the article that birthed a method known colloquially in the archival field as "MPLP." Greene and Meissner

criticized the archival profession for, among other things, putting maximum effort into processing, preservation, and description, suggesting instead that more of the burden of research be shifted to the user to avoid the buildup of massive backlogs. MPLP was and continues to be extremely controversial among archivists in the United States (Ness 2010, Prom 2010, Phillips 2015), but alongside the postmodernist turn and the advent of electronic records, it marked the beginning of an important self-reflective turn for the archival profession.

In the 2010s, particularly the mid- to late 2010s, critical writings in the archival field began to reflect more diverse perspectives in relation to the power of archives and the concept of evidence. In particular, there has been a shift toward collaborative ideas of evidence, influenced by Web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies; the advent of community archives and the recognition of archives as sites of social justice and reparation; the incorporation of feminist, queer, and affect theory; and a growing interest in decolonizing the archive and incorporating traditional and indigenous forms of knowledge.

Terry Cook's article, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms" (2013), building off his 1997 article "What is Past is Prologue," recognizes this shift toward community perspectives in the archival profession. Cook discusses the archival profession's beginnings as passive guardians of evidence, which he calls the "pre-modern" paradigm, toward a recognition that the archivist should act as a historian for collective memory, the "modern" archivist. The "identity" paradigm is the postmodern paradigm in which the archivist is recognized to be a mediator. This paradigm, Cook notes, was marked by a struggle over whether the archival profession should be defined by its preservation of evidence or by its shaping of

societal memory. Cook believes that the archival profession suffers from "an identity crisis," and the third paradigm was marked by "the search for the archivist's own identity as a conscious mediator aiding society in forming its own multiple identities through recourse to archival memory and as an active agent protecting evidence in the face of the blistering complexity of rapidly changing societal organizations and digital media" (p. 113).

According to Cook, the current paradigm is the "community" paradigm, in which the "activist-archivist" fosters the creation of collaborative evidence and memory-making. Especially due to the rise of the Internet and the democratization of communication through social media, archivists are recognizing that it is possible to document more communities than ever, and also that it is possible, and may be necessary, to get those communities' direct, contemporaneous input on the representation of their heritage in archives. Cook writes of the new role for the archivist that "[r]ather than taking such records away from their communities, the new model suggests empowering communities to look after their own records, especially their digital records, by partnering professional archival expertise and archival digital infrastructures with communities' deep sense of commitment and pride in their own heritage and identity" (p. 116).

Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd's "Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream" (2009), provides an overview of the nature and purpose of community archives. The authors discuss the nature of community archives as local groups' recognition that their own heritage is important to preserve, and that "[t]he establishment of a community archive is, for many, a form of activism that seeks to redress or rebalance this pattern of privileging and marginalising [sic]" (p. 74).

In studying community archives across the United Kingdom, the authors observed that community archives tended to emphasize education as one of their goals, especially resisting dominant or hegemonic narratives about their (marginalized) community. They also noticed that several of the archives collected a wider breadth of material compared to national or other archives, particularly ephemeral materials like leaflets and posters that are "crucial" to groups that may not have an established "official" heritage. Community archives thus must broaden their concept of evidence to accommodate the ways their daily lives resist the common, government-record-rooted, modernist conception of evidence in the archival field.

Anne Gilliland, Michelle Caswell, and Marika Cifor have been three leaders in incorporating affect theory into archival discourse. Cifor (2016) defines affect as "a force that creates a relation between a body and a world." In an archival context, Cifor writes, affect can be understood as the emotional effects that records have on individuals. and calls on archivists to consider the role of emotions in appraisal and individuals' relation to archives. Gilliland and Caswell (2016) discuss the concept of "imagined" records and the emotions that records can unearth. Jamie A. Lee (2015, 2016, 2019) uses queer theory and other social theorists' insights as a lens through which to view archival theory and practice. I discuss these authors' works in greater detail in section IV, Queer Theory.

Recently, decolonizing the archive has become a popular topic, especially because colonial notions of evidence obscured indigenous and traditional knowledge. Jeannette Bastian (2006, 2009, 2013) describes how postcolonial scholars studying colonial societies have read colonial records against the grain, and how they have struggled with trying to unearth the voices of the colonized populations from the records of the

colonizers. Bastian suggests expanding the notion of provenance to focus on social or community provenance, as well as reformulating the notions of evidence and record to reflect "the dynamic actions, transactions and interactions of the society" (2006, p. 282). In particular, the idea of evidence should be expanded to include performances and oral traditions (Bastian 2009). Bastian states that a postcolonial archive, "[w]hile accommodating and acknowledging master narratives, the postcolonial archive focuses on the small communities and the socially marginalized. It identifies cultural expressions and signifiers such as dance, ritual and celebration. It concerns itself as much with remembrance and collective identity as it does with traditional text" (2013, p. 282).

Kimberly Anderson, in "The Footprint and the Stepping Foot: Archival Records, Evidence, and Time" (2013), examines how the temporal disconnect between the creation of the record and the use of the record has contributed to the privileging of the written, static form in Western concepts of evidence. This means that oral traditions, events, and other dynamic parts of culture are often not considered evidence because they shift in time and are not temporally static, "and thus, the records retained in the archive will tend to emphasize institutions or communities that communicate or conduct interactions in ways that can be captured" (p. 355). Anderson argues that what a culture considers evidence is a metaphysical question, not an objective one—one's idea of evidence is firmly tied into one's belief system.

Working from Brothman's (2002), among others', definition of record, Anderson suggests a new concept of record that would include events and other dynamic processes: "an intentional, stable, semantic structure that moves in time" (p. 362). "Intentional" means that the record was intended to pass through time, meaning that it can be accessed

beyond the current moment. "Stability" means semantic stability, not physical fixity; although the record's physical manifestations may change, the record itself always represents "a set of relationships between sign and meaning that can be processed, accessed, and interpreted at times in the future" (p. 362). "Semantic" means that the record has some sort of semantic structure, even if the meaning behind that structure is lost, it is important that it *has* the structure in place. Because this definition of record does not require physical fixity, it opens space for oral traditions and events. Because the document "moves in time," there is no requirement that the document is temporally separated from its creator(s). In this way, Anderson hopes that "[r]ather than translating between record types, as happens in oral history, archivists can instead identify the dynamic oral form as its *own* record rather than something that must be *made into* a record" (p. 367, emphasis added).

Michelle Caswell and Ricardo Punzalan investigate the influence of the archival field's focus on evidence on its defense of human rights in their article "Archives and Human Rights: Questioning Notions of Information and Access" (2016). Exploring both Jenkinsonian and Schellenbergian influence, Caswell and Punzalan note that the prevailing definitions of records in the field are based on their ability to serve as evidence of an event, rather than information about an event. In this way, the records in archives may be used as evidence to defend human rights claims. Caswell and Punzalan review literature on archival power to investigate primarily how archives can perpetuate human rights abuses, "[w]hile the cases explored here underscored how archivists have supported dominant power structures at the expense of human rights and human lives, the realization that archival labor is always political also opens us up to the possibility of

archival labor subverting hegemonic power" (p. 298). Caswell and Punzalan thus argue for the possibility of archival evidence being liberating.

Examining Other Disciplines

Having a more complete view of the evolution of evidence from modern to postmodern in the archival field, I will now examine the view of evidence in three humanities fields. I will begin with the field of literary criticism and theory due to its close ties to postmodernism and examine why and how its development was able to diverge from the adaptation of postmodernism in the archival field, as well as examining how the unstated assumptions on which literary criticism operates have rarely been questioned.

Next, I will examine the field of queer theory, as an offshoot from literary theory and queer studies; how this field developed its own ideas about evidence in archives and relating to identity; how affect theory and queer theory are being applied in archives to encounter different conceptions of documents and center the experiences of archives on the user; and how essentialist ideas about gender and sexuality constrain the fluidity and multiple lived truths of queer identities.

Tying together the influence of literary theory and queer theory is the fourth field of fandom culture, where the anarchic "anything-goes" approach inherited from user-centered queer, affect, race, and gender theory and politics is constantly rigidized and challenged by the normative concept of "canon," an authoritative constraint and construct inherited from the field of literary theory.

I begin by examining the field of literary theory and criticism, its relationship to its own concept of textual evidence, and how postmodernism affected that relationship.

III. LITERARY CRITICISM AND THEORY

The discipline of literary criticism has battled with the role of the creator and reader in relation to the text and what can be considered evidence. Literary criticism, too, traveled from modernist and historical conceptions of evidence, to postmodernist conceptions and back again; yet vestiges of the modernist roots still exist.

Early modernist conceptions of evidence in literary theory and criticism arose from the New Criticism advanced by Cleanth Brooks and his formalist contemporaries. As a contrast to biographical-based criticism of a text, the formalists wanted to encourage appreciation of the text itself and the meanings contained within it, from which arose the practice of "close reading" (Brooks 1951, p. 22). Brooks assumes that acts of criticism would be performed by ideal readers, who are detached and do not offer any emotional input or subjectivity into their interpretations (p. 24).

Literary critics William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley (1946) argue in two articles, "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Affective Fallacy," that both assuming an intention on the author's part, as well as including any emotional response to the text in one's critical response, distract from the appreciation of the text for its language and structure as art. As Mitchell (2011) notes, "[i]n identifying both fallacies, [Wimsatt and Beardsley] aim to render the discipline of literary criticism more rigorous, focused, and objective, by endorsing 'the way of poetic analysis and exegesis'—close reading—rather than 'the way of biographical or genetic enquiry.'"

Following New Criticism, the philosophical movement of structuralism studied language in itself. The French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure is one of the most prominent figures of structuralism. He argues that language is constructed independently of an individual, and differs from the speech act itself, which is heterogeneous and individually variable (Saussure 1916, p. 59). He is most well-known for advancing the idea that the word is comprised of two parts: signifier and signified, the concept and the sound-image (Saussure 1916, p. 61).

Succeeding the structuralists were the post-structuralists and deconstructionists, literary theory movements also originating in France and spearheaded by theorists such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida. The post-structuralists and deconstructionists rejected the binarism and essentialism of Saussure's claims, arguing that language has no inherent meaning, but is only understood within specific social and temporal contexts.

Jacques Derrida, familiar among archivists for *Archive Fever*, is known in literary theory for his concepts of *différance*, the infinite deferral and differing in meaning in all communicative processes (Derrida 1968, p. 287), and the "trace," what is left behind in the wake of *différance* (Derrida 1968, p. 295). Roland Barthes investigated sign and signification and cultural mythologies, though he remains most well-known for his 1967 treatise on the "Death of the Author."

How "The Death of the Author" Changed Everything

> Who is speaking thus? […] We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing. (Barthes 1967, p. 122)

So writes Barthes in "The Death of the Author," in discussing a passage about the nature of woman from the novella *Sarrasine* by French author Honoré de Balzac. Barthes

claims that as soon as a piece of writing is set on the page, it ceases to belong to the person writing. In fact, ownership was not even original before the writer started, Barthes argues, as all writings are simply patchworks made up of inscriptions from other writings, stored within the writer's internal "dictionary"; with this last point in particular, Barthes set the stage for Derrida's ideas of the "trace" and *différance* (Barthes, p. 146, 147). According to Barthes, writers can only express themselves in terms of what they have gleaned from reading other works.

Due to the patchwork nature of the text, Barthes argues that unearthing the one true meaning of the text is impossible. Instead, the meaning of the text lies in the *reader* and the reader's own internal dictionary of lived and read experiences. "Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature," Barthes writes. "We know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (p. 148).

"The Death of the Author" marked a shift from prioritizing the author's biographical and historical circumstances to prioritizing the reader's interpretations, pushing back against Brooks and the New Critics who assumed that the text could be "objectively" read by an ideal reader. In "Critical Practices: On the Representation and Interpretation of Text" (2014), Henry Widdowson argues that reader interpretations can be prioritized due to the nature of literature itself. Widdowson claims the following:

> [In reading literature,] [y]ou do not have to worry about whether your interpretation corresponds with the author's communicative intention. You assume that the very existence of the text implies intentionality, some claim to significance, but you are free to assign whatever significance suits you. There is no possibility of checking out whether your understanding matches what the

author meant, and no penalties for getting it wrong. In this respect, the literary text is in limbo: there is authorship but no ownership (p. 162).

According to Widdowson, in interpreting a text, readers are naturally led back to their own experiences. They must "invent" in order to understand the text. This claim affirms Barthes' belief that the author's "intent" is meaningless because literature is a practice of interpretation based on the reader's individual context—their "internal dictionary." Both Barthes and Widdowson, then, reject the affective fallacy that claimed that a reader's individual interpretation is inconsequential to a "true" reading of the text, because there is no ideal reader, just like there is no one ideal intention.

In incorporating the death of the author and other tenets of the post-structuralist and deconstructionist mindsets, the field of literary criticism and literary theory began to move toward diversity of interpretation, based in the reader rather than the writer. Postmodernist theory was eagerly accepted by many literary critics. Literary criticism began to overlap more with social sciences and theories, including feminism, queer theory, postcolonial theory, class theory, and critical race theory. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan's *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (2004) contains texts on the nature of postmodernism by Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard alongside pioneering texts on gender, race, class, ideology, and colonialism. Barthes had effectively set the stage for the death of the author and the renaissance of the reader.

However, the concept of evidence itself still lay firmly entrenched in the New Critics' idea of textual evidence garnered from close reading. Even as readers and critics from diverse backgrounds advanced, and continue to advance, new ways of looking at texts, and as literary theory and social theories developed, the practice of literary criticism itself remained, and remains, firmly grounded in reading the texts themselves

rather than exploring the reader's affective experience of the text or questioning the notion of textual evidence.

Engaging with the Concept of Evidence in Literary Criticism

It is difficult to gauge how much direct engagement there has been with the concept of evidence in literary criticism. The field is vast, with many scholars and many sub-disciplines, and it is difficult to find discussion of evidence as a *construct*. My lack of involvement in the literary field constitutes a major limitation in my study; I cannot easily trace "meta" discussions about textual evidence in the literary criticism literature. Having only gained a surface-level understanding of the literary field when I studied English as an undergraduate, I was also unsure which journals would be most fruitful in my investigation. Nonetheless, I was able to unearth some discussion about the concept of evidence among literary critics.

Harold Cherniss (1999) pushes back against the emerging subfield of New Historicism as well as the tradition of biographical study in literature. Cherniss states that taking a work only in the context of its history is reductive, and that those who do so fail to appreciate the work for its artistic merit. Trying to understand a work through its historical context alone would make no sense, as the author had no consciousness of the historicity of the period in which they were writing, and that period cannot be entirely "recreated" in the reader's mind—the reader's interpretive process will necessarily stem from *the reader's* experiences and not any hypothetical experiences of the work's original audience. Cherniss writes, "The insidious danger of the biographical method lies in its assumption that the essence is merely a combination of accidents, that literature is an automatic by-product of external forces, whence comes its tacit conclusion that no

literary work has autonomous significance" (p. 158). Cherniss thus enforces the "death of the author" approach, influenced by his study in the field of classics.

Widdowson (2014) enforces that literary criticism is built upon the reader's interpretation and not on any single meaning contained in the text. This is nothing new for the literary field, which has accepted plurality of interpretation since the early days of postmodernism, but Widdowson was writing in the separate sociological discipline of critical discourse analysis.

Literary critics and theorists have frequently questioned what can be considered or admitted as textual evidence. Such critics argue that the object of criticism, whether book, poem, or story, is influenced by material that surrounds the text and affects a reader's interpretation, and that this material may also be considered textual evidence even if it is not contained "within" the text. Literary theorist Michel Foucault was a prominent voices in this discussion. In *The Archaelogy of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault explains the concept of "discourse" and how discourse establishes not only the rules of language, but also the standards for how it can be transmitted (p. 92). Foucault argues that "literature" and "politics" are recent categories to describe facets of discourse, and that when we realize that everything is discourse, it is difficult to determine explicit borders. Foucault writes, "The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (p. 92). Similarly to Barthes' claim that all texts are just remixing statements that came before, Foucault conceives of a book as having no clear

borders because it is influenced by all the texts that come before, coexist with it, and come after.

Gérard Genette's (1991) concept of paratext also proposes that the borders of a work are not clearly delineated. The most basic information included in paratext is the author and title, which influence how a text is read. Paratext also includes history, time period, and relevant texts from the same time period; Genette defines it as "an assorted set of practices and discourses of all sorts and of all ages" (p. 262). Knowing the paratext, Genette argues, even though it is not required to read a text, influences the way readers read the text itself. The purposes, applications, and interpretations of paratexts also vary widely from work to work, and Genette claims there is no text without paratext. Thus, the ideas of paratext and of discourse complicate the concept of death of the author, knowing that every text comes with "extra" discursive baggage.

The question of the limits of evidence is discussed by David Greetham (2010), writing in the subfield of textual criticism. Textual criticism emphasizes intertextuality and the importance of contemporaneous texts, drafts, and other paratexts in understanding a text. Greetham defines textual criticism as a discipline that challenged the very concept of evidence itself. Greetham argues that textual critics are unsure whether they should consider their discipline a separate activity from literary criticism, and whether their discipline should be viewed as "objective empirical demonstration" or "fallible human judgment" (p. 58). This tension between objectivity and individual subjectivity is reflected in literary criticism as a whole.

In discussing different versions of works, Greetham writes, "In surveying the enormous field of potential evidence, all editors confront the question: under what

principles can the evidentiary status of a witness be determined? Or, perhaps more accurate[ly]: is it possible to determine evidentiary status without having a desired version of the work in mind?" (p. 64). Textual critics thus struggle with whether to admit earlier versions of a work as "true" textual evidence, especially when they feel compelled to pick an "ideal" version of the work that most accurately represents the writer's intentions. Greetham also contemplates the use of "external evidence" by textual scholars. External evidence is gathered through the use of related documents in examining the creation (especially authorship) or revision of a text. Greetham expresses doubts that external evidence can truly be considered "reliable": "Moreover, external evidence may not be as neutral as it seems, and it may work only for those who are already convinced [...] [H]ow can 'external' evidence be considered purely external, since it may establish its authority largely by being a reliable witness to itself?" (p. 83). Greetham thus explores the question of what can and cannot be admitted as evidence from a textual scholar's perspective.

John Bryant (1987) provides a challenge to the concept of evidence in the form of a reconceptualization of the borders of a text. Bryant discusses how *Typee* by Herman Melville, a book he assigned for a class, sparked a conversation about revision of texts when a student discovered that he had purchased an earlier edition that differed significantly from the edition required for class. Bryant sees texts themselves, not only the diversity of interpretations that may be derived from them, as fluid and multiple. However, Bryant argues, literary critics have paid little attention to the possibilities of fluid texts for study and teaching.

Fluid texts reveal changes based on readers' interactions with the texts and social climates of the time, such as the changes Melville made to the British edition of *Typee* before it was released to American audiences in a revised version. In this way, Bryant claims, they reveal "intentionality" to change a text. He writes, "a fluid text has meaning only to the extent that we can interpret the shifting intentions encoded in its material differentiations (textual variants). Moreover, the shift in intention manifested in a fluid text represents a range of revisionary causes located in both the modes of production (writers) and consumption (readers)" (p. 26).

Fluid texts allow literary critics to perceive writers as readers of their own text, publishers and editors as readers, and society and individuals as readers. "[A] revised text embodies responses to the readerly voices speaking to the writer as he or she [sic] revises" (Bryant, p. 27). It reveals collaboration and heteroglossia—a convergence of voices—within the text. A fluid text is never "final," there is no "ultimate" interpretation; as Bryant writes, "[e]diting is a critical act, and an edition is not so much an 'established' text that enables criticism as it is in itself an interpretation" (p. 30).

Bryant criticizes past critical readings of *Typee* for their unwillingness to engage with the fluid text and the differences between versions. He concludes that "cultural analysis, textual scholarship, and literary criticism continue to occupy separate spheres," and publishers and even online archives have yet to develop methods (as of 2007) for reading and comparing versions of texts. Though Bryant's article challenges the reliance of literary critics on a single text, and he centralizes the reader in his formulation, he, too, still relies on a modernist concept of evidence as found within texts, rather than created by the reader's interpretive actions.

J19 Contributors Confront Archival Evidence

In a 2014 issue of *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, four contributors working in the field of nineteenth-century American literature discussed the concept of textual evidence in relation to archives. In the introduction to the section of the issue, Carrie Hyde and Joseph Rezek (2014) write that literary critics' sudden interest in the archives is "for new ways of seeing old texts and for new texts by which to understand old problems," "coupled with the anxiety that we've run out of new things to say about old texts" (p. 155). The rising discipline of New Historicism, as well as an investment in postcolonial and diverse readings, increased this interest. Hyde and Rezek write, "*We traded 'canons' for 'archives.'* We came to see the 'archive' (both as a term and a practice) as a way of guarding literary studies against accusations of interpretive triviality" (p. 156, emphasis added).

Brushing up against affect theory, Hyde and Rezek claim that archival evidence is not merely about the information contained in the text, "but also the evidential significance of our sensual experience in the archive: the nontextual features of material texts, size, format, paper quality, watermarks, bindings, and so on" (p. 157), which they deem "the aesthetics of archival evidence." Hyde and Rezek also discuss the then-recently-established practice of "distant reading" in which scholars analyze digital texts using algorithms to understand the frequency of certain terms in texts from a certain time period or other commonality. They claim that this is "only one type of evidence" and that it is "not superior in nature to the qualitative forms of knowledge once associated with close-reading" (p. 157).

Hyde and Rezek's introduction sets the stage for the common themes among these four articles: a skepticism of the kind of evidence advocated by "distant reading" and an embracing of the "hermeneutics of archival materials" (Lazo 2014), a process of reading that incorporates the informational (literary) content and physical form of the archives. I discuss each individual article below.

Paul Erickson (2014) provides a professional perspective that differs from the other articles. Erickson, an archival technician working in the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, provides a practice-based look into libraries and archives that serves as a guide to literary scholars unfamiliar with archival science. In archives, Erickson believes, scholars assume that the evidence they confront will be incomplete, explaining why historic writing is based on interpretive practice (p. 189). When visiting archives, literary scholars, Erickson asserts, are looking for texts to put "in conversation" with other contemporaneous texts (p. 189). He assents with Hyde and Rezek's rejection of "distant reading," questioning whether the datasets garnered from such practices can be considered evidence or whether they are merely data (p. 192).

Rodrigo Lazo (2014) explains how archival "close reading" differs from normal "close reading." Being in an archive means being situated in archival language and practices. Lazo plays into the emotional aspect of using archives when he calls archival reading an "experience," explains his need to travel to inspect the documents, and discusses his joy at finding the evidence he sought. Lazo notes the relative unpopularity of archival research in the literary field: "The ongoing importance of rigorous theoretical and textual analysis (as well as close reading) in English departments seemed to be at odds with pieces swept up in archival corners. While the historicists, working in a

subfield of literary criticism that emerged in the 1990s, may be moving increasingly into the crevices of archival materials (or at least eager to talk about archives), analysis of or using archival materials is still infrequent within literary criticism. Major works, even as the "canon" continues to expand, continue to exert influence (p. 182).

In the most theoretically-oriented of the four articles, Brian Connolly (2014) draws on Lacan and Derrida in stating that the search for reality within archives is fruitless. Due to the availability of new and vast quantities of evidence through digitization, Connolly notes, evidence, and empiricism, have become popular again, and new practices such as "distant reading" have emerged. He writes that these practices mark "a newfound fascination with an empirical orientation toward evidence, one frequently offered as a substitute (or antidote) for now supposedly 'tired' hermeneutics" (p. 172-173). Connolly is concerned that this turn toward evidence and technology is blind to the way it enforces Positivist, modernist viewpoints. He admits that "a wholesale rejection of digitization and globalism would be both naive and hopeless. But the techno-imperialist imperative, which at least flirts with a neoempiricist, positivist orientation toward evidence and the archive, needs to be resisted" (p. 177). He warns away from closure: "Desire can never be satisfied, no matter how many pieces of evidence (or signifiers) we accumulate" (p. 177).

The last of the four articles is Maurice Lee's (2014) "Falsifiability, Confirmation Bias, and Textual Promiscuity." Similarly to Connolly, Lee is interested in the expanding universe of documents, particularly in relation to "textual promiscuity," or how texts from the same time period or with similar subjects can be related to various literary texts. With this diversity of interpretation, Lee wonders if there is a way that some

interpretations can be considered "truer" than others, or falsified as "untrue." He writes, "[i]t is not simply that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, or that allegory is in the eye of the beholder. More crucially, claims about evidentiary relationships between texts are hard to falsify amid intertextual promiscuity, a dynamic that becomes increasingly irresistible as search engines make connections easier to claim" (p. 164).

The Internet and the proliferation of communication technologies, Lee argues, has moved literary interpretation further toward "intertextuality, superabundance, and unfalsifiability" (p. 165). Digital technology opens more interpretive practices and more ways of seeing. Making a similar call on literary critics as some archival theorists made of their fellow professionals, Lee asks that literary critics make their methods more transparent.

Literary critics have thus engaged with (archival) concepts of evidence and attempted to expand the concept of evidence beyond the borders of a single object of criticism, but the concept of textual evidence has only been slightly broadened. Literary evidence is still entrenched in the idea of a single text which contains the author's "ultimate intentions," even as the majority of literary theorists agree that there is no one intention and that the text only takes on a life in the hands of its readers. Many of the authors also touched on the idea that textual evidence is sometimes seen as "empirical," a term that carries rationalist, even objective, connotations. Unlike the archival field, literary theorists can afford to push beyond modernist and rationalist conceptions of evidence because, as implied by Widdowson, there are no consequences for doing so, just as there are no "penalties" for a wrong interpretation (Widdowson 2014, p. 162). Literary study is not a professionalized field; it is a field of humanities study. But even though it

can afford to be detached from the "real world," its clinging to modernist, rationalist ideas of evidence as constituted by the text itself, as "all there in the text," points to the underlying objectivity that still guides conceptions of evidence across disciplines.

Having examined the development and changes in the concept of evidence in literary theory, I now proceed with an examination of the development of the concept of evidence in queer theory and how lingering modernist ideas of queer identity still harm the queer community.

IV. QUEER THEORY

The queer[5] community has long struggled with societal delimitations on sexuality as well as defining queer sexuality and gender. Following the rise of queer social movements, and influenced by literary and feminist theory, queer theory emerged in the 1960s to combat a heteronormative and cissexist society's formulations of homosexuality, bisexuality, and trans identities. It was also a response to earlier writings on the queer community and gender that tended to be essentialist and binarist, such as essentialist feminism[6], or Sigmund Freud's writings on sexuality. Some important texts in queer theory include Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, and Judith Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" and *Gender Trouble*.

Foucault (1976) explains how individual sexual practices were medicalized and made into a weapon of social control by government. Foucault writes that sexuality had been a private, individual construct based on individual pleasures and fetishes, and that acts considered deviant were punished, rather than individuals. However, Foucault argues, beginning in the nineteenth century, "[the] homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology […] Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions on his face and body" (p. 896). The categorization and naming of sexual orientations allowed for the

oppression, social exclusion, and punishment of "deviant" sexualities, which were synthesized from individual sexual practices. As Foucault writes, "the homosexual was now a species" (p. 896).

Butler (1988) argues against the essentialist view that gender is based on innate biological characteristics. Rather, Butler sees gender as a performance enacted through a series of discursive and bodily acts. She writes that "[t]he various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (p. 903). Even though gender is entirely constructed, Butler asserts that "[t]he authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one's belief in its necessity and naturalness," and "those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (p. 903).

Building on Foucault, Sedgwick (1990) similarly argues that the homo/hetero binary is arbitrarily chosen from the many dimensions that make up human sexuality and used as a weapon to "devalue one of the two nominally symmetrical forms of choice" (p. 913). This binary opposition obscures the complexity of human sexuality and forces those who identify with one category to assume all of its other binary associations or otherwise be considered deviant (p. 914).

Foundational writers in the field of queer theory thus pushed back against heteronormative, cissexist society's essentialist delimitations, paving the way for queer definitions of evidence.

Toward Queer Concepts of Evidence

Evidence is tricky grounds for queer people, particularly in relation to archives. This was explained by Erin Baucom (2016) in the literature review of her master's paper,

"Do Archival Finding Aids Describe LGBT Individuals The Same Way They Would Describe Themselves?" Baucom explains that due to oppression and fear, queer people were pressured to self-censor their identities, or their families would censor them to "protect" their memory (p. 5). Many of the records used for research on queer identities are police records. As Baucom notes, "[a] person was not arrested for *being* a homosexual. An individual could only be arrested for performing deviant sexual practices or trying to solicit deviant sexual practices" (p. 7, emphasis in original). Therefore, even in postmortem, police records describe individuals using terms applied to them by the state to oppress them, and not on their own terms.

Concerns over evidence of sexuality were expressed in publication in the archival field as early as 1991 with Steven Maynard's article "The Burning, Wilful Evidence." Maynard discusses how not only queer sexuality, but any evidence of sexuality has often been hidden or suppressed (p. 196). This has resulted in the archiving of lesbian and gay history mostly being community-based, especially since the only available documents in government archives document "deviant" behaviors, rather than a person's individual statement of their own sexuality. Maynard discusses the visceral influence of fear on his ability to do research on gay history. He illustrates a hypothetical scene in which he stands with "knees shaking and hands trembling" while an archivist photocopies a document about "sodomy," "buggery," or "gross indecency" (p. 197). Maynard argues that research on gay history is far easier for those who are out and proud of their sexuality and that a "climate of sensitivity" on the part of the archivists might help make nervous researchers feel more at ease.

James V. Carmichael (2000) is critical of the explosion of gay evidence at the turn of the millennium. Like Maynard, Carmichael acknowledges that the history of sexuality is one of sanitization. However, Carmichael also argues that "mothball outing" is a major issue. He perceives that historians, librarians, and archivists would rush to prove a person was gay if there was at least some evidence, and warns against being rash, feeling that it would undermine "real" evidentiary value. However, Carmichael's concept of "true" or "real" evidence is not echoed by many queer theorists, who have taken a much different perspective against the sanitization and pathologization/criminalization noted by Maynard, Carmichael, and Foucault before them.

José Esteban Muñoz (1996) writes that queerness is transmitted covertly, which is necessitated by "the fact that leaving too much of a trace has often meant that the queer subject has left herself [sic] open for attack" (p. 6). He further discusses the nature of queer evidence: "Instead of being clearly available as visible evidence, queerness has instead existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted with by those within its epistemological sphere—while evaporating at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility" (p. 6). Muñoz proposes that the ephemeral nature of queer evidence is due to the need for self-preservation, and that by validating ephemeral and anecdotal evidence, we grant access to those who have been locked out of "official" histories. Queerness should be understood as a "shared structure of feeling," understood only by those who know its emotional experience (p. 10). Muñoz thus argues for a queer concept of evidence built more on shared emotions and experiences than objective notions of the queer experience.

Ann Cvetkovich (2003), in discussing the nature of queer archives, argues that due to the shared trauma of oppression, especially post-AIDS, in the queer community, traumatic and emotional memory "demand and produce an unusual archive, one that frequently resists the coherence of narrative or that is fragmented and ostensibly arbitrary" (p. 241). "A radical archive of emotion" based around preserving both literal and emotional ephemera can capture the intimate details of sexuality, love, and loss in queer history (p. 241). Cvetkovich also argues that fictional archives, such as the one depicted in Cheryl Dunye's film *Watermelon Woman*, have the potential to capture the emotional, affective nature of a queer archives of emotion and trauma.

Other scholars writing in the field of queer theory have built on this idea of emotional, affective evidence constituted through ephemera and existing in traces and gaps. Martin F. Mansalanan IV (2014) uses the messy living arrangement of six queer undocumented immigrants, whom he dubs the "Queer Six," to demonstrate how queer archives can be seen as material "messes." After being invited to the living space of the Queer Six by Imelda, a trans Filipina woman and the owner of the apartment, Mansalanan was shocked to see the disarray. Imelda explained to Mansalanan that "each of the six residents had sequestered a portion or corner and placed their belongings in it. It is not just a jumble of things, she countered. Each of the six residents knew where their possessions belonged" (p. 96).

Later, Mansalanan witnessed one of the six residents, Natalia, bring melamine dishes in off the street, and then put them away in the closet for a distant future. Imelda explained that no one used dishes because they did not have the time to wash them and feared cockroaches and rats in the apartment. Other belongings were also sequestered

away as a means of "saving" them and in preparation for escaping from a questionable living situation, or from government persecution of undocumented immigrants. Mansalanan proposes that the lack of order—the mess—is a queer survival strategy, and especially for undocumented immigrants who are facing the state's authoritative plea for evidence of origin and citizenship.

This mess, Mansalanan argues, constitutes the queer immigrant archive, which is built of not only purposeful and intentional mess and disorientation, but also the loss surrounding the obscurity of one's origin. Like Cvetkovich's archive of feelings, the papers and objects in the living queer immigrant archive are imbued with emotions and trauma. As Mansalanan writes, "The Queer Six's messy archive reflects the ways that official state-mandated knowledge is embodied in the stuff of paperwork and how such a queer household/archive rejects the primacy of the document by refusing legibility and establishing an alternative (dis)order of things" (103). Mansalanan also builds on Muñoz's idea of ephemera as evidence, arguing that the itinerance of the Queer Six's lives, and their status as undocumented immigrants, necessitates this transience. These ephemera, Mansalanan argues, do not abide to ideas of fixed provenance or purpose, thus betraying normative ideas of evidence (p. 105).

Melissa White (2014) discusses how queer refugees seeking asylum in Canada must construct narratives about their sexuality and gender in order to "prove" their need for shelter. This is a complicated process for both couples and individuals. Queer couples applying for family class asylum are expected to present documentary "evidence" of their lives as a couple; White explains that "applicants are invited to establish elaborate paper archives that include relationship essays; photographic evidence; letters of testimony and

support from family, friends, and community members; and proof of joint economic holdings or debts" (p. 78). This artificialization of the development of a relationship, White writes, places stress on the queer couple to perform their relationship "correctly." It is a curious blend of objectivity and subjectivity, "a means of rendering the imperceptible, unrepeatable bond(s) between people utterly conventional and therefore calculable—a form of affective data, or data as affect" (p. 79).

The difficulty of "proving" one's sexuality against the investigation of a bureaucratic state is an even greater challenge for individual queer refugees who are not in a "same-sex" relationship. Proof is often based on whether or not the refugee's country of origin is hospitable to queer people. Other forms of evidence may include "proof of membership or affiliation with gay and lesbian organizations and letters from past sexual partners in Canada or the country of last residence, in addition to medical or psychological records" (p. 85-86). White notes that given the conditions of flight from one's original country, and the fact that queer refugees rarely live in "gay enclaves," these forms of proof can be difficult to gather. This means that refugees may have to settle for conveying queerness by performing stereotypical behavior, such as butchness for lesbian or bisexual/pansexual women, or effeminacy for gay men, "in order to render queerness intelligible to the adjudicator, lest the claimant be deemed 'not gay enough' to warrant protection" (p. 86).

Despite the stress of this narrative, performative process, White claims that it constitutes a discursive, affective relation between the state and the asylum seekers. Evidence is not only constituted "objectively," but through artificially constructed narratives of affect and trauma. Even if bureaucratic workflows dictate that the decisions

must be made objectively based on objective evidence, White claims that emotion and affect play a large role in the presentation of the evidence, its analysis, and the final decision.

The Archival Field Goes Queer

Cvetkovich and Muñoz's engagement with affect and personal experience is echoed in writings in the archival field that cross over into queer and affect theory. K.J. Rawson (2009) discusses various environmental and intellectual barriers to access that he faced and other trans researchers might face while trying to use an archive or access materials related to trans identities. Echoing Foucault's discussion of the discursive construction of sexualities, Rawson found in an interview with a trans researcher that ze[7] had to "[unlearn] 'transgender' as a category" in order to search for trans-related materials (p. 134).

In his personal experience, Rawson found that the Sexual Minorities Archives in Massachusetts inverted the usual archival logic of the researcher looking for, or "desiring" information, by recognizing that collections "can have desires and want to be touched, too" (p. 137). For Rawson, this was particularly salient in a BDSM (Bondage, Dominance, Sadism, and Masochism) and leather-focused exhibit that encouraged visitors to interact with the toys and tools on display. He compares the affective awe he felt to his first experience with archives, a haptic encounter with a Shakespearean folio: "For the briefest moment, I passed a gloved finger along the edge of that folio, not even daring to flip a page" (p. 138).

Riika Taavetti (2016), in "A Marshall in Love: Remembering and Forgetting Queer Pasts in the Finnish Archives," agrees with previous writers in the field of queer

theory and archival scholarship that the question of evidence is difficult in queer history. Quoting Jeffreys (1993), Taavetti notes that "she discusses in her article the difficulties faced if lesbian relationships are reduced to sex or, on the contrary, if love between women is desexualized. She states that if proof of sex is required in lesbian history 'there is a serious possibility that we will end up with no lesbian history at all'" (Jeffreys 1993, p. 22, as cited in Taavetti 2016, p. 294). Taavetti builds on Muñoz's and Rawson's work when she discusses how queer individuals often need to look in between for the traces and gaps in history, in the absence of concrete, "objective" evidence. Taavetti echoes Cvetkovich when she writes that sometimes "in queer scholarship the line between evidence and fabrication is purposely blurred" (p. 294).

Jamie A. Lee (2015, 2016, 2019) has been a prominent contemporary voice in connecting archives and queer theory. They have proposed and explored a "queer/ed archival methodology." Drawing on works in archival theory as well as queer theory, especially from queer writers of color, Lee discusses how the queer body has been homogenized by the archive and contrasted to the heteronormative narrative (2015, p. 334). They suggest that queer experiences exist in the "both/and" space, rather than the "either/or" space (2015, p. 326, 328). This is where the term "queer/ed" comes from, since the forward slash denotes a movement from past to present, a "taking apart and coming together" (Lee 2016, p. 34). Lee bases the queer/ed archival methodology on several theorists' concepts.

Lee conveys the methodology as a rejection of the "politics of respectability," a term initially coined during the American civil rights movement and discussed in a queer context by Deborah B. Gould, and the growing movement of "homonormativity," a term

popularized by Lisa Duggan. Together, the politics of respectability and homonormativity establish a norm for queer people that involves heteronormative coupled sexuality in order to achieve recognition from, and even assimilate into, (hetero)normative society (p. 336).

Lee also builds significantly on the work of Jasbir Puar in *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007). Puar is interested in the concept of "haunting," which Lee employs in a similar fashion to Derrida's "trace" or Muñoz's idea of ephemerality to describe the traumatic and affective nature of queer archives. Puar also uses the term "assemblage," a concept originally formulated in 1980 by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, as an alternative to intersectionality. According to Puar and Lee, the latter proposes that multifaceted identities can be neatly separated into boxes, but the former captures the overlapping, messy, transitory, temporally-situated, and interwoven nature of all identities (p. 340). Combining these concepts of assemblage, haunting, and the resistance to homonormativity and respectability politics, the queer/ed archive "has the potential to hold many pasts, many futures, and transformations" (p. 340).

Lee (2016) further explores the queer/ed archival methodology by drawing on their personal experiences in two queer archives. They argue that the archival body is constantly in motion, challenging the "chrononormativity" of archives by suggesting that this simultaneous "becoming" and "unbecoming" as the documents and their viewers interact with each other and the archives "move" the researcher, means that the archives are never static. Lee uses their observation of a student intern as an example, writing that his embarrassed reaction to a "misplaced" photograph of an oral sexual act reveals how the photograph "moves" him (p. 37). Lee also addresses the idea of "enduring" value,

suggesting that a better term for the value in queer/ed archives is instead "end*ea*ring value" because the documents and materials interact with the researcher. Lee concludes that the queer/ed archives provides a space for outcasts, challenging the politics of respectability, heteronormativity, and homonormativity: "[T]he queer/ed archives embodies the struggling, shifting, and even further queering of those deemed 'improper.' The queer/ed archives opens up spaces for the rejects. And it works to commemorate—or not—particular social formations" (p. 48).

In their most recent article, Lee (2019) draws together previous insights to reflect on the oral history project for which they conducted interviews. Lee discusses how the traditional idea of archival evidence is challenged by the "(un)becoming," the simultaneous state of becoming and unbecoming, and the multiplicity of truths situated in queer oral history interviews. One interviewee that they mention is a genderqueer individual named TC, who extensively discussed his transition from designated female at birth. Because he did not shy away from talking about his physical "female" body and his experience as a lesbian before his transition, his story represents, to Lee, his perpetual "(un)becoming" and the multiplicity of his narrative. Lee thus argues that there can be no one single truth situated in an archival record, just as there is no monolithic truth for individual identities that are always in a state of fluidity and transition, of (un)becoming.

The archival field has also engaged with affect theory, which draws in insights from queer and feminist theory. Marika Cifor (2016) built on Cvetkovich and advocated for the use of affect theory to capture archives of trauma and emotion. Michelle Caswell and Anne Gilliland (2016) discuss impossible archival imaginaries, which reflect individuals' and groups' affective relationships with real and imagined records. Caswell

and Gilliland define archival imaginaries as imagined bodies of records which, although they do not exist, carry an emotional significance to the person or group imagining them. The authors use various examples to outline the feelings that may accompany archival imaginaries. Refugees searching for ways to define themselves against a government's need for documentary proof may experience feelings of fear and struggle with one's identity. Following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, his parents argued that if police officers had worn body cameras, they would have been able to prove that police officer Darren Wilson's killing of Michael Brown was a murder. The imagined body camera video demonstrates the anger and sadness Michael Brown's family felt in response to their son's death, and their determination to change the law in order to prevent further distress and injustice.

Caswell and Gilliland note that archival imaginaries are most likely to appear "when expected evidence does not exist, is not available or is insufficient to achieve a desired outcome; when there are different or contested interpretations of the same acts or evidence; or when the official evidentiary infrastructures and interpretations are not trusted, especially highly charged cases such as those pertaining to violations of human rights" (p. 65). Though the imaginaries are impossible, they have important, wide-ranging affective power for the imaginers.

Essentialism Persists in Today's Discourse

Queer theorists insist that gender and sexuality are socially, discursively constructed. However, essentialist and binarist—modernist—views of sexuality persist both inside and outside the queer community.

Jamie A. Lee's discussion of Lisa Duggan's concept of "homonormativity" may shed some light on the modernist view of queer sexuality. On the politics of respectability and homonormativity, Lee writes:

> Today, this aspiration for normalised [sic] civil rights has become deeply embedded in our LGBTQ lives and these desires for acceptance have been inculcated so that many from these communities embody homonormativity. In creating this desire for "gay equality" and the subsequent LGBTQ communities' investment into this civil rights agenda, the gay public sphere is contained and becomes, therefore, manageable by the dominant mainstream publics and capitalist enterprise. Through exercising a gay moralism, *our own LGBTQ communities self-regulate and attack the non-normativities that exist and are visible within our own groups* (Lee 2015, p. 334, emphasis added).

This issue of self-regulation was also recognized by Julia Serano. In her book *Excluded* (2013), she notes that "despite our best intentions, the movements and communities that we create almost always end up marginalizing and excluding others who wish to participate" (p. 1). Serano gives examples of this type of exclusionary behavior: feminists excluding women from their movements for "nonfeminist" behavior; drag queens and leather daddies being unwelcome at pride parades; lesbians and gay men excluding bisexuals/pansexuals, asexuals, and trans people from the queer community; and accusations within bisexual and trans communities (with both of which Serano identifies) excluding members who are not "real" bisexuals or "real" trans people (p. 2). Serano pins these issues down to essentialist assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality, leading people to insist that there is a "right" way to perform one's identity. These identity disputes echo Judith Butler's assertion that people become fascinated with the myth of the gender they perform, believing it to be natural, and they use that myth to punish others who do not perform their gender correctly.

Heteronormativity, cissexism, and essentialist assumptions are harmful to people of all stripes within the queer community and without. Trans people frequently find

themselves under the stress of "passing," an enaction of binary gender ideals which is not only a harmful concept for trans men and trans women, but also gender variant or gender nonconforming individuals. Bisexuality, pansexuality, and asexuality are frequently under stress from the homo/hetero binary, with bisexuals and pansexuals in opposite-gender relationships often facing ostracization in the queer community, and asexuality is treated as invisible or equivalent to heterosexuality for its failure to accord with a binarist, essentialist view of what constitutes queerness.

The exclusionary movements Serano mentions have taken hold not only in person but also online. Most infamously, lesbian feminists dubbed "TERFs," trans-exclusionary radical feminists, argue with essentialist logic for the exclusion of trans women from the queer community, claiming that trans women cannot be women because they were not born with a vagina. Another subgroup dubbed "exclusionists" or "REGs" (reactionary exclusionists gatekeepers), which frequently includes even those who disagree with the arguments of TERFs, argues for the exclusion of asexuality and aromanticism from the queer community on the basis that these orientations are not "inherently" queer, leaving asexuals and aromantics alienated from both their queer and non-queer peers.

Throughout the community, debates still persist on acronyms (how many letters? who gets included?), whether slurs can be reclaimed, and who "really" belongs. Modernist, binarist, and essentialist ideas lead to internal strife in a community that was initially created in solidarity against the stress of a heteronormative, cissexist world.

Having completed my look at evidence in queer theory and the queer community, I now move on to an examination of evidence in the field of fandom and fan studies, and

how the rigid construct of "canon" undermines the interpretive diversity that exists in contemporary fandom.

V. FANDOM AND FAN STUDIES

Fandom and fans have arguably existed since the invention of culture and media. "Fandom" is a very broad term, encompassing fans of published print and media works, sports fans, music fans, and other types of fans. The contemporary idea of "fandom" referring to individuals who are fans of print and media works, such as books, television shows, video games, and movies emerged in the 1930s among fans of science fiction, and particularly came to a head in the 1960s with the *Star Trek* fandom. This was the first television show fandom documented to have widely circulated fanfiction and fanart (hereafter referred to as "derivative" or "transformative" works) among itself in the form of print zines, and the first contemporary fandom to be extensively studied by new media scholars.

Unlike most literary critics, many scholars in the discipline of fan studies have embraced reader-response criticism[8], drawing from popular reading critics as well as Barthes' concept of the death of the author. Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* (1992) is one of the seminal theoretical works examining fandom. Jenkins, himself a fan of *Blake's 7* and other television shows, was interested in examining television fans' relationships to the original texts. He draws from Michel de Certeau's work on popular reading as a form of "textual poaching," invention of a new text from fragments of the original text, to suggest that fans' interaction with the text makes the text "something more than what it was before, not something less" (p. 51). The social nature of fandom, in which fans are

continually discussing and dissecting the text, means that new readings and new ideas can always emerge, even with a text that may not seem "deep" to traditional media scholars.

Because fandom is social in nature, there may be disagreements in interpretation. Jenkins argues that fans create and judge the validity of individual interpretations on the basis of a composite idea of the show's world, its individual ideas, and their relationships, what he dubs the "meta-text" and what fans today commonly refer to as "canon." A single fandom is similar to any critical discipline, in which there is a "right way" to read as a fan, and fans are socialized into their individual fandom's understanding of its respective canon (p. 89). Jenkins gives the example of a fan who was able to provide an overall assessment of *Star Trek* character Jean-Luc Picard's personality, and when asked about individual traits, she was able to cite specific examples from the series. He writes, "Any new information the series provides about Picard will be fit into this existing grid of assumptions about his character and judged according to its conformity with what has come before" (p. 100). Using this meta-text and their knowledge about the series, fans are free to speculate, filling in gaps in the series' narrative. Fans thus form a composite idea of the series and its characters and use what is provided in the series as evidence for their own interpretations, in much the same way that literary interpretation is done.

The construct of "canon" is not the only concept limiting the possible range of individual interpretations. Because authors are creating at the same time that fans are interacting with the text, the relationship between creator and fans can also strain diversity of interpretation. Cornel Sandvoss (2007) sees fan interpretation as a similar practice of gap-filling, and also addresses the unique role of the creator in fan interpretation. Drawing on reader-response theorist Wolfgang Iser, Sandvoss argues that

not only are interpretation and the creation of transformative works practices of gap-filling that rely on the fan's knowledge about the world, they also constitute a process of "normalization" through which the reader seeks to iron out all the peculiarities in the text and make it more familiar. He argues that reader and author are interdependent, unlike Barthes' argument that the reader should focus on the text alone. Because the text cannot fully be emptied of those alien elements, normalization, and thus the death of the author, will never be complete.

YouTuber Lindsay Ellis' (2018) video essay on the death of the author uses John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* and *Harry Potter* author J.K. Rowling and the two authors' differing styles of engagement with fans and cultivation of a public image, as well as a discussion of Barthes and Foucault, as a lens through which to examine whether the death of the author is truly possible in the post-postmodern era. Ellis argues that *The Fault in Our Stars* advocates for death of the author through the character Peter van Houten, who tells main character Hazel that he does not know what happens at the end of her favorite book. Ellis claims that "his intent does not matter—the book does not speak to Hazel because of the author's intent, but because of the text itself. The text in isolation is what means so much to Hazel" (4:22-4:30). However, Ellis mentions later in the video, it was difficult for readers to separate Green's book from his real-life friendship with a teenage terminal cancer patient, Esther Earl.

Drawing on Foucault's (1972) idea of discourse and Genette's (1991) concept of paratext, Ellis claims that knowing the "discourse" around a text influences how the reader reads it, "whether you want it to or not" (14:23-14:31). Ellis argues that, in today's personal brand-obsessed culture, there is no way to truly kill the author. "Fifty years

later," Ellis says, "the work does not possess the right to kill, to be its author's murderer. Because the work will always be tied to the brand, and in that brand lies a certain sort of immortality" (16:01-16:11).

Derek Johnson (2007) discusses how fan interpretations can be constrained both by intracommunity strife and creator decisions. He argues that the same "hyperdiegesis," a term coined by Matt Hill to describe the originating text, can lead to different meta-textual interpretations. He examines the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fandom's disagreement over season six and treatment of the interim director Marti Noxon. "Shipping," the fan practice of pairing certain characters together in a romantic relationship, was frequently a source of conflict in *Buffy* fandom, especially because the creators of the hyperdiegetic text chose to legitimate only one of the relationships (p. 288). Some fans' distaste for season six also led to the claim that season six was the worst one yet, leading others who enjoyed season six to agree with the viewpoint even if they enjoyed it themselves. In this way, Johnson argues, a hegemonic idea of the hyperdiegetic text was constructed, which necessarily had to leave out other points of view at the cost of consensus. As Johnson writes, "How do inequalities of status and textual interest give way to unified interpretation? Alternative positions and tastes must somehow be silenced so that divergent interests within a community can be unified as hegemonic interpretative consensus" (p. 287).

Gemma Bothe's "'If fandom jumped off a bridge, it would be onto a ship'" (2014) explores similar conflict caused by shipping within the *Arrow* (2012) fandom. Bothe, like Johnson, criticizes the view of individual fandoms as homogeneous, cohesive, and easily willing to reach consensus. Echoing Johnson's discussion of differing meta-

textual interpretations gathered from the same hyperdiegesis, Bothe writes that "[a]s each

new episode of *Arrow* is aired in the United States[,] new evidence is gathered from the

scenes and dialogue of the episode to lend credence to the legitimacy of one ship over

another" (p. 9). Fans of the two conflicting ships within the *Arrow* fandom interpreted the

same scene in vastly different ways.

Diversity Stifled

Bothe (2014) notes that "[a]t a superficial level of participation, online fandom

and online fan fiction appears to be a socially inclusive forum. Individuals are unable to

tell the age, race, gender or socioeconomic demographic of other users" (p. 2). Indeed,

Jenkins was not the only one to note that fandom, and particularly derivative works, can

be a transformative space for women, queer people, racially and ethnically diverse

individuals, persons with disabilities, and other underserved populations to explore

concepts and dynamics that "normal" media would not allow. This is particularly salient

in Jenkins' discussion of research on how men and women are socialized to read texts.

Jenkins notes that while women have frequently been found to insert themselves into the

world of a text and are willing to forgo complete accuracy, men have been found to

present the narrative as a logical hero's journey, rather than focusing on the narrative-as-

world (p. 108). Jenkins found the same was true in examining women who were *Star

Trek* fans, who focused more on the characters and the world, versus men who were fans

of *Twin Peaks*, who sought to understand the logical structure of the plot (p. 109). By

using this "feminine" method of reading texts, fans from diverse backgrounds thus insert

themselves into the worlds of the narratives, constructing metatextual ideas of the world

and its characters, and drawing on their own experiences in the process of normalization (Jenkins 1992, Sandvoss 2007).

However, this diversity of interpretation is far from harmonious, and not only because of Johnson and Bothe's observations on "shipping." Rather than allowing individual interpretations to coexist, the concept of "canon" within fandom enforces an idea of the text as a logical whole in which everything can be logically explained or justified by the apparent cohesion of the hyperdiegetic text. This rigidity can cause problems, especially for diverse fans whose interpretations tend to get pushed aside by the white cis hetero female majority.

Blogger Stitch Media Mix's post titled "Headcanons only go so far when it comes to representation" (2018) shows their struggle against the concept of canon. In the opening of the post, they discuss their headcanon—a term used in fandom to denote someone's individual interpretation—for the *Batman* character Harvey Dent. Stitch sees Dent as bisexual, biracial, and facing mental health issues. Stitch explains the sources for their "headcanons," all of which are based on existing interpretations of the character or their own normalization of the text. However, Stitch writes that "[e]ven though I've based my headcanons on existing canon and could probably make a pretty solid argument for the canonicity of my work […] that doesn't make it canon."

Stitch gives multiple examples of relationships that fans interpreted to be queer, such as Keith and Lance from Netflix's *Voltron*, Stiles and Derek from *Teen Wolf*, and Kara and Lena from *Supergirl*. Stitch argues that these headcanons are not real representation because the headcanons are not explicitly confirmed by the hyperdiegetic text, and that simply claiming them as "canon" or "fanon"—a portmanteau of "fan" and

"canon"—without the actual *text* (even if the writers supported the headcanons)

confirming them, means that they mean "nothing" in terms of *actual* representation.

Despite how transformative and liberating headcanons and fanon can be in terms of

representation, Stitch writes that they simply are not a replacement for representation in

the source "canon" texts.

Stitch has frequently been critical of the hegemonic nature of fandom that

Johnson (2007) pointed out. Johnson wrote that "Alternative positions and tastes must

somehow be silenced so that divergent interests within a community can be unified as

hegemonic interpretive consensus" (287). Stitch's post (2019) venting about the

"silencing" of criticism against the free, nonprofit fanfiction hosting website Archive of

Our Own (AO3), developed by fans for the preservation of transformative works, reflects

this issue. Stitch writes that "[s]ome of the worst harassment I ever received came

directly in response to me questioning the AO3's notable lack of visible and viable

policies around dealing with racism and racist fanworks in particular." When they

complained about Archive of Our Own's lack of policies, Stitch was frequently told to

"go make your own [Archive]." Stitch argues that this kind of response, especially in

light of AO3's name, establishes the white fan's perspective as the default. Stitch also

notes that AO3's "offensive content policy," as of 2019, states that "we will not remove

Content for offensiveness, no matter how awful, repugnant, or badly spelled we may

personally find that Content to be." Even when Stitch and other fans reported racist

fanworks to AO3's Support, those works were not removed. Stitch writes:

> So many 'fandom olds'—many of whom aren't even that much older than I am
> now—seem to think that criticizing fandom space is something only uninformed
> outsiders do. We're told to be grateful because of how much good the AO3 does
> for fans and for fandom archiving[.] But this makes it clear that the "our" in

Archive of Our Own" is exclusionary from the jump and perhaps always has been/will be. This makes it clear that marginalized and vulnerable fans who don't toe the line and embrace certain staples in fandom aren't part of the "our". Even though they should be.

The racism Stitch faced in challenging AO3, especially as expressed in their assertion that "vulnerable fans who don't […] embrace certain staples in fandom aren't part of the 'our,'" echoes Johnson's statement that "[b]y reinforcing certain textual contingencies as desirable, fan consensus reproduces tastes predisposed to those particular interpretations. Although golden ages change, factionalized fan interests can provisionally install certain evaluations as hegemonic common sense through antagonistic, [sic] intracommunity discourse" (p. 291). The modernist rigidity of canon as well as what constitutes a "true" fan thus causes problems for fans who are willing to challenge issues within their individual fandoms or fandom as a whole.

Having concluded my analysis of how canon, creators, and intracommunity conflict stifle the diversity of interpretation in fandom, I now transition to a comparison of modernist evidence across the disciplines, and follow it with a new formulation for evidence for archivists that incorporates expanded insight from my examination of these three disciplines.

VI. MODERN AND POSTMODERN EVIDENCE ACROSS FOUR DISCIPLINES

Having examined these four disciplinary areas, we can now begin to formulate an idea of the characteristics of the modernist, Positivist idea of evidence. Not all of these concepts may map perfectly to the modernist concepts of evidence in every field. My goal is to lay out a general understanding of the limitations and restrictions imposed by modernist, Positivist, traditional ideas of evidence and how they have affected these four fields, especially archival practice. I will then frame this concept of evidence in the context of several theories and insights related to information organization and information behavior, such as the human need for classification (Lakoff), the invisibility of infrastructure (Bowker and Star), modernist idea of classification (Jens-Erik Mai), small world theory (Chatman), and sense-making (Dervin), to understand why human beings continually cling to this modernist framework despite its limitations.

1. *Evidence is inherent or "essential."* Evidentiality is seen as an inherent quality of the record, text, person, object, or thing. Evidence is contained *within* something, has one explicit meaning, and only requires interpretation to understand.

Examples. In archival practice, Jenkinson was the first to advance the idea that the evidence is somehow contained within documents and only requires interpretation to understand. Schellenberg also enforced this idea that evidentality is inherent in documents because of the circumstances of their creation. In literary theory, this is echoed in Saussure's concept of the sign, because he assumed there was a shared sign we

all relied on to understand the text. In literary criticism, Brooks, as well as Wimsatt and Beardsley, assumed evidence was all there in the text, and that it only required interpretation to "uncover" it. In queer theory, the essentialist discourse would see identity as natural rather than discursively constructed. In fandom studies, the idea of "canon" or a hyperdiegetic text enforces the idea that things are "all there" in the text, just as in literary theory.

Even if interpretation is the only process required to uncover the inherent evidence, there is a "wrong" way to interpret a text. This is reflected in my next point.

1.2. *Evidence has an objective existence.* This concept ties into number 1. Evidence is seen as "objective," that is, it does not betray any ulterior motive. Evidence can be used to "prove" points. Because evidence is inherent/essential, the role of interpretation in making evidence "come to life" is downplayed, even if it is required as noted in 1. Interpretations should be objective rather than subjective, and they should strive to uncover the "correct" answer. .

Examples. In archival theory, Jenkinson and Schellenberg saw records as objective because they were passed down from creators through the chain of custody and created in the normal course of an organization or person's activity. In literary theory, Wimsatt and Beardsley's two fallacies, and Brooks' assumption of an ideal reader, dissuaded the possibility that the reader, or the author, could affect the reading. Though Barthes rejected the fallacies, according to Lindsay Ellis' view, he also assumed an ideal reader and an ideal text. In essentialist queer discourse, gender, sex, and sexuality are seen as neat identity labels that have objective meanings despite Foucault, Sedgwick, and Butler's arguments that they are discursively constructed identities. In fandom, the canon

text is frequently treated as an objective yardstick by which to measure all metatextual claims.

2. *Evidence is truthful.* The text or document is always what it purports to be. The interpreter has no need to question the text or its formation, provided it came straight to the interpreter from an authority. Even if it is possible for the authority to be fallible or lie, the opinions and statements it makes should be trusted before being questioned, because it created the text.

Examples. Jenkinson's idea of the chain of custody, and his argument that records were not drawn up in the interest of posterity, supports the idea that archival evidence retains authenticity and thus truth, no matter how a custodian or researcher might decide to interpret or represent it. Early literary theory focused on the creator in order to understand the background behind the text, and later literary theory focused on the text itself, while eradicating the author but continuing the search for the author's intentions. As Lindsay Ellis notes, fandom frequently takes creators' admissions about the text as "word of god" that is used to shut down any variant interpretations. Ellis' assertion is also supported by Stitch Media Mix's blog entries.

3. *Evidence is real.* Evidence is a real thing. The evidence exists inherently within the text and is not decided upon by others, and when we "pull" the evidence "out" of the text, it is a reflection of something that was already "*in*" the text. 3 is closely tied to 1, *Evidence is inherent,* but the meaning of 3 is slightly different, in fact building on 1.

Examples. Evidence is a construct used in archival practice to enforce that records have a "real" existence in the eyes of creators, users, and archivists. Evidence is a construct used in literary theory to enforce interpretations that are based on some

"reality" contained in the text. Identity labels are used within the queer community and without to enforce that sexuality and gender have a "real" existence and that there is a right way to be or do one's identity. Evidence is a construct used in fandom to enforce that interpretations will be based on some "reality" contained in "canon."

4. *We all agree on what constitutes evidence,* or worded differently, *Evidence is based on consensus.* Within our respective fields, we all agree on certain conditions for establishing evidence. Even if there is a diversity of interpretation, we arrive at a common understanding, which necessarily means ignoring or excluding some viewpoints. 4 may appear to contradict 3. But despite the fact that consensus is what makes evidence "real," evidence is seen to have a reality *apart* from our own collective decision on what constitutes "realness" or authenticity. This is perhaps the most insidious and most persistent aspect of modernist ideas of evidence, and it still dissuades divergent and diverse interpretations.

Examples. The archival field's professionalization, as noted by Rowat (1993), Bearman (1995), and Brothman (2002), required it to accept certain norms and principles, as well as a formulation of what constituted evidence, as a basis for practice. Literary theory operates on an unstated assumption that textual evidence is contained within one printed or digital version of a text as a disembodied intellectual object and that this evidence can be extracted by performing close reading. Queer identity is neatly separated into categories, even though one performance of an identity does not match another, and there is no reality, only performance and discursive categories, as noted by Butler, Foucault, and Sedgwick. Hegemonic constructions of a meta-text create the illusion of

consensus in fandom, and detractors are often bullied or silenced into accepting the norm, as noted by Johnson, Bothe, and Stitch Media Mix.

5. *Evidence comes from the past.* Evidence is based on (events that occurred) in the past. Evidence is not constructed in the present by its interpreters, and it was not created with a future in mind. Evidence arrives in the present "ready-made."

Examples. Archival practice has privileged documents whose "lifecycle" has been completed. There is less of a focus on preserving the present, such as through oral history or activist archiving. The role of archival description in constructing a story about the present has traditionally been downplayed or not acknowledged. In literary theory, texts were created in some past, and are read inside or outside the context of that past. As noted by Butler especially, queer identity is judged rigidly on the basis of past actions and experiences rather than present identification. When evaluating present representations of a character or world, fans look to the past as a standard, as noted by Jenkins.

6. *Evidence is textual.* Evidence is based on textual assertion of "facts." Evidence may be constituted through speech or actions, but the textual form is privileged over all other forms.

Examples. Archival theory has traditionally privileged recorded, textual information, even in the digital age. Literary theory is a discipline based entirely around the idea of "textual evidence" used to support assertions about a work of literature. When searching to prove that historical figures were queer, writers resort to recorded information rather than relying on hearsay or rumors. Fandoms use the source text to support their metatextual interpretations.

Thus, the modern conception of evidence incorporates the following characteristics: inherency, objectivity, truthfulness/trust, realness, consensus, being situated in the past, and textuality. If I described the modern conception of evidence in a short phrase, I would describe it as *Indisputable Reality.*

Indisputable Reality: How Has It Helped Us? How Has It Hurt Us?

Indisputable reality, despite sounding like a very modernist and potentially harmful concept, has had both benefits and drawbacks in the fields I discussed. Indisputable reality has helped establish relative cohesiveness across disciplines, though not without consequences.

For instance, the idea that there was an objective concept of being gay or lesbian, inherited from the categories to which Foucault (1976) refers, has helped people converge around queer identities and use the categories to make their voices heard against heteronormative, cissexist society, even as indisputable reality similarly established archetypes of queer behavior both within that normative society and without. Indisputable reality was used successfully by Luciana Duranti and her collaborators to establish guidance for preserving digital documents as evidence in the face of uncertain technological expansion, even as it also enforced Jenkinsonian ideals that seem to falter when we are faced with archiving dynamic online content like websites and social media.

Indisputable reality helps fans converge around a common text and consider possible opportunities for the future of a text or speculate about its future, even as non-normative interpretations are punished for not adhering to the supposed reality. And indisputable reality means that close reading has unified the field of literary criticism,

even as textual criticism has challenged the notion of reading one pure text, and that the role of the reader in interpretation has not been privileged.

Indisputable reality is an attempt by humans to neatly classify the world, a process that helps humans understand the world around them. George Lakoff (2008) discusses how humans need to use categorization to make sense of the world. However, humans also assume that categories are "natural." What Jens-Erik Mai (2011) calls "classification-as-ontology," and Lakoff refers to as the "classical" method of categorization, is guided by the following principles: things are or they are not in a category; boundaries between categories are neatly defined; categories are based on commonalities; and things must have the same qualities in common to be in the same categories. Classification-as-ontology exemplifies the modernism of indisputable reality.

Lakoff, building from several theories but especially Eleanor Rosch's (1973) prototype theory—which proposed that there are members of a category that are perceived as more central or exemplary of that category than others, and not all members are created equally—asserts that categorization is a matter of experience and imagination. Mai arrives at a similar conclusion and proposes that the new method of classification be referred to as "classification-as-epistemology," that is, we classify based on our knowledge of the world around us, and the system of knowledge—the epistemology—that we use to understand it.

Jeffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star (1999) similarly discuss how classification can become transparent through the lens of the concept of infrastructure. Building off the research of Star and Ruhleder, Bowker and Star define infrastructure as "a historical process of development of tools made for a variety of users, made to work in concert," "a

practical match among routines of work practice, technology, and wider-scale

organizational and technical resources," "a rich set of negotiated compromises ranging

from epistemology to data entry that are both available and transparent to communities of

users," and "a negotiated order in which all of the above, recursively, can function

together" (p. 34). According to Star and Ruhleder, infrastructure is transparent,

embedded, learned and shaped by its community of practice and its standards, and fixed

in modular increments; infrastructure only becomes transparent upon breakdown.

Infrastructure is ubiquitous, physically embodied, requires revision of the past in light of

present ways of knowledge, and involves practical politics. Bowker and Star thus argue

that infrastructure in various fields and areas of life is not natural but has been constituted

through complex social and professional developments.

When humans establish rigid, "classical" conditions for evidence through

classification-as-ontology and indisputable reality—while not always conscious of the

way that social and political developments underpin established structures—that self-

discipline creates the conditions for a community of consensus, which also means

eliminating "false" interpretations and downplaying them to the public. As Brothman

(2002) noted, consensus, meaning indisputable reality, was essential in making the

archival field professional and being taken seriously, just as Jenkins admitted that he

downplayed the diversity of interpretation among fans to make fandom seem cohesive to

"outsiders."

Indisputable reality also leads to the creation of a "small world" as individuals are

socialized into the world based on the indisputable reality that constitutes it. Elfreda

Chatman (1999) discusses how a "life in the round" means living a public, imprecise life

that nonetheless provides an "acceptable level of certainty" because it is based around a small world (p. 207). In a small world, Chatman argues, inhabitants' share cultural, social, and conceptual frames form a way of life different from the lives of "outsiders" to that world. A certain worldview is established within that small world based on public and private social norms, and insiders are encouraged not to seek outside information unless it is critical, collectively relevant, or the life in the round is no longer functioning. If individuals fail to question the worldview into which they have been socialized, it means that their world will have a limited range of possibilities. The small world thus discourages information seeking and also dissent within the world. The more heavily entrenched worldviews within our disciplines become, and the more insular, the more information poor we become.

Even if it does not always benefit us, indisputable reality is so firmly entrenched in its respective disciplines. Consensus makes it appear to be "natural" in the same way that gender's fiction becomes natural to its performers, in the same way that the small world becomes comfortable for those living in it, that infrastructure seems transparent without its breakdown, and that modern classification seems natural. Because of this "naturalness," and because the rewards for giving it up often do not directly benefit the most powerful members in their respective communities, those who perform within an indisputable reality are often loath to give it up. Therefore, it is necessary to build on *top* of indisputable reality and challenge it in a way that does not subvert it in extreme ways. A complete change—a revolution—will not succeed without subtle changes to the existing framework.

A New Face for Evidence

My post-postmodernist conception of evidence builds on top of indisputable reality, acknowledging its inescapability while offering greater inclusivity for diversity of interpretation, practice, and evidence. This new conception exposes the roots of indisputable reality, but it does not aim to completely rip the roots because I acknowledge that ripping the roots would not only be impossible, but *harmful*, in the same way that allowing the roots to dig deeper would be even more harmful.

As Bowker and Star (1999) note in their discussion of infrastructure, "the indeterminacy of the past implies recovering multivocality; it also means understanding how standard narratives that appear universal have been constructed" (p. 41). What Bowker and Star imply, and what Verne Harris supports, is that it becomes necessary in our reformulation of indisputable reality to transcend binaries and allow spaces for the either and the or, the is and not, to coexist. Though I do not believe it is possible to completely transcend indisputable reality because of human nature (Lakoff 2008, Mai 2011), I do not wish for my position to resemble a "moderate" viewpoint. The archival field has a complicated relationship with theory, and I am trying to present a concept of evidence that can be applicable in practice but still has a revolutionary character. Indisputable reality needs to be challenged, but without it, we would also not be able to agree on disciplinary practice, or, in fact, understand our world at all (Lakoff 2008, Mai 2011).

1. *Evidence is inherent* becomes *Evidence is constructed through interaction.* Evidence is not an inherent quality of a document, person, or object. Evidence wasn't "born this way." We need to acknowledge that society's interaction with documents, the discourse and paratext around us, shapes the way we understand a piece of text or our

own queer identity. This also means that the concept of "death of the author" must be rejected, too, because it still assumes an ideal reader, as Ellis (2018) notes. Evidence is not inherent. We can see this from the way that fans construct diverse "headcanons" based on their normalization of the hyperdiegetic text. We can see this by the fact that literary critics and students are *still* analyzing Shakespeare and gaining *new* insights 500 years later.

 Implications and applications. As Meehan (2009) acknowledges, archival description is constructed through interpretive practice. Whenever we interact with documents, we are constructing new ideas about them based on our stances and viewpoints. We need to acknowledge our role as mediators across the disciplines.

 It is useful to think of the creation of evidence as a process of sense-making. Brenda Dervin's (1992) theory of sense-making argues that in information seeking, individuals use their own situations and contexts, as well as information from the world around them, to close gaps in their knowledge. This idea also accords with Sandvoss' (2007) idea of normalization.

 1.2. *Evidence is objective* becomes *Evidence is subjective, but we must operate from a common epistemological framework, while providing room for dispute, negotiation, and expanded insight.* The postmodernists we have examined argued that all evidence was constructed discursively and within certain frameworks. I agree that all evidence is subjective, and that we must acknowledge this fact within archival and other practices. However, just like close reading in literary theory, we need common practices or workflows to be able to have a disciplinary framework on which to operate (Bowker and Star 1999, Chatman 1999).

The common framework need not be seen as an objective one. Consider the concept of intersubjectivity as discussed by Eugene Freeman (1973) and Eugene Matusov (1996). Freeman argues that objectivity is based on a consensus among those experiencing an event individually (subjectively), which he calls "intersubjective agreement." Humans assume subjectivity when they experience something on their own, but other humans do not experience it that way. Matusov (1996) writes that even if individuals do not understand each other's perspectives, a lack of understanding does not mean a lack of intersubjectivity. He is interested in the "participatory" model of intersubjectivity, in which consensus is not necessary for agreement, but rather, because disagreement or confusion is part of all communication, arguments, disputes, and disagreements are all part of intersubjectivity, and intersubjectivity does not necessitate agreement. In other words, healthy communication requires both consensus and disagreement.

Implications and applications. This does not mean archivists should not challenge their practices. It means only that when they are practicing, they require standards and principles, which create a common ground of understanding on which they can operate. Archivists' backgrounds are diverse. Repositories, situations and collections are diverse. It is important to be conscious of how various institutional and situational factors and individual and social perspectives affect and play into practices and workflows.

In combining 1 and 1.2, consider also the role of emotion and affect in ideas of evidence. Emotion and affect play a large role into individual and collective conceptions of evidence, which has largely gone unacknowledged in fields attempting to be "empirical" and "objective" in order to be taken seriously.

2. *Evidence is truthful* becomes *Truths are multiple and unstable, but "truth"*
exists concretely to the point that it fits with the conditions determined in our
epistemological framework. As the postmodernists noted, "truth" is a subjective concept,
meaning that there is no truth with a capital T. Lee (2019) noted that queer people live a
multiplicity of truths. In literary theory, the definitions of "truth" in a text shift depending
on the lens used to examine it. In fandoms, truths are constructed individually and
socially through normalizing a text. Truth is unstable and shifting, but as Matusov (1996)
writes in discussing intersubjectivity, we can still disagree while accepting some things as
truth in order to have a common epistemological framework and to function as humans.

Implications and applications. To recover Bowker and Star's "multivocality" and
foster Lee's (2019) multiplicity of truths, it is necessary for archivists to expose their
infrastructure and understand their past and our history. Understanding the framework
within which archivists operate more deeply helps liberate them to work within that
framework, acknowledging why it was established and why "best practices" are
considered "best," but it also enables them to challenge that framework and continue
productive disputes and disagreement.

3. *Evidence is real* becomes *We make evidence real.* Evidence is not objectively
"real," and it has no existence other than that which *we* create through our interaction
with texts and the world around us. By using the term "we," I enforce that evidence is
constituted by individuals and groups, and when we claim that evidence is real with
support from our established epistemological frameworks, we are able to advance our
goals and points of view. Echoing Jenkins' use of the *Velveteen Rabbit* to demonstrate

that texts, just like toys, become "real" when they are used—loved—evidence becomes real when a person breathes life into it through existence and interaction.

Implications and applications. Realizing that evidence is constructed liberates archivists both to recognize their biases as well as their power in creating evidence. Archivists must recognize their responsibilities in creating evidence and consider their individual viewpoints as well as the desires of the creators and groups represented in their archives.

4. *We all agree on what constitutes evidence/Evidence is based on consensus* becomes *We all agree to agree what constitutes evidence, but consensus should always be challenged.* Consensus can only lead to progress as long as it is still useful to the group's constituted reality. New perspectives should be appreciated and absorbed into a new consensus. Dispute will continue when someone else's perspective deviates from the consensus. The consensus will change and develop to incorporate more voices and diverse perspectives. This should be a continuous cycle. When we become content with the way we do things, we risk not only stagnation but losing relevance. And to disagree is human.

Implications and applications. The archival field has been adept in responding to change and trends, especially in the Internet age. Now that archivists have the ability to engage with more and more people, they need to incorporate voices outside of their profession and overlap with disciplines. Postmodernism was about breaking down disciplinary borders; post-postmodernism should be about *transcending* them to reach out to users.

5. *Evidence comes from the past* becomes *Evidence is past, present, and future.*
As Anderson (2013) notes, we need to transcend Western concepts of temporality.
Evidence is not only something of the past that we read in the present. Much recorded
information, oral culture, and actions were committed with eyes toward the present.
Evidence, like the idea of fluid texts discussed by Bryant (2007), is fluid and transcends
temporality. Through each interaction, it is being successively redefined and
reconstituted, just like a body in motion. Identity is not stable, and neither is evidence.
Identity, as Lee (2019) notes, is always (un)becoming.

Implications and applications. Archivists need to be conscious of how their
systems undergird their practices and conception of evidence. Regarding temporality, it is
important to understand description as past *interpretations* of records,, and it is also
important to looking back to the way archival functions such as appraisal, arrangement,
and description were carried out in the past. When Bowker and Star discuss
infrastructure, they argue that understanding the past is a continuous process of
renegotiation. Archivists need to adopt this point of view not only regarding their
practices and conception of evidence, but also when they are examining past descriptions
and finding aids, to try to understand the social, historical, and political traces behind the
descriptions provided, and uncover the unstated assumptions—the indisputable reality—
under which their predecessors worked.

6. *Evidence is textual* becomes *Evidence has a variety of manifestations and is
necessarily* inter*textual.* The question of what and how much can be considered evidence
has been a challenge for literary theorists (Foucault 1972, Genette 1991, Greetham 2010).
If everything is discourse, what can be considered evidence? Not only do we need to refer

to our established epistemological framework, we may also need to rework that framework to accommodate different types of evidence. Evidence, being constituted through interaction, is necessarily intertextual. As Ellis (2018) notes, there can be no reading of a text without knowledge of the discourse surrounding it.

Implications and applications. Archives are not only comprised of traditional static documentary forms. Archivists know that. But in the social media age, we have to be prepared to see dynamic interactions, actions, traditions, oral culture, multimedia culture, and beyond as archivable. All of these things can constitute evidence. All of these things have significance. Archivists need to be prepared to argue why they have—or don't have—significance for their institutional and sociohistorical context.

The new post-postmodernist conception of evidence has the following characteristics: constructed through interaction, subjective, multiple and unstable in its truths, made to be real, agreed upon but not without challenge, beyond temporality, and simultaneously not always textual and intertextual. I have argued that in order to situate a theoretical conception of evidence in archival practice, archivists need a common epistemological framework to operate from, but that this framework must constantly be challenged in order for archivists to develop. The new conception of evidence will be named *Conscious Contention.*

Why Conscious Contention?

I called the modernist conception of evidence "indisputable reality." "Contention" shows that the new conception of evidence involves active, ongoing negotiation and conflict, rather than a consensus that foregoes incorporating diverse perspectives and active conflict that keep the archival profession lively and healthy. It also acknowledges

that archivists are always endeavoring to understand and reshape their past in new points of view, and that understanding their history and growing as a profession is an ongoing process. "Conscious" captures three things: 1) the archival profession's commitment to understanding diverse perspectives and incorporating the voices that have been left out by the primarily white cis hetero Christian abled male hegemony; 2) my knowledge, from the postmodernists and from examining other disciplines' struggles with evidence, of how this tradition of indisputable reality has affected and continues to affect archivists, other disciplines, and humanity; and 3) an effort both to acknowledge why and how indisputable reality is inescapable, and yet aspiring to challenge and transcend the constraints of indisputable reality with conscious questioning.

Conscious contention is an informed conception of evidence. It acknowledges the need for conflict within the archival profession, rather than assuming everyone agrees. At the same time, it acknowledges that we need a common epistemological framework to make sense of the world. Conscious contention knows that evidence is made and constructed, knows that those constructions are socially contingent, and knows that truths are shifting and incomplete, yet it also acknowledges the need for consensus in creating a stable idea of evidence. Conscious contention uses the insights of postmodernism and the research into the literature of the disciplines out of which this paper arose in constructing a new conception of evidence for the archival profession. Most of all, the construction of evidence through conscious contention is an ongoing process. Archivists will continue to build on our idea of evidence, leaving palimpsestic traces of the modernism and postmodernism that came before, and even embracing some parts of our earliest traces— though not without criticizing them.

VII. CONCLUSION

The archival profession has taken many challenges of self-improvement to heart. Archival practitioners are willing to change and adapt new practices in light of studies, conference presentations, articles, or popular use. Therefore, I believe it is time for a new theoretical framework as well. Archivists must take the challenge of self-improvement to heart, and they must always question and seek to broaden "evidence" as a concept. In the same way, we must acknowledge that just as archivists are in the "memory business" (Jimerson 2006), they are also in the "evidence" business (Cook 2013). Users look to archives for evidence for research, defense, support, or emotional journey. It is archivists' responsibility to provide, to be transparent about their influence, to discuss—even argue—with their users and each other, and push themselves to continue questioning ideas of evidence and incorporating new perspectives and insights into theoretical and practical frameworks.

VIII. NOTES

[1]In discussing archival descriptive practice in the United States, Anne Gilliland (2014) suggests this may be because the Dutch manual was not translated into English until 1941, "seven years after the founding of the US National Archives and four years after the establishment of the SAA. Therefore, it was not available when it arguably might have had the most significant impact on the development of American descriptive practices" (p. 55).

[2]When I was an undergraduate, several of my professors, including my literary theory professor, admitted that postmodernism is difficult to define. Julie Rivkin and Andrew Ryan (2004) express a similar sentiment in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*.

[3]Harris uses Derrida's term, which Derrida borrowed from the Greek, meaning the guardians of official documents kept under surveillance in houses. From *Archive Fever*: "The *archons* are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives" (Derrida 1996, p. 2).

[4]This tension is explored in depth by Terry Cook (2013) in his article about the "four archival paradigms." "Evidence and memory have evolved, then, in archival discourse in a kind of creative tension, each worthless without the other despite the contrary implications they seemingly have for the archival endeavour" (p. 102). Cook writes that rather than being a dichotomy, evidence and memory are in fact two sides of the same archival coin: "[E]vidence, testimony, and records are themselves social and political constructs, each subject to mediation, interpretation, bias, and power relationships. Evidence and memory are not opposites, therefore, but friendly cousins" (p. 104).

[5]Also known as the LGBT community (also LGBT+, LGBTQ, LGBTQIA, etc.) Because it is a reclaimed slur, the use of the term "queer" continues to be a site of debate among non-heterosexual, non-cisgender, and gender non-conforming individuals. Because it is the term used in "queer theory" and can be used as an all-encompassing term, "queer" is the term hereafter used to refer to these individual identities in a group sense.

[6]Rivkin and Ryan on the emergence of constructionism and essentialism in feminism: "[T]wo perspectives began to form, one 'constructionist' or accepting of the idea that gender is made by culture in history, the other 'essentialist,' more inclined to the idea that gender reflects a natural difference between men and women that is as much psychological, even linguistic, as it is biological" (Rivkin and Ryan, p. 766). Some

feminists who adopted essentialist perspectives include Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Adrienne Rich. Varying views of gender also influenced perspectives on sexuality in queer studies.

[7]The researcher's pronouns were ze/hir.

[8]Reader-response criticism is a subfield of literary criticism that focuses on the reader's response to the text rather than the author's intention (Rivkin and Ryan 2004).

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