

RE-MAPPING MEMORY:

*Possibilities of Postcolonial
and Anti-Racist (Counter)Archiving*

Digital Conference

18 March 2021

9:00 am – 4:00 pm EDT

14.00 – 21.00 CET

Princeton-HU Strategic Partnership

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

GSS PROGRAM IN GENDER
AND SEXUALITY STUDIES



RE-MAPPING MEMORY: Possibilities of Postcolonial and Anti-Racist (Counter)Archiving

In light of the recent anti-racist protests in reaction to continued police violence in the United States and across the globe, the Princeton-HU Strategic Partnership Research Project **Re-Imagining the Archive: Sexual Politics and Postcolonial Entanglements** is hosting this conference, to discuss the current challenges of memorial cultures and politics. The simultaneous critique of racism, sexism, and transphobia in different places across the globe in 2020 marked a specific moment in time that we take as a prompt to further the conversation on anti-racist and postcolonial memorial and archival practices and methodologies.

How and where do we encounter the legacies of enslavement and colonialism in our everyday lives, in our research and our institutions' histories? What strategies can we find to publicly address and counter these histories of violence? This includes the renaming of streets and the removal of statues but also the creation of new sites of commemoration. Keynote speaker Anjali Arondekar and panelists will address the following questions: How can transdisciplinary gender and postcolonial studies, combining historiographic, literary, and anthropological perspectives, not only challenge existing archives, but also re-imagine methodologies of archiving? How do the body, feeling and aspiration act as archives and how can we approach the archive itself as a processual hub of relationships and struggles? In other words, which archival hermeneutics are required to tell marginalized gendered (hi)stories, including fictional and speculative re-imaginings as alternative forms of (counter)archives, and envision possible queer anti-racist/anti-sexist futures?

9.00-09.15 EDT

14.00-14.15 CET

WELCOME/HOUSEKEEPING

09.15-10.30 EDT

14.15-15.30 CET

PANEL 1: Archival Affordances and Political Struggles

Chair: MARI JARRIS

ANNE POTJANS | Transnational Attachments: The Emotional Politics
of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

RL GOLDBERG | Wrongly Bodied, Too: Clarissa Sligh's Black/Trans Archive

TARA SURI | Between the Body and the Population: The Soviet Vacuum Aspirator
and the Politics of Abortion in Postcolonial India (1952-1971)

10.30-10.45 EDT

15.30-15.45 CET

BREAK

10.45-12.15 EDT

15.45-17.15 CET

**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: Possibilities of Postcolonial and Anti-Racist
(Counter) Archiving in the Present Moment**

Chair: WALLACE D. BEST

NATALIE BAYER, ANJA SUNHYUN MICHAELSEN,
SILVY CHAKKALAKAL and ELAHE HASCHEMI YEKANI

12.15 -12.45 EDT

17.15-17.45 CET

BREAK

12.45-1.35 EDT

17.45-18.35 CET

PANEL 2: The Body as Archive

Chair: TODD SEKULER

SINA HOLST | The Body as Time Machine: Trauma Theory, Time and the Body

JIYA PANDYA | Living Through History: Reproductive Disability in a
Scientific Archive of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy

1.35-2.00 ET

18.35-19.00 CET

BREAK

2.00-3.30 EDT

19.00-20.30 CET

KEYNOTE: Introduction by SILVY CHAKKALAKAL

ANJALI ARONDEKAR | Abundance: Sexuality's Archives

FAREWELL AND THANKS

Anjali Arondekar

Abundance: Sexuality's Archives

Histories of sexuality routinely mediate past(s) through archival forms of paucity, disenfranchisement and loss. Sexuality, particularly in the global south, is rescued from the detritus of hegemonic histories of colonialism and nationalism and placed within more reparative narratives of reform and rights. This talk challenges such a focus on loss as the structuring mode of narration for histories of sexuality. Instead, I explore the radical abundance of sexuality through archives in South Asia that are plentiful and quotidian, imaginative and ordinary. Two central questions are at stake here: (1) What if we are to shift our attention from the recuperation of sexuality as loss to understanding it as a site of radical abundance and futurity? (2) What are the archival and/or evidentiary forms that emerge from such a coupling of sexuality and abundance?

ANJALI ARONDEKAR is Associate Professor of Feminist Studies, and founding Co-Director, Center for South Asian Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz. Her research engages the poetics and politics of sexuality, caste, and historiography, with a focus on Indian Ocean Studies and South Asia. She is the author of *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Duke University Press, 2009, Orient Blackswan, India, 2010), winner of the Alan Bray Memorial Book Award for best book in lesbian, gay, or queer studies in literature and cultural studies, Modern Language Association (MLA), 2010. She is co-editor (with Geeta Patel) of "Area Impossible: The Geopolitics of Queer Studies," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2016). Her second book, *Abundance: Sexuality, Historiography, Geopolitics* (forthcoming Duke University Press), grows out of her interest in the figurations of sexuality, caste and capital in colonial British and Portuguese India.

anjaliarondekar.sites.ucsc.edu

IN ORDER OF SPEAKERS

Anne Potjans

PhD Candidate and Lecturer, American Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Transnational Attachments: The Emotional Politics of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

In my presentation I would like to focus on #BlackLivesMatter street art in Berlin. By looking at these artifacts I intend to explore the significance of cultural and political entanglements between Germany, Black Germany, and Black America. As a theoretical backdrop to these explorations I am using conceptual deliberations from my dissertation project on Black feminist representations of rage and anger. In doing so, I wish to look at the emotional politics of the #BlackLivesMatter movement and think about questions such as:

- What is the function/significance of these sites of remembrance in Berlin?
- What information do they provide on how histories of racist violence and anti-racist resistance travel across different cultural contexts?
- And what happens to the affective/emotional origins of those histories once they are displaced? Is the rallying cry for the ontological equality of Black lives in Germany charged with a different emotional quality than it is in the US?

ANNE POTJANS teaches American literature and culture at the department of English and American Studies at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where she also works on her Ph.D. project on anger and abjection in Black Feminist Literature. Furthermore, she has done extensive research on diasporic connections between African American and Black German Feminist literature in the post-WW II era. Anne Potjans has co-authored an article on sexual desire and racial seeing in two (Black) German film productions and her most recent article on Black German and African American kinship relations was published in February, 2020. Since 2015, she has presented her research nationally and internationally, for instance at the University of Oxford, the University of Washington, and the Freie Universität Berlin. In the context of a faculty exchange in 2019, she taught an undergraduate seminar entitled “Distant Connections: Black Political Consciousness in Germany and the United States” at the University of Washington.

RL Goldberg

PhD candidate, English & Humanistic Study, Princeton University

Wrongly Bodied, Too: Clarissa Sligh's Black/Trans Archive

Clarissa Sligh's book *Wrongly Bodied: Documenting Transition from Female to Male* (2009) is concerned with two different forms of transition from female to male: the first is that of Sligh's trans masculine photographic subject, Jake McBee, a trans man transitioning in Texas. Secondly, but no less importantly, the book chronicles the 'transition' of Ellen Craft and her husband William—both formerly enslaved in the US South, specifically Georgia—as they escaped to freedom. The Craft's narrative, drawn from their 1860 account *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*, details how light-skinned Ellen passed as a white, male slaveowner and her husband William posed as 'his' slave accompanying him for medical treatment in the North. Sligh's book—a photography series with supplemental narrative—provides little clarity regarding how Sligh saw this juxtaposition—one trans male medical transition alongside two fugitive enslaved people passing—formally operating. Though it is evident that Sligh refracts Jake's experience through that of the Crafts' to understand the structures of 'passing,' what gets effaced in the juxtaposition are innumerable crucial difference between these two narratives.

This presentation will ask: How is it that what is immaterial to Sligh, like Ellen Craft's "maleness"—the body that performatively existed, but did not exist materially—is afforded the same status as Jake's presence, his trans masculine materiality? In what ways does the material trans masculine body—Jake, specifically—offer through its whiteness the opportunity to explore what remains non-material, speculative, and uncertain, in the archive—the material being of enslaved people? How does the gender fabulation that, from behind the camera, Sligh catches in Jake's transition open up the kinds of critical fabulation we might engage in the archive? What, finally, can be said about trans masculine corporeal materiality in this chiasmatic crossing of real, material, archival, ephemeral, and undocumented?

RL GOLDBERG is a PhD candidate in English and Humanistic Study at Princeton; their work has been published in *TSQ*, the *Philip Roth Quarterly*, the *Paris Review*, the *LARB*, and elsewhere.

Tara Suri

PhD Candidate, History, Princeton University

Between the Body and the Population: The Soviet Vacuum Aspirator and the Politics of Abortion in Postcolonial India (1952 – 1971)

What does it mean to consider reproductive technology as an index of the postcolonial order of things? I engage this question of archival reading practice, formulated through the South Asian historiography of sexuality, by tracing the sociolegal life of Soviet abortion technology in India. More specifically, I examine how a public enchantment with the Soviet vacuum aspirator shaped the 1971 Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, which liberalized the colonial-era provisions that had criminalized abortion. The investment in Soviet technology, I suggest, reflected a broader shift in the racialized Cold War politics of population. If family planning officials had previously pathologized abortion as a problem that would be overcome through educating the ‘masses’ into sexual citizenship, they now pointed to the vacuum aspirator to lobby for the decriminalization of abortion. Inverting earlier logics, they framed decriminalization as an exceptional measure that would ultimately produce responsible sexual citizens who would plan their families and thus never need abortion. Approaching the Soviet vacuum aspirator not as a forgotten artifact but rather as a material example of a proliferating bureaucratic quest to regulate futurity, I explore the ordering and re-ordering of the normative relationship between sexuality and reproduction in the postcolonial state.

TARA SURI is a graduate student in Princeton’s History Department. Her dissertation focuses on the scientific trade in rhesus monkeys in twentieth-century South Asia. She is interested in feminist, queer, and postcolonial science and technology studies.

Sina Holst

PhD candidate, European Ethnology/Cultural Anthropology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

The Body as Time Machine: Trauma Theory, Time and the Body

In my presentation, I propose to conceptualize human bodies as archives both in the context of personal lives and subjectivities and in the field of Memory and Memorial Cultures. I suggest to pay attention to some of the ways in which human bodies practice time and are subjects themselves to politics of time by drawing on insights from trauma theory about how human bodies exist in and through temporal multiplicity. Rather than assuming a model of the human as stably living in the present, I propose to think about being human as being scattered in time and about the human body as a locus of multi-temporality. I wonder, then, how this multi-temporality within bodies can be researched, traced, and voiced, and what this approach could contribute to understanding Memorials and Memory Cultures.

SINA HOLST is a PhD candidate at the Institute for European Ethnology at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She studied Social and Cultural Anthropology, Theatre Sciences and European Ethnology in Berlin (Germany) and Warsaw (Poland). Her interests include Anthropocene Studies, Memory Culture/Nature Studies, Body Politics and Theories of Governmentality. In her current research she investigates more-than-human modes of memory at the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau. Her PhD is funded by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Germany). She is based in Cracow, Poland.

Jiya Pandya

PhD Candidate, History and Gender & Sexuality Studies, Princeton University

Living Through History: Reproductive Disability in a Scientific Archive of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy

In this presentation, I contend with the ways in which the process of archiving itself can produce temporalities that disrupt creative and critical forms of existence and resistance. I examine the formation of a medical-scientific archive in the aftermath of the industrial disaster now known as the Bhopal Gas Leak in 1984 in India. I focus on research about pregnant women, mothers, and their children disabled during the leak. Drawing on feminist crip theory, I aim to disentangle the ways in which eugenic logics built into this research sterilize the possibilities for disabled futurity in Bhopal. In treating these women, children, and fetuses' bodies as scientific archives for the prevention and management of industrial tragedies, medical scholars freeze the Bhopal disaster into a temporality of backwardness, as a historical event that has already taken place and will remain in the past. This practice of historicization renders survivors' present and future a temporal impossibility, stripping them of their agency, imagination, community, and endurance. Re-imagining the archive, then, must include a political commitment to the survival not just of information, but also the embodiments of it.

JIYA PANDYA is a third year PhD candidate in the Department of History and Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies at Princeton University. Her research focuses on the comparative discourse around disability and caste in post-colonial India, and on visions of welfare, care, and community amongst the state and its citizens.

WALLACE D. BEST is the Hughes-Rogers Professor of Religion and African American Studies and the Director of the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies at Princeton University.

He is the author of *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952*, (Princeton University Press) and *Langston's Salvation: American Religion and the Bard of Harlem* (New York University Press). He is currently at work on an anthology entitled *Elder Lucy Smith: Documents from the Life of a Pentecostal Woman Preacher*.

NATALIE BAYER has been the director of FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, a district museum in Berlin since 2018. She has curated exhibitions like “Labor 89 – Neue Perspektiven auf die Wendezeit (New Perspectives on the Period of Transition Around the Fall of the Berlin Wall)” (2020) on feminist BPoC-perspectives on racism, “Dach über Kopf. Housing issues in Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg” (2019-2020), “GUESTures | Gostikulacije of artist Margareta Kern” (2019) and conferences like “Berliner Ge-Denkräume. Stimmen und Politiken für eine Erinnerungskultur der Migrationsgesellschaft (Voices and policies for a historiography in the migration society)” (2018).

Prior to this, she worked as curator at the City Museum Munich for a project in order to establish new methodologies and concepts on the migratory society. As an independent curator she was part of the team of “Crossing Munich. Orte, Bilder und Debatten der Migration (Places, ideas and discussions on migration)” (2009, München), at the City Museum Kaufbeuren and “Movements of Migration. Neue Perspektiven auf Migration in Göttingen (New perspectives on migration in Goettingen)”, (2013, Göttingen). She is a member of “kritnet – Netzwerk Kritische Migrations – und Grenzregimeforschung” (kritnet – network for critical migration and border regime studies) as well as member of advisory boards and juries for cultural projects.

She has studied European Ethnology, History of Art, Cultural Anthropology and graduated 2009 at University Munich. Currently she writes her Ph.D. thesis “Migration on Display” on the poetics and politics of migration in German museums (Georg-August-University Göttingen/Germany). Her main research fields are migration, urban developments, racism, representation and commemoration policies.

SILVY CHAKKALAKAL is Junior Professor at the Institute of European Ethnology and at the Center of Transdisciplinary Gender Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She teaches in the fields of postcolonial and gender studies, anthropology and literature, popular culture and aesthetics. She is the author of *Die Welt in Bildern. Erfahrung und Evidenz in Friedrich J. Bertuchs 'Bilderbuch für Kinder' (1790-1830)* (Wallstein 2014). Her second monograph, *Indienliebe. Die frühe Ethnographie und ihre Bilder* is due to be published by Kadmos in 2021. Her research focus lies on questions of creativity, cooperation, time and temporality in cultural anthropology, with special interest on anthropology's socio-political engagements. Currently, she is working on ethnographic projects on education, antiracism and decoloniality as well as anthropology of the future.

ELAHE HASCHEMI YEKANI is Professor of English and American Literature and Culture with a Focus on Postcolonial Studies at the Department of English and American Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

In her second book *Familial Feeling: Entangled Tonalities in Early Black Atlantic Writing and the Rise of the British Novel* (Palgrave Macmillan 2021) she traces an entangled literary history of canonical bourgeois novels of the late 18th and 19th century and the earliest written testimonies of Black British writers. Open Access: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-58641-6>

Other publications include: *The Privilege of Crisis. Narratives of Masculinities in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Photography and Film* (Campus 2011); together with Anson Koch-Rein and Jasper J. Verlinden (Ed.). Special Issue of *EJES: Representing Trans* (1/2020); together with Eveline Kilian and Beatrice Michaelis (Ed.). *Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political* (Routledge 2013).

ANJA SUNHYUN MICHAELSEN holds an MA in gender studies and German literature from the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and a PhD in media studies from the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. She was a lecturer at the media studies department in Bochum and a postdoc fellow at the ICI Berlin. After a guest professorship at the Institute for Theatre, Film, and Media Studies at the University of Vienna she is currently working on a project on Korean-German adoption archives.

MARI JARRIS is a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University's Department of Comparative Literature and the Humboldt-Universität's Institute of German Literature. She is writing her dissertation on utopianism and feminism in nineteenth- and twentieth-century German and Russian socialisms.

TODD SEKULER holds a Master in Public Health from Columbia University in NYC, and a Ph.D. in European Ethnology from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU). He has worked most recently on the history of HIV/AIDS activism in Europe, is co-founder of the European HIV/AIDS Archive (EHAA), and was co-curator of the 'HIVstories: Living Politics' exhibition, which toured museums in Berlin, Warsaw and Istanbul. He is currently a postdoc researcher studying hate speech regulation at the HU's Institute for European Ethnology as part of the transnational research project, 'CrimScapes. Navigating citizenship through European landscapes of criminalisation'. His work explores the intersections of health, politics and memory.



hu.berlin/re-imagining_the_archive

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Zentrum für transdisziplinäre Geschlechterstudien (ZtG)

Dr. Gabriele Jähnert

Executive director of the
Centre of Transdisciplinary Gender Studies (ZtG)
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU)

Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies

Princeton University

Dr. Maria K. Papadakis

Program Manager
Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies