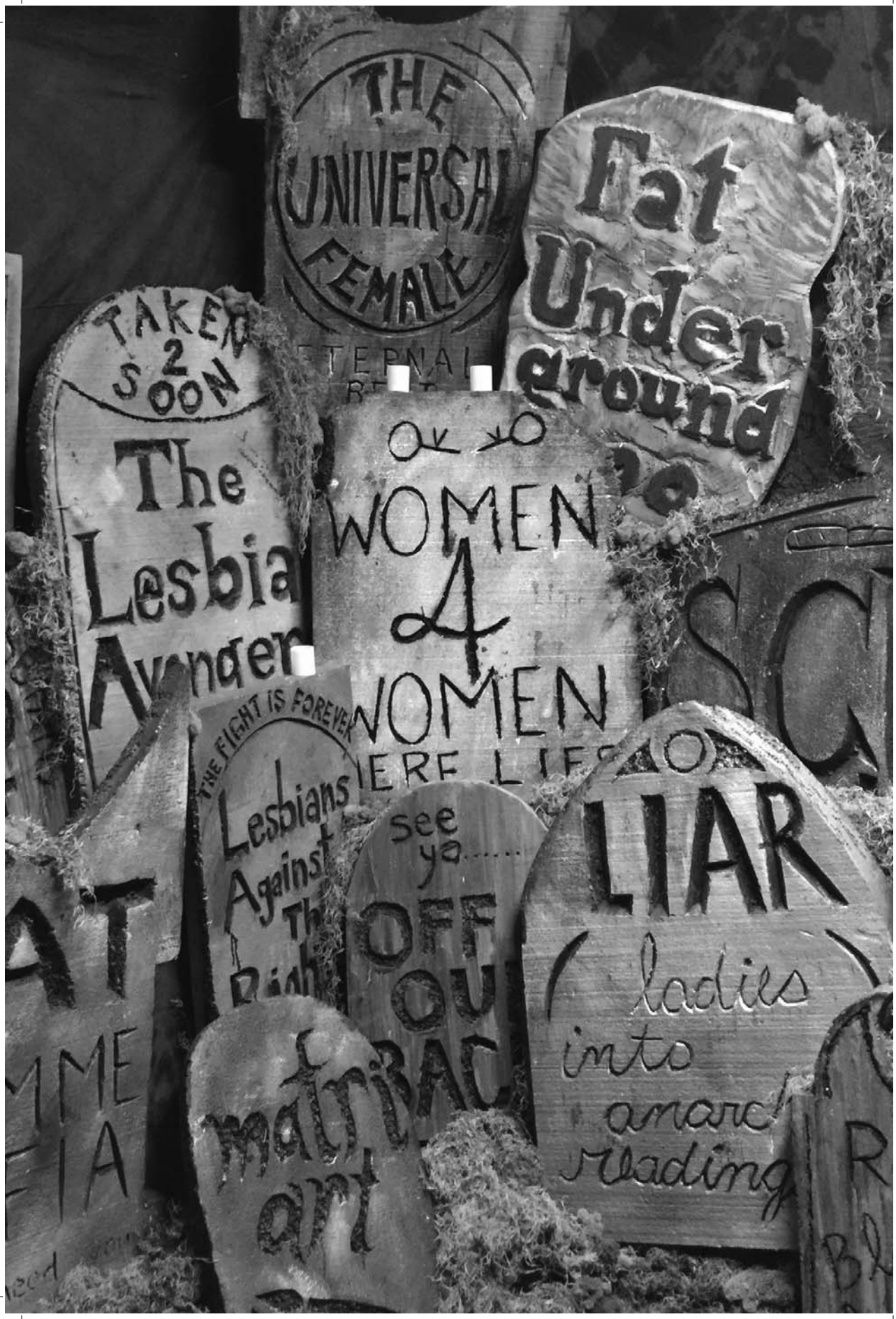
INSIDE KILLJOY'S KASTLE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INSIDE KILLJOY'S KASTLE

DYKEY GHOSTS, FEMINIST MONSTERS, AND OTHER LESBIAN HAUNTINGS

Edited by Allyson Mitchell and Cait McKinney

agYU
Art Gallery of York University · Toronto

UBCPress · Vancouver · Toronto

28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound in Canada on paper that is processed chlorine- and acid-free.

ISBN 978-0-7748-6157-1 (softcover)
ISBN 978-0-7748-6158-8 (pdf)

Cataloguing data is available from Library and Archives Canada.

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens
Graphic design: Cecilia Berkovic
Set in Aperçu, Lydia, and Pitch by Artegraphica Design Co. Ltd.
Copy editor: Lesley Erickson
Indexer: Judy Dunlop

UBC Press
The University of British Columbia
2029 West Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2
ubcpress.ca

Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

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Toronto ON M3J 1P3
AGYU.art

The Art Gallery of York University is supported by York University, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council.

This book is supported by ONE Archives at the University of Southern California Libraries.

This book is dedicated to all the old lezzers.

This book is dedicated to all the young queerdos.

This book is also dedicated to difficult conversations, movement, collectivity, pleasure, and acrimony.

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Stop Telling Women to Smile

– STREET ART PROJECT BY TATYANA FAZLALIZADEH, 2012

What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion.

– RADICALESBIANS, FROM THE WOMAN-IDENTIFIED WOMAN MANIFESTO, 1970

Niche lesbian content, hard boundaries: no creeps, no terfs.

– @XENAWORRIERPRINCESS, 2019


Catch One Disco
TAKEN 2 SOON
The Lesbia
Avenger
RADICALES
THE FIGHT IS FOREVER
Lesbians
Against
FAT
EMME
AFIA
RIP

Contents

THE KASTLE: EXECUTION

THE CRYPT: ARCHIVING AND REFLECTION

Acknowledgments

As the non-Indigenous editors of this collection, we would like to position this book on the stolen land of North America. We acknowledge that we are benefitting from the colonial structures that continue to operate on this land.

The artwork discussed in this publication was produced in Toronto and Los Angeles. The primary artists, Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue, are white settlers who recognize that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the land upon which this art has been located, and they acknowledge the artwork's presence on the unceded territory of several Indigenous Nations.

The area known as Tkaronto (the Mohawk word for "place where trees stand in the water," which comes from a fishing practice used in the Great Lakes area) has been cared for by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Huron-Wendat, and the Métis. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject to the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

The area known as Los Angeles and the Channel Islands is traditionally cared for by the Tongva peoples. We are grateful for our time as guests on this land.

This book was published in Vancouver, on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sə̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh

(Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. UBC Press is specifically located on the lands of the Musqueam people.

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We acknowledge the contribution of all of the people who shared their thoughts, gathered information, ran errands, organized receipts, brought food, glued hair, crocheted webs, performed, attended, and trusted this art project (a full list of contributors can be found on pages 197–201). We recognize and are grateful to the artists and academics who carefully considered these contributions in their writing for this book.

We appreciate the labour and support provided by Emelie Chhangur and Michael Maranda at the Art Gallery of York University and David Evans Frantz at the ONE Archives. Darcy Cullen and Holly Keller at UBC Press supported a complicated book through every stage of production. Thanks also to Lesley Erickson for the patient and thoughtful copyediting and Judy Dunlop for the index. We love the way this collection looks thanks to Cecilia Berkovic's design. Naomi de Szegheo-Lang helped us prepare the manuscript for production, fixing a million details with a keen eye. Ruth Kolezar-Green provided guidance for our land acknowldgment. We also recognize the input provided by Deirdre Logue in crafting our introduction to this book.

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This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

INSIDE KILLJOY'S KASTLE

Lesbian Rule: Welcome to the Hell House

CAIT MCKINNEY AND ALLYSON MITCHELL

Are you ready?

Welcome to *Killjoy's Kastle*. I have been selected by a committee of killjoys who confirm that I am qualified to lead this tour.

It is a commonly suggested that feminists (particularly lesbian feminists) are, in fact, killjoys. They just aren't any fun, just won't play the game – revelling in the destruction of good times, they are happiness murderesses.

Let me get this crooked for you – some lesbian feminists are maligned, pushed into corners and intentionally wounded by lesbophobes, misogynists, and the like … There are other lesbian feminists who are indeed monstrous, ones who would rather stomp their own movement, resting comfortably in race and class privilege, then budge on stale ideas about gender and sex and bodies and … Let's face it, it can all be very confusing, even if you are an insider like me … chained to this duty.

Killjoy, who lives in this kastle, tries to find balance – being mean when necessary and nimble as required …

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With these words, the Demented Women's Studies Professor welcomes visitors to *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House,* an artwork by Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue. Our professor already works in another kind of hell house by day. She is broken from contradictions in the conditions of pay and prestige at the university, where all she has is what she needs to keep working and where there is no capacity to thrive, where she

teaches about social justice theories and histories, struggles to decolonize, to make her classrooms "safer" in a context where the paradox is that the very buildings she works in stand on capitalism, white supremacy, misogyny, transphobia, and colonialism, all under the rubric of education, higher learning, intelligence, and diversity. She works as a tour guide, at night, after class is done, because her contract teaching gig doesn't pay well. She is a combination of precariously employed, hairy-lipped, overcaring, and oversharing, and she sweats in her perimenopausal silk shirt, angry, outdated. She's passive-aggressive and weak pelvic-floored, despite all the Zumba. She wants to please and is concerned about student evaluations, even though she knows the game is rigged. She's loose in her culturally appropriative clothing, rocking her academic bling – chunky necklaces. Sex positive, her haircut is timeless, and she's unapologetically greying. She is snarky, cold-sored, desperate to maintain relevance, confident, migrained, overworked, over being polite, wise, croning, experienced, mesmerizing. She is ready to teach, and she knows that time is running out. She would want us to start with some important details.

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Killjoy's Kastle is a large-scale, multimedia, walk-through installation and performance that evokes all the fright in lesbian-feminist histories so that we might unpack, reject, or critically recover these stories for the queer present. To date, three cities have hosted a version of the kastle: Toronto, in 2013, with the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU); London, in 2014, at the British Film Institute; and Los Angeles, in 2015, with ONE Archives. A fourth installation will occur in Philadelphia in 2019. The project finds its roots in "traditional" carnival haunted houses and lesbian-feminist direct action aesthetics. Most directly, the kastle parodies the evangelical Christian hell house tradition – live-action haunted houses put up by churches near Halloween to scare teenagers stiff with scenes of homosexuality, abortion, and other bodily "sins."[1] Formally, community-theatre tactics, soundscapes, conversation, lighting design, performance, props, costuming, and public interaction all inform the kastle. Built with creepy but whimsical craft aesthetics, the space stages interactive scenarios through human-scale dioramas, and visitors tour through each of these scenes, guided by their professor, who narrates the trip. These scenes are installed in nontraditional gallery spaces: an old warehouse, a community

centre. They take place outside of institutions but are supported by them.

Altering traditional horror tropes to prey on the public's fears of queer culture, performers in *Killjoy's Kastle* take the form of ghosts, ghouls, monsters, political indoctrinators, and lesbian avengers with names such as the "Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers, the Menstrual Trans Man with Diva Cup, and Da Carpet Muncha. For visitors, the kastle experience begins in the very long lineup to get into the house. Guests are greeted by Undead Pro-choice Activists, Tree-Hugging Anti-logging Defenders, Gender Queer Drag Queens, Rape Revenge Advocates, "Because I Am a Ghoul" Security Supporters, and the ghost of radical feminist Valerie Solanas, each cajoling the audience while they wait to get in. The "house" is constructed with an entrance and exit facade and includes dividing walls, lighting, and a sound system. But what really brings the space to life inside are the various performers and scenes that the visitors encounter:

The Dead Lesbian Crowd Comptrollers
The Hall of Warning Signs
The Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas
The "Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers
The Giant Bearded Clam and Her Familiar
The Paranormal Consciousness Raisers
Da Carpet Muncha
The Terrifying Tunnel of Two Adult Women in Love
The Big Trubs Earth Mother with Menstrual Blood Apple-Bobbing Fountain
The Dank Cave Monster
The Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies
The Marvelous Emasculator
The Polystyrene Animatronic Man Cave Interrupter
The Salty Tears of Transformation through Chris Crocker
The Ball Bustas
The Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party
The Intersectional Activist Wrestles the Crumbling Pillars of Society [LA only]
The Giant Ambiguous Hairy Hole [LA only]
The Daddy Pen [LA only]
The Multifaced Lesbian Internet Troll [LA only]
The Undead Protest Marshals [LA only]
The Shaft Witches
The Stitch Witches [LA only]

The Menstrual Trans Man with Diva Cup [LA only]
The Lesbian Art Dealer [LA only]
The Straw Feminist Hall of Shame
The Gaybourhood Watch [LA only]
The Real-Life Feminist Killjoys
Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppee

From the Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas to the Dank Cave Monster's lair, these scenes are animated by a cast of performers (Mitchell and Logue's collaborators), many of whom contributed to this book. On the other side, after exiting Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppee, visitors are greeted by a fish taco stand, to satisfy other hungers. This is just a gloss of the experience. Moynan King's essay in this collection provides a detailed tour of the installation, theorized through her background in performance studies. The complete Demented Women's Studies Professor's script is also included in these pages, though she improvised a lot, to be sure.

Like most site-specific works realized with limited resources, *Killjoy's Kastle* expands and contracts to fit its surroundings. Toronto's installation was set up in four thousand square feet of temporary warehouse space. Led by partners Mitchell and Logue, a group of twenty artists worked to create the costumes and props for the space, and Emelie Chhangur at the AGYU curated (see her essay in this volume). Twenty-five people helped to install the work, and forty performers animated the opening night for seven hundred visitors. Between October 17 and 30, the exhibition attracted 4,300 more visitors. Costs were significant, and support from the AGYU was supplemented by Mitchell and Logue's personal savings (and credit cards). With the exception of a few volunteers, queer family friends, and folks working for school credit, all of the artists were paid.

As many of the contributors to this book note, especially Ann Cvetkovich and Kyla Wazana Tompkins, the exhibition was met with controversy: important dialogue among queers about white supremacy and transmisogyny collapsed into name calling on the event's Facebook page. The online discussion began the day after a blog post by a Toronto artist and blogger critiqued representations of whiteness in the space.[2] Another comment left on the Facebook page queried the transmisogyny of the kastle's Ball Bustas scene. Many commenters weighed in on these intertwined issues and threads with defences, further damnations, and critique. Online debate followed the project to Los Angeles. In both cases, Mitchell and Logue responded with public letters

(see this volume) acknowledging problems, apologizing for harm, outlining how concerns about the work had been addressed, and inviting more dialogue both in the kastle and online. Other critiques came from outside queer communities. In its last few days, Toronto's right-wing media discovered the project, and an undercover "exposé" of the space ran on talk news television. Mitchell and Logue received a barrage of hate letters and threats. All this acrimony is part of the story.

The BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival supported *Killjoy's Kastle*'s second iteration in London. Curated by Nazmia Jamal, a slice of the original, including video documentation and slide shows, was represented in a pop-up gallery space. Jamal and her collaborators created a site-specific graveyard of activist organizations, and they focused on the archives of black feminist and lesbian activist histories in London. As Jamal and Catherine Grant outline in their contributions to this volume, these marked graves brought the exhibition's method to a local context and to the particular challenges of archiving black feminist history.

The ONE National Lesbian & Gay Archives at the University of Southern California Libraries hosted *Killjoy's Kastle* in LA, and David Evans Frantz curated (see his essay in this volume). As in Toronto, dozens of artists helped to create, install, and enliven the space. The exhibition was installed in a community centre in the middle of West Hollywood's Plummer Park. Everyone was nervous to perform in such a public place. An arson attack at an LA Planned Parenthood centre had preceded the opening by two weeks, setting performers on edge. One evening during the exhibition, a photographer was escorted from the installation after taking close-up images of performers' naked bodies. The crowds kept everyone motivated despite these issues. Every evening, a lineup snaked through the park, and 5,000 people came through over the project's two-week run.

These numbers are heartening: there is an engaged audience for lesbian-feminist work, but the art world doesn't always want to know about, or serve, them. Coming out to see the show in droves, these queers and their kin made *Killjoy's Kastle* its own wilful subject working against conservativism in the art world and beyond.[3] *Killjoy's Kastle* was born in response to the experiences of lesbophobia Mitchell went through with an earlier installation called *Ladies Sasquatch* (2008–10). The installation included six massive beast women and their smaller familiars gathered around a crackling fiberglass bonfire. It toured to four museums in Canada.[4] At each site, Mitchell had difficult conversations with museum staff, who wanted to place warning signs about "adult"

or "sexual" content at the gallery entrance.[4] It became obvious that the problem these arts administrators had (or perceived that the public would have) with the work was the relationship between "lesbian" *and* "feminist." In other words, sexuality is thought to be most dangerous when it's read as explicitly political.

At the time of the exhibitions, "same-sex" marriage had just become legal in Canada.[5] Many skeptical queers questioned the false promise of safety and assimilation. The veneer of "acceptance" that might be extended to a privileged few needed to be revealed, in part, by some lesbian-feminist sasquatches and their alternative kin structures. After this experience, Mitchell was determined to use the "threat" of the label "lesbian feminist" to test the limits of acceptance and decorum within contemporary art spaces. The project began by thinking through what would be scary inside a lesbian haunted house and who would be scared there.

Thinking through these questions within art-world spaces, *Killjoy's Kastle* takes up the kind of institutional critique popular among feminist artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it does so in a way that is deliberately out of time, a drag on the idea that the queer-feminist artist has arrived and been embraced in their full capacities.[6] Contributors to *Desire Change,* a recent edited collection on contemporary feminist art in Canada, argue that this kind of enlivenment of institutional critique is vital. Amy Fung, cheyanne turions, and Gina Badger each take different approaches to thinking through the lineages of, and ongoing necessity for, intersectional feminist institutional critique. Holding institutions accountable, but also reflecting on the broader conditions in which feminists find the means to make their work, is particularly salient for projects that seek to decolonize institutions or decentre the white, middle-class subject from feminist art criticism. *Killjoy's Kastle* takes place within a contemporary art world in which queer-feminist projects appear but are often placed at the margins of major museums and exhibition spaces or other supportive infrastructures.

Some of these institutions have asked for compromises. While Mitchell and Logue were installing the work in London, they were invited to come down off of their rickety ladders, where they were hanging crocheted spiderwebs, to have tea with the festival's director. It turned out that she didn't really want tea; she wanted the video in the exhibition edited for public consumption. Two elements were deemed potentially offensive to a larger audience: the moment when the word "cunt" is uttered by the performer playing Valerie Solanas and a very brief

segment where the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers show their, well, cunts. The director offered a choice: edit the cunts out of the video or close the exhibition to visitors under eighteen, check IDs at the door, cloak the entrance behind a curtain, and decrease opening hours. She assured the artists that this was not censorship: the choice was theirs.

If lesbians can scare monolithic institutions, such as mainstream LGBTQ film festivals, it's because they promise to do too much. As Chhangur discusses in her contribution, *Killjoy's Kastle* has worked with institutions but outside their physical spaces in a project of world making that asks different questions of what publics want and need from museums. The project draws on a long list of queer antecedents to ask these questions. It's indebted to the work of artists who engage with bodies through ideas of monstrosity and abjection such as Kara Walker, Jana Sterback, Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Nao Bustamante, and Jess Dobkin, to name a few. And it's indebted to artists working in the horror genre (e.g., Hieronymous Bosch, Mike Kelley, and Paul McCarthy) and artists working in large-scale, domestic installation work (e.g., Judy Chicago, Niki de Saint Phalle, Mary Kelly, Lynn Hershmann, Lynn La Point, Laura Kikauka, and Louise Bourgeois). This lineage expands beyond galleries and museums to artists working across broadly queer participatory frameworks that revel in *multi*media practice: The Hidden Cameras, Rita McKeough, Kiss and Tell Collective, Ridykeulous, The Polyphonic Spree, and the infamous queer club nights Mitchell and Logue came up in such as Will Munro's Vaseline, in Toronto, and Duckie, in London (founded by Jay Cloth, Chelsea Kelsey, Amy Lam, and Kim Phaggs).

In its indebtedness to other artists, to queer histories, and to the many performers who have brought the project to life, *Killjoy's Kastle* is a collaborative labour of love. As King describes in her contribution to this volume, a range of queer-, trans-, and lesbian-identified artists and activists helped to workshop the project's development, and many went on to become performers on opening night in Toronto. A lot of money, tears, and sweat equity went into making *Killjoy's Kastle* respond to the ongoing marginality faced by queer- and lesbian-feminist art and activism.

Here, committed groups of people *make things together* with joy and love. This process-driven, behind-the-scenes labour is often hard to document because it's work that happens in the background, before any engagement with the public takes place. But "getting the job done" represents so much of what queer art making and queer activism actually entail.

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The history of lesbian-feminist art runs partly on hearsay. When Mitchell and Logue met curator Kathy Rae Huffman in 2014 and the conversation came around to *Killjoy's Kastle,* Kathy Rae remembered another feminist haunted house from decades ago, but the details were foggy. As it turned out, this haunting happened in 1983 as part of an exhibition titled *At Home* at the Long Beach Museum of Art. The exhibition celebrated the ten-year anniversary of *Womanhouse* (1972), a large-scale installation that took place in a run-down, seventeen-room house in Los Angeles.[7] *At Home* was a weekend party guest-curated by art historian Arlene Raven. There are no detailed accounts of this event within published art historical scholarship (that we could find), but Kathy Rae remembers the event well, even without material remnants to go on: "The event was great fun. I have only memories but no photos or documentation in my possession. I also found no photos in the LBMA archives when I was researching for the *Pacific Standard Time* exhibition, which I curated for the museum in 2011–12. I'll think about who might have any and which artists participated, who you should also contact … Sisters of Survival, Barbara Smith, Anne Bray, Susanne Lacey … There were dozens of participants. Someone must have the documentation from that in a shoebox under her bed."[8]

This anecdote describes a familiar situation for lesbian-feminist art. If you missed it, it doesn't exist, either because these works are by women, or lesbians, or queers or because they are so unsustainable in their ambitious scales and modest institutional supports that they only seem to be in the world for brief moments (see Grant's discussion of Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski's work in this book). They come alive in the most urgent ways before crushing forces realize their existence and they have to go underground, or they are forgotten. These performances, site-specific installations, or immersive spaces are financially and politically like grassfire: they ignite without warning and burn themselves out (before they find other fuel and burn down the entire forest). They are too good to be true, and they are too hot to handle. What's left behind is a carbon-rich cleanse, necessary and generative for new growth to happen and to expose and kill off predators.

This is some of what we imagine happened to *At Home* in 1983. What remains is hiding under a bed, or in some lesbian's closet, biding time. Similarly, the costumes, objects, props, and sculptures used to realize *Killjoy's Kastle* live inside a large, expensive storage locker in a small town an hour northeast of

Toronto. This locker has become a crypt, a cave, a casket housing noncommercial art objects that might be shown again (or not). The keeping is a burden. An artist's work generates all of this stuff that is hypervisible and hypermaterial, stuff that is central to the practice and important within lesbian art economies but viewed as heavy, too-tactile garbage within the larger art world. That is why we need this book, so we can find the stories of this haunted house and the ones that came before and pull them out of their storage lockers and shoe boxes. Contributors to this book work to keep the ongoing eventfulness of *Killjoy's Kastle* alive by building a better archive together.[9]

This book emerges from a commitment to documenting queer-feminist art and activism by finding methods for thinking, writing, drawing, and enlivening history together. Artists, art historians, critics, and others who want to remember queer installation and performance find ways to engage imaginatively with their ephemerality, designing alternative kinds of "archives" to do this work. In *The Archive and the Repertoire,* performance studies scholar Diana Taylor frames performance as a different kind of archive attuned to embodied and collective memories.[10] Feminist performance leaves peculiar kinds of "documents" behind, and this is part of its queerness. Thinking through this situation, art historian Amelia Jones argues that the photographs, books, and accounts made of feminist performance works are not poor impressions of the originals but rather significant documents in their own right: not the thing but something else altogether.[11]

Creating various versions of this "something else," most contributors to this book participated in *Killjoy's Kastle* in some way, whether as artists, curators, or participants who toured the installation. They lend their impressions to a collective account of what this work has meant across multiple sites and audiences, capturing some of what it was like to have been there. At the same time, the multiplicity of voices shows how this experience was different for everyone: being queer, trans, white, a person of colour, a person who is young, or a person who is old and "lived through" these histories each shape the way contributors experienced the kastle and what it revealed to them about queer practices of kinship, accountability, acrimony, and *doing* feminist history.

Making, being in, or writing about *Killjoy's Kastle* can be emotionally demanding because the work deals with lesbian-feminist histories charged with affect, infighting, and the often painful work of being a feminist.[12] *Killjoy's Kastle* takes its name

from feminist theorist Sara Ahmed's figure of the feminist killjoy, introduced in her essay "Feminist Killjoys (and Other Wilful Subjects)," which appeared in *Scholar and the Feminist* in 2010 and is reproduced here. In that essay, and in much of her work since then, Ahmed finds figures throughout feminist history who perform the difficult work of being wilful, getting in the way, and spoiling other people's fun. These are forms of political praxis that make living a feminist life, well, liveable, in Ahmed's terms.[13] Ahmed's killjoy is an inspiration for many of the contributors to this volume. The ghouls, ghosts, and lezzie monsters one encounters in the kastle turn the experience of being a killjoy into sport so that others might watch with horror, delight, or something in between.

The burden of killing joy, or of watching someone else's joy be killed, is shouldered unevenly within feminist movements. As Ahmed writes, feminists of colour are often called on to do this work, particularly when activist circles marked by whiteness and cisnormativity prove to be unhomely. Antiracist organizing led by feminists of colour past and present provides other models for understanding archives. Historical projects such as the Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press continue to be enlivened and made urgent through contemporary engagements with their archives.[14] As Syrus Marcus Ware and Rio Rodriguez have each argued, archival logics and ideas about historical inheritance are fundamentally structured by white supremacy, in part because of the idea that histories must continue to accumulate without interrogating their conditions of (re)production.[15]

Over the course of its three iterations, *Killjoy's Kastle* shouldered a tremendous representational burden – how to playfully evoke the tremendous love and also horror in lesbian-feminist history without reproducing racism and transphobia or relying on one monolithic narrative as reference point. The project misstepped, made adjustments, and worked to respond to criticisms from community members, many of which were articulated online or through processing sessions in person with the Real-Life Feminist Killjoys at the kastle's exit. Over the course of its three iterations, scenes in the kastle centred more stories and performances by feminists of colour and trans people within its haunted halls. This work is not over.

We need better methods, different methods, speculative, imaginative, and artful methods for enlivening queer pasts in order to dismantle or build outside of these structures. *Killjoy's Kastle* asks, to what extent might parody, camp, play, and the exaggerated genres of horror provide one of these dismantling

forms of enlivenment? This question builds on a long history of feminist theory that has considered the powers of horror, monstrosity, and the grotesque.[16] Horror is relative – it trades in shared social nightmares – and so monsters change shape throughout history in order to keep up.[17] The feminist killjoy adapts to her time period while maintaining consistent tactics, such as processing bad feelings.

Emphasizing both the horror of feminist infighting and the emotional labour that goes into unending lesbian processing sessions, Ann Cvetkovich's and Kyla Wazana Tompkins' contributions to this volume explore the historical and theoretical underpinnings of feminist conflicts and adaptations. Cvetkovich and Tompkins each performed as Real-Life Feminist Killjoys, helping visitors at the end of their tours unpack the experience in a semiserious send-up of how lesbians talk too much about their feelings. The room where the killjoys sit is a chilly climate before re-entry into the real world. This is where the bubble bursts, where satire and humour fall away and the joke's over. The visitor becomes aware that others in the room have questions or feel discomfort and listens to how interpretations of the same experience may differ. In a loving reproduction of feminist consciousness-raising circles, women's studies classrooms, lesbian relationship dynamics, and activist infighting, this difference gets processed, or talked through, before visitors leave the kastle's walls. These difficult conversations are how we can learn about gaps, silences, and absences in lesbian history.

With the Real-Life Feminist Killjoys, visitors made sense of what they had seen and heard, sometimes with frustration or anger at what had or hadn't been critiqued in the space. As concerned as she is for the unresolved, tense, or even acrimonious experiences of the audience members she spoke with, Cvetkovich is equally invested in making sense of how "processing" works. Her essay considers the shared labour of collectively holding and sharing emotions in activist and educational spaces. Similarly, Tompkins sifts through the practical, intellectual, and emotional work that goes into negotiating histories of lesbian-feminist transphobia within an intergenerational milieu – how might we continue to learn from these histories, and the women who made them, rather than pretending that their effects are only always in the past?

We stand to learn the most from one another when we "process" difficult emotions together, but these encounters might just as easily be doomed to fail or to leave people feeling bad, unprocessed. Of course, the kastle's processing rooms are

not real group-therapy sessions; this is performance art, a status that does not diminish the project's emotional life but rather makes *Killjoy's Kastle* uniquely suited to working through when, how, and for whom lesbian feminism has been both a site of attachment and a horror show. As King argues in this volume, *Killjoy's Kastle*'s ability to queerly reimagine and intervene in lesbian histories was possible because of the performative nature of the space. Critical race and sexuality studies scholar Amber Jamilla Musser and performance studies scholar Jennifer Doyle have each explored the problem of understanding and documenting difficult emotion in performance art.[18] They offer experimental models for writing about the affective, even traumatic, registers of taking in queer, feminist, and antiracist performance work, which can be particularly resistant to documentation in all its felt complexity. Musser's and Doyle's work shares some concerns with lesbian-feminist histories that explore how emotion can enliven historiographical methods. Works such as Victoria Hesford's *Feeling Women's Liberation* (2013) provide a model for thinking about how our present-day, feeling relationships to feminist histories shape those very histories – the past is apparent to us only through our singularly and collectively invested invocations.

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What are these histories, and how do we agree on them? In her contribution to this volume, Heather Love reflects on *Killjoy's Kastle*'s engagement with what she calls "dyke culture." Love asks how the exhibit might illuminate and amplify the vitality of the term "lesbian," addressing both its failings and its untapped potential for queer, feminist, and trans cultures across time. For Love, this work "provides a crucial point of reference and an archive for emerging queer, lesbian, and trans scholars navigating the shoals of contemporary identity and activism." As Ahmed argues in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), we need lesbian feminism's lessons now more than ever because of how they share with transfeminism a deep engagement with imagining a world that is otherwise.[19] While acknowledging that lesbian feminism and transfeminism might seem, in many ways, at odds, Ahmed outlines how both movements use anger to build something hopeful, capacious, and oriented to more liveable futures. Critical reference points to the lesbian past are necessary given the drive to do something forward-looking, and urgent, with this history.

There is tension between the idea of lesbian feminism as marginal to art history, and even to women's archiving projects, and the apparent abundance of lesbian-feminist history making within queer networks, both through community archives and online. Media studies scholar Kate Eichhorn calls this trend the "archival turn in feminism," in which social movements organize how their histories are told by collecting, organizing, interpreting, and archiving documents and ephemera.[20] Instagram's queer ephemera-sharing cultures are a case in point, particularly the popular account @h_e_r_s_t_o_r_y and their collaboration with the queer clothing manufacturer Otherwild. Their "The Future Is Female" T-shirt comes out of radical lesbian-feminist culture, but its connections to lesbian politics and life worlds are lost when the slogan is taken up in popular women's marches and sold on mugs at Urban Outfitters.[21]

Killjoy's Kastle responds to this tension – lesbian feminism's simultaneous presence and erasure – because even within conditions of abundance, problems in archiving lesbian history persist. As archivist-scholar Mary A. Caldera argues, lesbian archives overemphasize white, middle-class, urban activist histories.[22] *Killjoy's Kastle* satirized these structures in lesbian-feminist historiography but didn't always succeed in dismantling them. For example, while *Killjoy's Kastle*'s cast of performers was diverse in terms of gender identity, race, and age, many of the performers who animated the space came from cities – Pittsburgh, Berlin, Montreal, Winnipeg, San Francisco, Toronto, and LA – and many benefitted from the class mobilities or educational capital afforded to artists and academics. There is a kind of notoriety and attention that gets paid to these geographies and figures when lesbian feminism is historicized. To what extent is the question "What would be scary inside a lesbian haunted house, and who would be scared there?" the premise for an *inside* joke?[23] How might we invite others to come in or, at least, stand outside and take a look?

Part of our hope for this book is that it will continue to provide opportunities for *Killjoy's Kastle* to do this work as it circulates, is read, and gets taught in feminist classroom spaces where participants want to think about what we might do, or choose not to do, with the histories to which we are proximate. One of the most popular items for purchase in the kastle's Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppee was Mitchell's "I'm with Problematic" T-shirt, a parody of the frat-humour classic "I'm with Stupid." The joke here is that something, or someone, is always a problem when feminists come together – this is both

the nightmare of feminist collaboration and the engine that keeps a project going.

Killjoy's Kastle reckons with who is made central, or marginal, within lesbian-feminist histories. These are the kinds of questions we must ask when inheriting or refusing histories that are often frustrating, painful, or just plain unrecognizable to many. As S. Trimble's contribution to this volume shows, *Killjoy's Kastle* draws on gothic traditions in a "conjuring and remixing of dated stereotypes" that "propel the installation into a risky engagement with dominant narratives of second-wave feminism as white-centric and transphobic." For Trimble, whose chapter explores *Killjoy's Kastle* within a broader study of how queer, gothic hauntings of domestic spaces can shake up white kinship structures, the house, as a contested structure, is the key to inheriting the past differently. Trimble writes, "The haunted house is the spatial complement of the lesbian feminist, a figure that's always inhabited – possessed, perhaps – by more than just one story." In this house, these houses, who is problematic, when are they problematic, and for whom?

So much of the lesbian-feminist history evoked here trades in stereotypes, hearsay, rumour, gossip, and legend. It's not just that the pressures of inheritance are scary but that the relics of this activism are apparitional, like the haunted house of *At Home* that may or may not have existed. As feminist historian Michelle Moravec asks, How might we use different methodologies to unghost these figures, and trace their connections, effects, and legacies?[24] In her essay on Jamal's kastle gravestones in London, Grant frames the closings of black feminist organizations and spaces as significant in retrospect because they signal broader processes of transition, gentrification, burnout, forgetting, and remembering.

There are times, though, when something ends because its time has come. Perhaps new generations of queers committed to transfeminist practices no longer see themselves in the work: "This is not my history." Theorizing this problem, feminist film historian Roxanne Samer argues that present-day feminists may not "understand these archives' preservations in the same light that their archivists do or initially did. Their politics are usually not the same, and they often refuse to consider themselves extensions or continuations of the women's movement. However, that need not mean that their interest in past feminisms wanes."[25] This book uses *Killjoy's Kastle* to ask what kinds of remainders lesbian feminism leaves when its specific iterations become untimely and then die. How does it haunt, and what do we do

with these old ghosts? What do they do with us, given media studies scholar (and L.A. performer) Alexandra Juhasz's assertion, cited by Samer, that we are not who they imagined us to be?[26]

Killjoy's Kastle is, in some respects, an experiment in bringing what Love elsewhere has called the unfashionable, "gentle, angry dinosaur" that is the lesbian feminist into the present.[27] What if we put her on display, let her go a bit wild? The contributors to this volume, inspired by their encounters with, participation in, or readings of *Killjoy's Kastle,* provide many models for doing something with lesbian feminism. Their approaches, methods, and questions are varied, as are their relationships to the space, and reading across their work, a complex story about this project and what is has meant emerges.

From its inception to execution and archiving, *Killjoy's Kastle* is a powerful collaborative project. Many people worked together as a team to develop the script, make the art, organize the event, and now create this book. *Inside Killjoy's Kastle* introduces the project by pulling in many different voices or parts. One of the strategies that make this multiplicity of voices possible is the inclusion of writing by eleven artists who participated in the haunted house. We asked them to write about their experiences, memories, and reflections. These pieces are meant to supplement the academic essays in the collection with stories of having been there. This book also includes more photographs than a typical scholarly collection in order to provide as much visual context for the reader as possible. Seen through the lenses of several different photographers, this visual perspective on *Killjoy's Kastle* is also multivalent.

The roles of academic, artist, photographer, designer, documentarian, archivist, performer, and editor bleed into one another in the context of a project like this one. Helena Reckitt's deep, interview-based account of how key collaborators worked together to make *Killjoy's Kastle* happen explores and makes visible these accounts and connections. Situated within Reckitt's broader research on collective, caring practices within queer and feminist contemporary art projects, the essay exemplifies how *Killjoy's Kastle* means different things to those who have participated in it and, we imagine, also to those who encounter it here for the first time.

"Collaboration" is too stubby of a term for this endeavour, and "community" is too overused. We are desperate for another word that could be applied to the kind of collectivity that is part collaboration, part community, part movement and created by

a group of people as a force they offer to a wider public. As we know from the conversations about this work that happened on social media, "community" as a term is not specific enough, too thorny. Not everyone feels the same way or shows up for the same reasons. Perhaps a better word would be "spree": a moment of engulfing exuberance. "Community" and "collaboration" are rigid scholarly terms that become buckets of grant-speak, losing their force. As the documentation of a performance, this book necessarily fixes much of this work under the rubric of "collaboration," but we want to mark the gaps in that term.[28] *Killjoy's Kastle* is a classroom, an archive, an art exhibition, an insertion.

This lesbian-feminist haunted house received incredible public support from audiences, curators, participants, and funders. It also met with a lot of resistance and continues to occupy a place of uncertainty; that is why it lives in a storage locker in the middle of nowhere and why this book is necessary. Keeping the project's politics alive means situating the work in the various hostile environments it negotiated, from right-wing media to the conflicts among queers that the project inspired online. Through this book, *Killjoy's Kastle* can continue to stand firm in its imperfection and its resolve to open up questions about what we might do with the lesbian histories we are asked to remember and even revive. What methods can we find to be "with problematic" in all our anger, joy, critique, love, and good humour. As Ahmed writes, "in order to survive what we come up against, in order to build worlds from shattered pieces, we need a revival of lesbian feminism."[29] In the haunted house, this revival is not quite absolute; zombified – made undead but not quite lively – she has to live in our world but is not exactly *of it,* the perfect position from which to show us other versions of ourselves and the institutions and political imaginaries we desire.

NOTES

1 In 2016, a Chicago church planned (and then cancelled) a hell house that was to depict the Pulse nightclub and Charleston Massacre as well as the old favourite, the botched abortion room. These biblically informed horror scenes were to take place in an elementary school. See Jenny Noyes, "Chicago School Cancels 'Christian' Haunted House That Depicted Pulse Nightclub Massacre for Halloween," *Sydney Morning Herald,* October 31, 2016.

2 The post and website have been taken down by the author, so we have chosen not to cite the blog directly.

3 Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

4 Specifically, at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, director Stephen Borys was upset by the installation and demanded that one of the sculptures be shifted so that the stylized vulva of one she-beast would not be the first thing audiences saw when they entered the space. With the installation shoved into a small gallery space beside a large display of the gallery's collection of domestic silver, it was as though the museum was surprised and repulsed by the work and did not know what to do with it.

5 Canada's Civil Marriages Act was finalized in 2005.

6 This idea of temporal drag is borrowed from Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

7 *Womanhouse* was produced by Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, and students in CalArts' Feminist Art Program.

8 Personal correspondence with Allyson Mitchell, August 15, 2017.

9 The concept of feminist eventfulness as a temporal mode for doing feminist historiography is explored in Samantha Thrift, "Feminist Eventfulness: Boredom and the 1984 Canadian Leadership Debate on Women's Issues," *Feminist Media Studies* 13, 3 (2011): 406–21.

10 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

11 Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56, 4 (1997): 11–18.

12 Here, we are thinking not only of Ahmed's body of work on feminist activism and affect but also of Bobby Noble's work on acrimony and inheritance in *Sons of the Movement: FtMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-queer Cultural Landscape* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2006), Clare Hemmings's *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), and more popular accounts such as Roxane Gay's *Bad Feminist* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014).

13 See Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

14 See Cassius Adair and Lisa Nakamura, "The Digital Afterlives of *This Bridge Called My Back:* Women of Color Feminism, Digital Labor, and Networked Pedagogy," *American Literature* 89, 2 (2017): 255–78.

15 Syrus Marcus Ware, "All Power to All People: Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 4, 2 (2017): 170–80, and Rio Rodriguez, "Mapping QTBIPOC Toronto" (master's thesis, York University, 2016).

16 See, for example, Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 2001 [1993]), and Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

17 Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

18 Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), and Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

19 On imagining otherwise, characteristic of queer of colour critique, see Ashon Crawley's work, for example, "Otherwise Movements," *New Inquiry,* January 19, 2015.

20 Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).

21 The slogan is specifically from a Labyris Books T-shirt worn by Alix Dobkin and photographed by Liza Cowan in 1975. See https://otherwild.com/products/the-future-is-female-t-shirt?variant=5122173569.

22 Mary A. Caldera, "The Lesbian in the Archives: An Overview of the History," in *Perspectives on Women's Archives,* ed. Tanya Zanish-Belcher with Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 231.

23 A further illustration of this is that when the right-wing Sun TV News discovered the haunted house towards the end of its Toronto run, its "newscaster," Michael Coren, read directly from the artists' statement, as if it were his own op-ed that he was using to describe the project because its inside joke was so seemingly illegible to him.

24 Michelle Moravec, "Unghosting Apparitional (Lesbian) Histories," *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 5 (2014), https://adanewmedia.org/2014/07/issue5-moravec/.

25 Roxanne Samer, "Revising 'Re-vision': Documenting 1970s Feminisms and the Queer Potentiality of Digital Feminist Archives," *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 5 (2014), https://adanewmedia.org/2014/07/issue5-samer/.

26 Alexandra Juhasz, "A Process Archive: The Grand Circularity of Woman's Building Video," in *Doin' It in Public: Feminism and Art at the Woman's Building,* ed. Meg Linton, Sue Maberry, and Elizabeth Pulsinelli (Los Angeles: Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, 2012), 109.

27 Heather Love, "Review: A Gentle Angry People," *Transition* 84 (2000): 98–113.

28 It is important in the context of this discussion of collaboration to provide a clarification for some of the essays and short pieces in the book, which at times slip between the authorship of Allyson Mitchell as sole primary artist and of *Killjoy's Kastle* as a co-authored artwork by Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue. This has to do with many factors, including the inclusion of Logue as coauthor in London and Los Angeles and, in retrospect, in Toronto. The artists acknowledge that this do-over is messy but make no apologies for the untidiness that this switch makes for undoing simple narratives of a very complicated art piece and questions of authorship in general. When you make something on this scale and in such an intimate and all-encompassing manner it defies, confuses, and improves the typical authorship protocols found in contemporary art.

29 Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life,* 213.

RISING FROM THE DEAD: INCEPTION

1
Scaling Up and Sharing Out Dyke Culture: Killjoy's Kastle's Haunted Block Party

HEATHER LOVE

I think that dyke culture is really amazing.

– ALLYSON MITCHELL[1]

Ariel Goldberg's 2016 *The Estrangement Principle* is an attempt to understand what the "queer" in "queer art" means. Reading books and visiting rooms where the word "queer" is used, Goldberg documents its appearances, hoping to pin it down by accumulating examples. Goldberg is a New York City–based poet and artist with a bad case of archive fever; magnetized by the term "queer," Goldberg is also put off by the term's marketability. In a series of deeply ambivalent reflections, Goldberg, who identifies as a "transdyke," elaborates what is sustaining in "queer" while keeping an eye on its failures and exclusions. Goldberg situates the term in close proximity to both "lesbian" and "transgender," sometimes staging ludic encounters between these terms ("the word 'lesbian' … [is] an heirloom kept on the mantel of an electronic fireplace, the flames below glowing with the word 'queer'") and sometimes distinguishing between them in the spirit of critique ("the word 'queer' crucially includes and affirms non-binary and trans people in ways the word 'dyke' has not").[2] In *The Estrangement Principle,* "queer" is, as ever, a rogue element, a joker in the pack: sometimes good, sometimes bad, but most often elusive and unpredictable.[3] But Goldberg's ambivalence towards "queer" cannot match their ambivalence towards "lesbian," which does hard service mediating intergenerational relations and the longing for community. "When I began writing," Goldberg observes, "I was desperate to

feel swaddled in dyke mentorship. But I never admitted that to myself, exactly. Instead, I did things like get Judith Butler's haircut."[4]

Such fervent longings tend to go unaccommodated, their very intensity a sign that they can never be satisfied. What is unusual about *The Estrangement Principle* is Goldberg's willingness to see this disappointment as an intellectual and aesthetic resource.[5] The indeterminacy of "queer" has made it an appealing term especially within the art world and academia. In such contexts, "lesbian" is understood either as the blandly denotative "L" of mainstream media and politics or as an embarrassing holdover from a superseded stage of feminism. But, as Goldberg shows, attempts to phase out the term "lesbian" neglect both historical and contemporary overlaps in people's lives, their affiliations, and their communities. Goldberg sets "lesbian" and "dyke" alongside "queer," allowing these terms to resonate and to interrupt each other.[6] *The Estrangement Principle* engages lesbian experience and representation, pulling back the curtain on personal and intellectual struggle with this inheritance. As Goldberg acknowledges, the desire to be "swaddled in dyke mentorship" can often boomerang into feelings of resentment and aggression. By avowing this desire and its disappointment, Goldberg treats "lesbian" as a vital and volatile term that connects queer, feminist, and trans cultures across time.

In her work with discarded feminist art, politics, and feelings over the past two decades, Allyson Mitchell has created a context where such engagements are both possible and necessary. Incorporating a vast array of materials, media, and images, Mitchell has illuminated and amplified the term "lesbian," addressing both its failings and its untapped potentials. Her work provides a crucial point of reference and an archive for emerging queer, lesbian, and trans scholars navigating the shoals of contemporary identity and activism. "Deep Lez," Mitchell's widely circulated artist statement, argues that it is possible to value lesbian-feminist history while acknowledging its essentialism, transexclusivity, and racism. "Deep Lez is right this minute and it is rooted in herstories and theories that came before," Mitchell writes. "It is taking the most relevant and capable ideas and using them as tools to create new ways of thinking, while still clinging to more radical politics that have already happened but definitely aren't over yet." Mitchell suggests that what is "dated" is not over and that contemporaneity and relevance are not the same thing. The past is not an inert but an active agent, a living resource for contemporary queer life. Mitchell describes this vision of politics

as "part quilting bee, part public relations campaign, and part Molotov cocktail."[7]

The lesbian-feminist past that Mitchell invokes in major projects such as *Ladies Sasquatch* (2006–10) or *A Girl's Journey to the Well of Forbidden Knowledge* (2010) is not far removed from the present. And yet, because this history has been renounced both in the culture at large and in third-wave queer and feminist frameworks, coming upon it feels uncanny, like an encounter with the dead. In "Deep Lez," Mitchell acknowledges the gothic element of her aesthetic practice: "I make lesbian feminist monsters using abandoned domestic handicraft." In the large-scale installation *Ladies Sasquatch,* for example, Mitchell uses cast-off or devalued materials to create a "coven" of imposing "lesbian feminist Sasquatch monsters." These shaggy, multicoloured figures, constructed out of discarded textiles and taxidermy materials, are based on images from vintage Playboys as well as the bodies of contemporary fat activists. They recall disregarded Indigenous and feminist histories, invoking but also reworking the fascination and contempt that swirls around racialized and feminized spectacle. As Mitchell writes on her website, "*Ladies Sasquatch* is meant to work as a point of departure for thinking about decolonized, queer, politicized bodies, sexuality and communities. In an attempt to imagine different sexual currencies *Ladies Sasquatch* valorizes cellulite, dirty fingernails, tattoos, big butts, fangs, collectivity and collaboration."

Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House, Mitchell's 2013 installation with Deirdre Logue, expands this investment in lesbian-feminist monsters to create a total environment of campy horror. As in the popular tradition of the Halloween haunted house, or its recasting as a hell house, *Killjoy's Kastle* constitutes a world, and it demands that visitors give themselves over to a potentially overwhelming or alienating experience. Because of the mild nature of the lesbian-feminist dangers to be faced ("Back Tickling and Hair Braiding Indoctrination Ahead"; "Accountability around the Corner"), the experience is not meant to inspire actual terror but rather a squirmy mix of recognition, hilarity, and discomfort. Mitchell and Logue point to what is "troubling" in lesbian feminism, taking up aspects of second-wave history that people have tried to put behind them and turning them into stumbling blocks – in some cases, literally ("Don't slip on the pussy juice!").

Mitchell describes the project in an interview with Matt Stromberg: "We're using camp aesthetics, sculpture, installation, and performance to undermine those ridiculous stereotypes,

but also to investigate some real monstrosities of queer activism and feminist organizing." She continues, "We're trying to strike a balance between not only being celebratory, but also trying to dig up some of the more painful ghosts and spirits that are part of our legacies."[8] Mitchell describes the work of the house as a matter of digging up ghosts and spirits; by allowing oneself to be haunted, Mitchell suggests, you can find your way to long-buried features of the lesbian past.[9] For some visitors to the kastle, the pain of such revivals was not mitigated by recontextualization: some visitors called out the installation for repeating the violence of trans and racial exclusion. Mitchell and Logue made such dynamics explicit, turning conflicts that are often aired online into the basis for a collective and immersive experience. We might see this process as an exorcism, or as a kind of apotropaic magic, which fends off danger by making it visible and explicit. Like the evil eye or the tradition of Halloween itself, *Killjoy's Kastle* explicitly names and pictures the culture's worst fears about lesbianism (including those held by lesbians themselves). This confrontation frees up the feminist past for other uses.

Killjoy's Kastle offers many critiques, both straightforward and tongue-in-cheek, of second-wave feminism. But it is not a hatchet job. Mitchell and Logue's affection for dyke culture is clear and is grounded in recognition of its ongoing marginalization. One key horror trope, the cemetery, is deployed in the kastle to memorialize the losses of lesbian, gay, and queer culture. In the eerie green light of the Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas, cartoonish tombstones feature the names of defunct organizations and publications, including *The Ladder, On Our Backs,* and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, with the dates of birth and death indicated. Given the controversies surrounding some of these organizations (particularly the transexclusionary policy at Michigan), some visitors may not be particularly broken up by their demise.[10] Still, the graveyard is crowded and provides stark evidence of lesbian culture's chronic marginality. The fact that the fear and disgust inspired by lesbianism is disproportionate to any actual threat it poses is underlined here and elsewhere by the hyperbolic form of the haunted house. In an interview with Caroline Miranda, Mitchell expresses befuddlement over this state of affairs: "What is so scary about us – these queer nerds?"[11] *Killjoy's Kastle,* amplifying this threat to absurd proportions, suggests that it is lesbian culture that stands in need of protection, both from the homophobia and misogyny of the general culture and from the condescension of contemporary activists who know better.

"Protection" in the context of *Killjoy's Kastle* takes the form of loving attention to the aesthetics and production details of the space. Mitchell's artwork has long been characterized by thorny affection for the superseded and out of date. In its mixture of irony and sincerity, attachment and critique, *Killjoy's Kastle* can be understood as camp. But Mitchell and Logue further mine a vein of discomfort and bodily intensity, thus giving a lesbian twist to the gay tradition of camp. In particular, the use of overly familiar (central core) imagery recalls what Ann Cvetkovich describes as "the slightly too close embrace of shag rugs and crocheted afghans."[12] Mitchell and Logue make copious use of that imagery in tableaux such as the Giant Bearded Clam and Her Familiar, the women performing vaginal self-exams in the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers den, and in the goddess giving birth to a million different kinds of pussy. But if the vagina was once invoked in a lesbian-feminist context as a straightforward symbol of female empowerment, its appearance in the haunted house is more complicated. Mitchell and Logue pay tribute to the work of consciousness raising and the women's health movement, but they also suggest how much the context of female empowerment has changed. The pussy in *Killjoy's Kastle* is not one: because of the inclusion of trans figures, images, and text, the vagina is treated as a trope or a signifier rather than as a biological or political desideratum. In addition, since *Killjoy's Kastle* plays on the fear of women's bodies, the feeling tone of the vagina is ambiguous. As Fran Schechter writes, *Killjoy's Kastle* "riffs on the scary environments set up by carnivals and right-wing Christians. Instead of the usual fears of gore and death, Mitchell plays with our queasiness around female sexuality and queer otherness."[13]

This focus on discomfort is evident in Mitchell's 2012 project, *Creep Lez,* which prominently featured the slogan (printed next to the icon of a pointing hand) "I'm with problematic."[14] The tone of this statement, emblazoned on tie-dyed T-shirts, suggests resignation, ambivalence, and wry humour. It acknowledges complicity and impurity and suggests that, since stereotypes are inevitable, we might engage them rather than disavow them or try to clean them up. But it also suggests proximity, or being with: the fact is that you are tied to "problematic" not only ideologically but also in bodily and material ways. Rather than avoid such entanglements (if such a thing were even possible), Mitchell and Logue create a space where it is possible to be safely in proximity to what is uncomfortable, alien, and even hated.

In its grand scale, its use of a popular form, and its interactive and immersive aesthetics, *Killjoy's Kastle* constitutes a scaling up

and sharing out of the experience of haunting and discomfort. Playing with scale has long been a part of both Mitchell's and Logue's individual practice and of their work together. Logue's video art centres on small domestic objects and body parts. In the 2012 video *Tiny Hooves,* banal and everyday objects such as fingernails, crystals, and Kleenex appear newly strange; Logue uses shifts in perspective and shifts in scale to make visible the perplexities of everyday life.[15] The work that Mitchell and Logue have undertaken together – for instance, the video *Hers Is Still a Dank Cave: Crawling toward a Queer Horizon* – employs similar effects, juxtaposing the miniature and the gigantic to create surreal but nonetheless cozy effects.[16] Using green-screen technology, Mitchell and Logue picture themselves encased in homespun fabrics, as queer homunculi scooting across kitchen counters, sunk into shag. Scale shifting is important to Mitchell and Logue's work in a broader sense as well, in their commitment to community and the arts of living. In their curation of events and exhibits at the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG), located in their house, Mitchell and Logue share space, time, food, conversation, and other resources with a broad public.[17]

Mitchell's solo work is often described as maximalist. The label reflects the variety of her materials, her embrace of reference against abstraction, and the sheer scale of her installations. But maximalism can also be said to describe the widening scope of her practice, which over the years has expanded to address larger and more diverse communities. Throughout this work, and in *Killjoy's Kastle,* Mitchell does not dilute her message or respond to the demand for more universal or "relatable" artwork. Instead, she simply proceeds as if an insistently minor lesbian-feminist culture were the dominant culture. This assertion of "Lesbian Rule" against all evidence to the contrary constitutes a good part of the humour and the impact of Mitchell's art. In her "Deep Lez" statement, Mitchell comments on the significance of community and politics as both the origin and the ultimate destination of her work. She writes:

> In a short time, Deep Lez grew beyond my own practice, and started taking hold beyond my immediate world. The language of Deep Lez, for example, has been adopted by those at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival who lobby for trans solidarity. Here, Deep Lez is mobilized to move radical lesbianism and identification with (or allegiance to) trans communities out of the realm of either/or and into the space of and/both. Deep Lez has been used as

> a platform for art exhibitions, parties, performances and other gatherings in which lesbian identification is to be explored as a relevant and strategic site of queer urban politics.

We might take Mitchell's naming of "Deep Lez" as a platform literally, since she has not only contributed to conversations about queer, lesbian, and trans politics but also created spaces where such conversations can take place. Mitchell furnishes these spaces, lining them with hook rugs, throw pillows, and fake fur, creating temporary environments where visitors can chat, lounge around, and lie down. Although these spaces are small, they are designed to hold larger histories. The play with scale is foregrounded in the title of Mitchell's *Micro Maxi Pad Cinemas* (2010), which she describes in the following terms: "The historical significance of the menstrual hut as a location meant to sequester away 'unclean' women, the often shamed and individual activity of television watching or the corporate rainbow of Pride industries are transformed through these cozy materials into an inviting space of intimate yet public viewing."[18]

Intimate yet public, micro but maxi. The *Micro Maxi Pad* exemplifies Mitchell's movement between the largest and smallest scales, riffing on the cozy and elastic space of female genitalia. Such installations acknowledge widespread ambivalence about women's bodies but also lighten the mood around these desired and dreaded parts. "I appreciate humor in art," Mitchell has said, "because it allows for … a softer landing pad for some difficult ideas."[19] Softness is a key aspect of Mitchell's materials and of her practice more generally. Cvetkovich has drawn a link between Mitchell's maximalist sensibilities and her fat activism, and we might build on her insight to consider softness more broadly as an emotional and physical quality of yielding and making space for others.[20] Maximalism for Mitchell is about letting it all hang out, but it is also about inviting everyone in; it is about valuing the good, the bad, and the ugly; and it is about centring imperfection and the laughter that accommodates it. The invitation that Mitchell extends is an act of generosity and inclusion, but it is not an invitation on any terms. You have to submit to "Lesbian Rule" to participate, to take your seat inside a busy, plush, and talkative vagina. The fact that these vaginas are so often lined with teeth suggests that this environment is not merely anodyne. Sitting in the cave means sitting with acrimony.

These expansive aesthetics were in full effect in *Killjoy's Kastle,* which was not so much a haunted house as a haunted

block party. Mitchell and Logue ramped up both the intimacy and the publicity, aiming big and inviting all comers. The installation created the kind of collective and anarchic space that has been so central to lesbian and gay and queer and trans culture and attempted, through its incorporation of dialogue and feedback, to model community as an open rather than a closed system. The collaborative production of the installation, the carnival atmosphere that prevailed, and its fuzzy borders (both the Toronto and Los Angeles sites included casual outdoor hang-out space) all worked to blow open a rarefied aesthetic experience. The loose tour text followed by a host of improvising Demented Women's Studies Professors sometimes caused controversy, and the space devoted to "lesbian hardcore processing" at the end of the tour turned *Killjoy's Kastle* into a community space designed for the airing of conflict. This discussion was extended into debates regarding transinclusion and the whiteness of lesbian culture that took place on blogs and *Killjoy Kastle*'s Facebook event page during and after the 2013 Toronto run of the show.

The honest discussion of difficult topics is one of the key practices that *Killjoy's Kastle* attempts to recoup from the lesbian-feminist past. From the published exchanges between Adrienne Rich and her critics at the end of her essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980) to Sarah Schulman's 2016 book *Conflict Is Not Abuse,* such practices have long been central to feminist and lesbian-feminist communities. Although fighting in these worlds has often been bitter, the commitment to engagement in the face of disagreement remains strong. In interviews, Mitchell has repeatedly described her investment in inviting and enabling difficult conversations. It seems clear that the large scale and interactivity of *Killjoy's Kastle* opened it to controversy and that creating such dialogue is one of the aims of the show. The debates that took place after Toronto tested the limits of such engagement and accountability. Being "inclusive" is a losing game, since every representation excludes by definition. Furthermore, the attempt to be inclusive can feel like a management of, rather than true openness to, difference. But it is not clear that we can do better in terms of community ethics. Throughout the process, Mitchell and Logue maintained their commitment to the exchange and dissent, leaving time for discussion in the kastle and getting out of the way to let others air their grievances online afterwards.

Commitment to ethical and engaged disagreement has been difficult to maintain in a moment of online trolling. Academic feminist and queer communities have been affected by this

climate and by increasing competition and professionalization that value individual achievement over collective aims. In an essay on Amber Hollibaugh and Cherríe Moraga's 1981 dialogue, "What We're Rollin around in Bed With," Joan Lubin laments the decline of a feminist culture of dissent. Describing the practice of consciousness raising as the "building up of a collective consciousness out of the ground of divergent experience," Lubin seeks to imagine anew "the work of teaching and learning as a material practice of reinhabiting the space of collectivity: learning in public."[21] With *Killjoy's Kastle,* Mitchell and Logue contributed materially to the construction of such a space of collectivity. Embracing an aesthetics of triggering, as well as an ethics of care and responsiveness, they suggest that being vulnerable to one another and engaged in nontoxic conflict are key tools of a feminist, queer, or, indeed, any other movement. To see Mitchell and Logue's collaborative fantasia of the feminist past, in all its messy glory, as essentialist or limiting is to miss the point. The radical project of *Killjoy's Kastle* is to scale up the marginal world of lesbian feminism, to share out as widely as possible the practices and sensations of this minor utopia. That this dream has expired, that its promises arrive already broken, wards off the violence that is endemic to most utopias. Mitchell and Logue imagine a world in which lesbianism is here and now but has not lost its air of marginality, grievance, resentment, idiosyncrasy, irony, anger, or estrangement. It is in this fractious world that we have to learn to live together, our bodies jostling with incomplete permission.

NOTES

1 Irma Villafuerte, interview with Allyson Mitchell, *Las Perlas Del Mar News,* May 12, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjyHSX_IdPY.

2 Ariel Goldberg, *The Estrangement Principle* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2016). See "trans-dyke" (151), "electronic fireplace" (4), and "non-binary and trans people" (147).

3 The case for the value of the unquantifiability of the word "queer" is made most persuasively in Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?," *PMLA* 110, 3 (1995): 343–49. In a rethinking of the social science origins of the field, I questioned this point of view. See Love, "Doing Being Deviant: Deviance Studies, Description, and the Queer Ordinary" *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 26, 1 (2015): 74–95. Also see Joan Lubin, "'Tired of Cruising? Try *Numbers!*': Pulp Sexology and the Literature of Quantity" (unpublished manuscript, courtesy of author).

4 Goldberg, *The Estrangement Principle,* 60.

5 The fact that such disappointments are enlivening rather than toxic may reflect the fact that Goldberg, at the time of writing, had outlived them: "When I first began this book, a friend warned me about how I was using the word 'scene,' not 'community,' in my understanding of social and artistic landscapes. I asked, 'What's the difference?' not yet

understanding how cynical and critical the word 'scene' sounded. Like I was locked out. But really, I was young(er) and hadn't been in one place long enough to contribute to various communities built around shared interests and experiences. I could only have been compelled to write this book at that acute moment of estrangement" (ibid.).

6 On the overlapping temporalities of such terms, and the longings and resentments they inspire, see Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

7 Allyson Mitchell, "Deep Lez," *Feminine Moments – Queer Feminist Art Worldwide,* http://www.femininemoments.dk/blog/deep-lez.

8 Matt Stromberg, "A Queer Feminist Haunted House Filled with Riot Ghouls and Poly-amorous Vampires," *Hyperallergic,* October 21, 2015, https://hyperallergic.com/245803/a-queer-feminist-haunted-house-filled-with-riot-ghouls-and-polyamorous-vampires.

9 On historical haunting as a tactile practice, see Elizabeth Freeman, "Deep Lez," in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 93. Writing about Mitchell's installations, Ann Cvetkovich describes attempts to "create alternative spaces and built environments in which daily life can be literally felt and sensed differently." See Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 188. Allowing oneself to be haunted in this context implies adopting not only an ideology but also a practice of living and a retraining of the senses.

10 The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (1975–2015) developed a policy of only allowing "womyn who at birth were deemed female, who were raised as girls, and who identify as womyn" to attend. Debates about transgender inclusion at the festival crystallized long-brewing conflicts between lesbian feminists and transgender and queer activists over the definition of womanhood. See Lisa Vogel, "Letter to the Community – April 11, 2013," Festival Letters and Statements to the Community, *Michigan Womyn's Music Festival,* http://michfest.com/letter-to-the-community-4_11_13.

11 Caroline A. Miranda, "Inside West Hollywood's Feminist Haunted House: Zombie Folk Singers and Body-Positive Vampires," *Los Angeles Times,* October 16, 2015.

12 Cvetkovich is describing a gathering in Mitchell's installation *Hungry Purse: The Vagina Dentata in Late Capitalism* (see *Depression,* 188).

13 Fran Schechter, "Klever Kastle: Sexy Show Is Boo-tiful and Fun," *NOW,* October 24, 2013, https://nowtoronto.com/art-and-books/art/klever-kastle.

14 Allyson Mitchell, "Creep Lez, 2012," http://www.allysonmitchell.com/project.html?project=creep-lez.

15 Previews are available on Deirdre Logue's website, http://deirdrelogue.com/video/Tiny_Hooves.html.

16 In a catalogue essay about *Dank Cave,* I wrote about play with scale and perspective in the representation of a domestic lesbian utopia. See Love, "Low," catalogue essay for *I'm Not Myself at All,* exhibit by Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue, Agnes Etherington Art Gallery at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, May 2–August 9, 2015.

17 For instance, see the FAG's partnership with the nomadic gallery Younger Than Beyoncé, which has used their space to host exhibitions, workshops, and talks (www.ytbgallery.com).

18 Allyson Mitchell, "Micro Maxi Pad Cinemas, 2010," http://www.allysonmitchell.com/project.html?project=micro-maxipad.

19 Ellie Gordon-Moershel, "Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House," *PRX,* February 18, 2014, https://beta.prx.org/stories/111480.

20 Cvetkovich, *Depression,* 185.

21 Joan Lubin, "Lesbianism Is the Practice: Feminism's Queer Method," unpublished manuscript.

Lesbianizing the Institution: The Haunting Effects of Killjoy Hospitality at the Art Gallery of York University

EMELIE CHHANGUR

Let's be fair (and generous!). I never invited Allyson Mitchell to do a project. She invited me. She invited me, and by association the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU), into her house – her lesbian, feminist hell house – *as guests*. She said at our very first meeting: "I'm not asking for money. I simply want to feel supported and my project protected." She wanted into *our* house as well! Queering guest-host relations right from the get-go, Allyson became our host *and* our guest, and we became hers, hers and a coven of dedicated feminists who also demanded entrance through the front door (a bloody, fang-framed gaping wound of a passage, it turns out) hell-bent on remaining nightmarishly nonassimilated and, goddamn it, warmly *welcoming*.

The AGYU was open to Allyson's invitation to come inside. We reciprocated, without condition. We weren't asking for an outreach project or public program in order to "build and diversify audiences," just as Allyson wasn't asking us for money. Hospitality, after all, constitutes a kind of thinking that opens upon the new, the unknown, and the incalculable, and this kind of encounter would permit all of us to reassess the borderlines of our own comfort zones – without requiring something *in return*. And so the project began: nous entre, entre nous.

Once inside – I have to admit – we had to negotiate some pretty treacherous territory: from dodging giant bearded clam spray to a near fatal spill on some seriously slippery pussy juice. There were experiential obstacles as well: sneaking past the dank cave monster, who was lurking under the stairwell (in case you didn't know), and then dealing with the labyris/guillotine operator, or, more precisely, their whims (okay, okay, millennium upon millennium of persecution, ridicule, erasure, and abject misunderstanding would put anyone in a bad mood!), not to mention the structural issues of crossing bridges that didn't bridge because binaries were broken down![1] There was also all the down and dirty, nitty-gritty, and equally slippery institutional negotiations: getting insurance for an off-site project in spaces that were less than structurally sound and negotiating with equally dank landlords, who wouldn't return our phone calls or didn't want a short-term lease for a noncommercial lesbian hell house with "opening hours."

But we are already getting ahead of ourselves: the above description is the performance of past actions, and its tropes pertain to what, discursively at least, is well established – as stereotypes and as progressive (and rightfully celebrated) lesbianisms. *Killjoy's Kastle* was intended to house the haunting *and* conjure new forms of feminist sexuality and to queer concepts of community and activism: to *welcome* the killjoy – and thus "criticality" – *into the home*. Wrapping an American gothic hell house tradition with yard upon illustrated, elaborately decorated yard of spirited craft aesthetic, *Killjoy's Kastle* not only sought to (purposely) scare the shit out of the house guests who dared enter its "dirty" world view (as any good hell house should), it was *designed* to do something new, to do something else, and to do it elsewhere – in a home, Allyson and Deirdre's home, in fact, where the project was caringly crafted over the course of fifteen fabulous, plus-sized months. This is where the

principles and strategies of feminist skill sharing and social organizing were enacted and not just symbolically staged or represented.

Beginning as a series of community consultations with lesbian, queer, and trans individuals and their allies, *Killjoy's Kastle*'s research phase turned into town hall–style sessions that took over Allyson and Deirdre's living quarters, spilled out onto the porch, and overflowed into the backyard (sometimes even into the side alley, much to the chagrin of the not-so-neighbourly neighbours). Informally, these gatherings had a real effect on the Toronto scene. Over time, research into the past and present of feminist thought (its structures and antistructures alike) gave shape to a new, multigenerational, and intersectional feminist community dedicated less to "being in the house" than to building it anew – from the ground up. By the time the props, costumes, decorations, and sets were being constructed, a team of young thinkers, emerging artists, and curious (though not entirely convinced) feminists from across Toronto – including students fulfilling course credits and paid internships or work-study placements – had *arrived*. Crafting alongside Allyson and Deirdre and their posse of more established artists and academics, this group of eager learners got hands-on experience full on: intergenerational debates over many, many homemade gluten- and dairy-free meals lovingly prepared by both hosts and guests – the bridges constructed through these encounters no longer relied on binaries for their logic – meets DIY aesthetics. As an ad hoc coven and continuum, this dedicated core practised a style of making that mimicked the craft techniques used to create the rug-hooked, crocheted, and stitched-together artworks, in the process becoming close-knit social networks. This way of working was dynamic and nimble: new perspectives and ideas were incorporated into the project in real time as they were generated. At a time when a new generation views feminism as a project of their (great-)

grandparent's, *Killjoy's* production phase rallied together and inspired a whole host of future feminists poised to take over the kastle, metaphorically speaking, of course.

Killjoy's Kastle wasn't simply intervening in the content of the evangelical Christian hell house, however. The project didn't simply reimagine this genre's performer-animated installations – which year after year showcase the same gruesome retributions for the "sins" of fornication, abortion, suicide, and (insert eye roll here) same-sex relationships – as an end in itself (as worthwhile as this is). Allyson radically altered the genre's frame and structure, openly "othering" its principles by making *the making* of "the house" the transformative moment of experience. Over the course of these fifteen plus months, they turned the hell house scenario into a meaningful form and forum with intrinsic and collective value that moved feminist discourse beyond the "representation" of a politic. The making of *Killjoy's Kastle* was a processual, participatory, and performative form of pedagogy that pointed to something important about the practice of (re)making ready-mades.

When constituted as a practice – not defined as a concept or bogged down by power dynamics (a.k.a. liberated by feminist [un]making) – hospitality becomes a means through which we might transcend fixed notions of belonging and complicate concepts of ownership without predetermined goals. For example, in Allyson's model of invitation, it was more likely that the AGYU would become "lesbianized" than *Killjoy's Kastle* would become institutionalized! And while invitations are always already a kind of structure that can obfuscate hospitality's (scary) processual potential, why not welcome a knock at the door? (The knock is the noise that unsettles; it comes before even the knocker is known.) Implicating ourselves in the project's process was a productive form of perversion that mirrored Allyson's arrival on our doorstep: instead of simply "showing" *Killjoy's Kastle* at the AGYU, we welcomed those

processes, points of view, and polyvocal practices so intrinsic – and challenging – to the making of *Killjoy's Kastle* into *our home*. Practising hospitality meant "instituting" the processual pedagogy of the art project by (un)structuring gallery procedures to meet its methodological demands. While structures make things conditional; processes open them up to what can't yet be known: a nascent knock at the door that attracts our curiosity. *Killjoy's Kastle* modelled a form of radical hospitality that opened a door at the AGYU.

This is a kind of meaning (making) that *takes place*, though not simply as a matter of happening or of fixing a location: this is not about insides and outsides. This is a kind of meaning that takes *the place of*: it is a re-placing. Over the course of the project's production phase, the AGYU had to remain open to change while bearing witness to the project's own transformations (and stay poised as it veered off into unknown directions). This is a practice that I call in-reach. By incorporating different kinds of cultural and aesthetic influences, different forms of social organization and economies, and differing cultural contexts and forms of expression *into* the gallery, in-reach is intended to transform the very nature and function of the art institution from within. I began theorizing in-reach 2011 after the completion of *The Awakening*, my first (three-year) collaboration with the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. In this instance, it was important to incorporate into the gallery Indigenous world views, protocols, and processes and to adopt different modes of decision making, with the goal of arriving at consensus through discussions that involved careful listening and equal opportunities to speak and be heard. Many of my long-term participatory projects put pressure on the institution to problem solve differently. At the AGYU, this has meant rethinking how the gallery views its own trajectory, from operating on a project-by-project timeline to working as a seamless, ever-evolving entity in

which change is not always visible in spatial or representational terms.

In the case of *Killjoy's Kastle*, enacting hospitality as a curatorial and institutional practice meant applying the skills we learned in the process of making *Killjoy's Kastle* to all the functions and operations of the gallery, including how the staff inside it works. Replacing outreach with in-reach is an act of mutual trust: Deirdre and Allyson's lesbian hell house might have unsettled our home, but that just means its entrances and exits are all the more gaping and ready to welcome – with open fangs – the next knock at the door. Boo.

NOTE

1 Taken from the "Demented Women Studies Professor Tour Guide Script."

2
Feminist Killjoys (and Other Wilful Subjects)

SARA AHMED

It can be hard to remember becoming a feminist if only because it is hard to remember a time that you did not feel that way. Is it possible to have always been that way? Is it possible to have been a feminist right from the beginning? A feminist story can be a beginning. Perhaps we can make sense of the complexity of feminism as an activist space if we can give an account of how feminism becomes an object of feeling, as something we invest in, as a way of relating to the world, a way of making sense of how we relate to the world. When did "feminism" become a word that spoke not just to you, but spoke you, that spoke of your existence or even spoke you into existence? The sound of it, your sound? How do we gather by gathering around this word, sticking to each other by sticking to it? What did it mean, what does it mean, to hold onto "feminism," to fight under its name; to feel in its ups and downs, in its coming and goings, one's own ups and downs, one's own comings and goings?

What is my story? Like you, I have many. One way of telling my feminist story would be to begin with a table. Around the table, a family gathers. Always, we are seated in the same place: my father one end, myself the other, my two sisters to one side, my mother to the other. Always, we are seated this way, as if we are trying to secure more than our place. A childhood memory, yes. But it is also memory of an everyday experience in that quite literal sense of an experience that happened every day. An intense everyday: my father asking questions, my sisters and me answering them, my mother mostly silent. When does intensity become tension?

We begin with a table. Around this table, the family gathers, having polite conversations, where only certain things can be

brought up. Someone says something you consider problematic. You are becoming tense; it is becoming tense. How hard to tell the difference between what is you and what is it! You respond, carefully, perhaps. You say why you think what they have said is problematic. You might be speaking quietly, but you are beginning to feel "wound up," recognizing with frustration that you are being wound up by someone who is winding you up. In speaking up or speaking out, you upset the situation. That you have described what was said by another as a problem means you have created a problem. You become the problem you create.

To be the object of shared disapproval, those glances that can cut you up, cut you out. An experience of alienation can shatter a world. The family gathers around the table; these are supposed to be happy occasions. How hard we work to keep the occasion happy, to keep the surface of the table polished so that it can reflect back a good image of the family. So much you are not supposed to say, to do, to be, in order to preserve that image. If you say, or do, or be anything that does not reflect the image of the happy family back to itself, the world becomes distorted. You become the cause of a distortion. You are the distortion you cause. Another dinner, ruined. To become alienated from a picture can allow you to see what that picture does not and will not reflect.

Becoming a feminist can be an alienation from happiness (though not just that, not only that: oh, the joy of being able to leave the place you were given!). When we feel happiness in proximity to the right objects, we are aligned; we are facing the right way. You become alienated – out of line with an affective community – when you do not experience happiness from the right things. The gap between the affective value of an object and how we experience an object can involve a range of affects, which are directed by the modes of explanation we offer to fill this gap.

If we are disappointed by something that is supposed to make us happy, we generate explanations of why that thing is disappointing. We can be disappointed without ever being happy. Think of the wedding day, imagined as "the happiest day of your life" before it even happens! What happens *when* the day happens, *if* happiness does not happen? In her classic *The Managed Heart,* Arlie Russell Hochschild explores how if the bride is not happy on the wedding day, and feels "depressed and upset," then she is experiencing an "inappropriate affect," or is being affected inappropriately. You have to save the day by feeling right: "sensing a gap between the ideal feeling and the

actual feeling she tolerated, the bride prompts herself to be happy."[1] The capacity to "save the day" depends on the bride being able to make herself be affected in the right way, or at least being able to persuade others that she is being affected in the right way. To correct our feelings is to become disaffected from a former affection: the bride makes herself happy by stopping herself from being miserable. We learn from this example that it is possible not to inhabit fully one's own happiness, or even to be alienated from one's happiness, if the former affection remains lively, persisting as more than just memory, or if one is made uneasy by the very necessity of having to make oneself feel a certain way.

You cannot always close the gap between how you do feel and how you should feel. Behind the sharpness of this "cannot" is a world of possibility. Does activism act out of this gap, opening it up, loosening it up? Not to close the gap between what you do feel and what you should feel might begin as or with a sense of disappointment.

Disappointment can involve an anxious narrative of self-doubt (why I am not made happy by this? what is wrong with me?), or a narrative of rage, where the object that is "supposed" to make us happy is attributed as the cause of disappointment. Your rage might be directed against it, or spill out towards those that promised you happiness through the elevation of such objects as good. We become strangers, or affect aliens, in such moments.

Affect aliens are those who experience alien affects. You are unseated by the table of happiness. If you lose your seat what happens? Activism is often a matter of seats. The word "dissidence," for instance, derives from the Latin *dis* – "apart" + *sedere* "to sit." The dissident is the one who sits apart. Or the dissident is the one who would be unseated by taking up a place at the table: your seat is the site of disagreement. In *Queer Phenomenology* I was too obsessed with tables to notice the queerness of the chair. But I did suggest then that if we begin with the body that loses its chair, the world we describe might be quite different.[2]

KILLJOYS

To be unseated by the table of happiness might be to threaten not simply that table, but what gathers around it, what gathers on it. When you are unseated, you can even get in the way of those who are seated, those who want more than anything to keep their seats. To threaten the loss of the seat can be to kill the joy of the seated. How well we recognize the figure of the

feminist killjoy! How she makes sense! Let's take the figure of the feminist killjoy seriously. One feminist project could be to give the killjoy back her voice. Whilst hearing feminists as killjoys might be a form of dismissal, there is an agency that this dismissal rather ironically reveals. We can respond to the accusation with a "yes."

The figure of the feminist killjoy makes sense if we place her in the context of feminist critiques of happiness, of how happiness is used to justify social norms as social goods (a social good is what causes happiness, given happiness is understood as what is good). As Simone de Beauvoir described so astutely, "it is always easy to describe as happy a situation in which one wishes to place [others]."[3] Not to agree to stay in the place of this wish might be to refuse the happiness that is wished for. To be involved in political activism is thus to be involved in a struggle against happiness. Even if we are struggling for different things, even if we have different worlds we want to create, we might share what we come up against. Our activist archives are thus unhappy archives. Just think of the labour of critique that is behind us: feminist critiques of the figure of "the happy housewife"; black critiques of the myth of "the happy slave"; queer critiques of the sentimentalization of heterosexuality as "domestic bliss." The struggle over happiness provides the horizon in which political claims are made. We inherit this horizon.

To be willing to go against a social order, which is protected as a moral order, a happiness order is to be willing to cause unhappiness, even if unhappiness is not your cause. To be willing to cause unhappiness might be about how we live an individual life (not to choose "the right path" is readable as giving up the happiness that is presumed to follow that path). Parental responses to coming out, for example, can take the explicit form not of being unhappy about the child being queer but of *being unhappy about the child being unhappy.*[4] Even if you do not want to cause the unhappiness of those you love, a queer life can mean living with that unhappiness. To be willing to cause unhappiness can also be how we immerse ourselves in collective struggle, as we work with and through others who share our points of alienation. Those who are unseated by the tables of happiness can find each other.

So, yes, let's take the figure of the feminist killjoy seriously. Does the feminist kill other people's joy by pointing out moments of sexism? Or does she expose the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced, or negated under public signs of joy? Does bad feeling enter the room when somebody expresses anger about things, or could anger be the moment when the bad feelings that

circulate through objects get brought to the surface in a certain way? The feminist subject "in the room" hence "brings others down" not only by talking about unhappy topics such as sexism but by exposing how happiness is sustained by erasing the signs of not getting along. Feminists do kill joy in a certain sense: they disturb the very fantasy that happiness can be found in certain places. To kill a fantasy can still kill a feeling. It is not just that feminists might not be happily affected by what is supposed to cause happiness, but our failure to be happy is read as sabotaging the happiness of others.

We can consider the relationship between the negativity of the figure of the feminist killjoy and how certain bodies are "encountered" as being negative. Marilyn Frye argues that oppression involves the requirement that you show signs of being happy with the situation in which you find yourself. As she puts it, "it is often a requirement upon oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signify our docility and our acquiescence in our situation." To be oppressed requires that you show signs of happiness, as signs of being or having been adjusted. For Frye "anything but the sunniest countenance exposes us to being perceived as mean, bitter, angry or dangerous."[5]

To be recognized as a feminist is to be assigned to a difficult category and a category of difficulty. You are "already read" as "not easy to get along with" when you name yourself as a feminist. You have to show that you are not difficult through displaying signs of good will and happiness. Frye alludes to such experiences when she describes how "this means, at the very least, that we may be found to be 'difficult' or unpleasant to work with, which is enough to cost one's livelihood."[6] We can also witness an investment in feminist unhappiness (the myth that feminists kill joy because they are joy-less). There is a desire to believe that women become feminists *because* they are unhappy. This desire functions as a defence of happiness against feminist critique. This is not to say that feminists might not be unhappy; becoming a feminist might mean becoming aware of *just how much* there is to be unhappy about. Feminist consciousness could be understood as consciousness of unhappiness, a consciousness made possible by the refusal to turn away. My point here would be that feminists are read as being unhappy, such that situations of conflict, violence, and power are read as *about* the unhappiness of feminists, rather than being what feminists are unhappy *about*.

Political struggles can take place over the causes of unhappiness. We need to give a history to unhappiness. We need

to hear in unhappiness more than the negation of the "un." The history of the word "unhappy" might teach us about the unhappiness of the history of happiness. In its earliest uses, "unhappy" meant to cause misfortune or trouble. Only later did it come to mean to feel misfortunate, in the sense of wretched or sad. We can learn from the swiftness of translation from causing unhappiness to being described *as* unhappy. We must learn.

The word "wretched" has its own genealogy, coming from "wretch," meaning a stranger, exile, banished person. "Wretched" in the sense of "vile, despicable person" was developed in Old English and is said to reflect "the sorry state of the outcast." Can we rewrite the history of happiness from the point of view of the wretch? If we listen to those who are cast as wretched, perhaps their wretchedness would no longer belong to them. The sorrow of the stranger might give us a different angle on happiness not because it teaches us what it is like or must be like to be a stranger, but because it might estrange us from the very happiness of the familiar.

Phenomenology helps us explore how the familiar is that which is not revealed. A queer phenomenology shows how the familiar is not revealed to those who can inhabit it. For queers and other others, the familiar is revealed to you, because you do not inhabit it. To be "estranged from" can be what enables a "consciousness of." This is why being a killjoy can be a knowledge project, a world-making project.

FEMINIST TABLES

A feminist call might be a call to anger, to develop a sense of rage about collective wrongs. And yet, it is important that we do not make feminist emotion into a site of truth: as if it is always clear or self-evident that our anger is right. When anger becomes righteous it can be oppressive; to assume anger makes us right can be a wrong. We know how easily a politics of happiness can be displaced into a politics of anger: the assumption of a right to happiness can convert very swiftly into anger towards others (immigrants, aliens, strangers) who have taken the happiness assumed to be "by right" to be ours. It is precisely that we cannot defend ourselves against such defensive use of emotion that would be my point. Emotions are not always just, even those that seem to acquire their force in or from an experience of injustice. Feminist emotions are mediated and opaque; they are sites of struggle, and we must persist in struggling with them.[7]

After all, feminist spaces are emotional spaces, in which the experience of solidarity is hardly exhaustive. As feminists we have

our own tables. If we are unseated by the family table, it does not necessarily follow that we are seated together. We can place the figure of the feminist killjoy alongside the figure of the angry black woman, explored so well by black feminist writers such as Audre Lorde and bell hooks.[8] The angry black woman can be described as a killjoy; she may even kill feminist joy, for example, by pointing out forms of racism within feminist politics. She might not even have to make any such point to kill joy. Listen to the following description from bell hooks: "a group of white feminist activists who do not know one another may be present at a meeting to discuss feminist theory. They may feel bonded on the basis of shared womanhood, but the atmosphere will noticeably change when a woman of colour enters the room. The white woman will become tense, no longer relaxed, no longer celebratory."[9]

It is not just that feelings are "in tension," but that the tension is located somewhere: in being felt by some bodies, it is attributed as caused by another body, who comes to be felt as apart from the group, as getting in the way of its enjoyment and solidarity. The body of colour is attributed as the cause of becoming tense, which is also the loss of a shared atmosphere. As a feminist of colour you do not even have to say anything to cause tension! The mere proximity of some bodies involves an affective conversion. We learn from this example how histories are condensed in the very intangibility of an atmosphere, or in the tangibility of the bodies that seem to get in the way. Atmospheres might become shared if there is agreement in where we locate the points of tension.

A history can be preserved in the very stickiness of a situation. To speak out of anger as a woman of colour is then to confirm your position as the cause of tension; your anger is what threatens the social bond. As Audre Lorde describes: "When women of Color speak out of the anger that laces so many of our contacts with white women, we are often told that we are 'creating a mood of helplessness,' 'preventing white women from getting past guilt,' or 'standing in the way of trusting communication and action.'"[10] The exposure of violence becomes the origin of violence. The woman of colour must let go of her anger for the white woman to move on.

The figure of the angry black woman is a fantasy figure that produces its own effects. Reasonable, thoughtful arguments are dismissed as anger (which of course empties anger of its own reason), which makes you angry, such that your response becomes read as the confirmation of evidence that you are not only angry

but also unreasonable! To make this point in another way, the anger of feminists of colour is attributed. You might be angry *about* how racism and sexism diminish life choices for women of colour. Your anger is a judgment that something is wrong. But then in being heard as angry, your speech is read as motivated by anger. Your anger is read as unattributed, as if you are against x because you are angry rather than being angry because you are against x. You become angry at the injustice of being heard as motivated by anger, which makes it harder to separate yourself from the object of your anger. You become entangled with what you are angry about because you are angry about how they have entangled you in your anger. In becoming angry about that entanglement, you confirm their commitment to your anger as the truth "behind" your speech, which is what blocks your anger, stops it from getting through. You are blocked by not getting through.

Some bodies become blockage points, points where smooth communication stops. Consider Ama Ata Aidoo's wonderful prose poem *Our Sister Killjoy,* where the narrator, Sissie, as a black woman, has to work to sustain the comfort of others. On a plane, a white hostess invites her to sit at the back with "her friends," two black people she does not know. She is about to say that she does not know them, and hesitates. "But to have refused to join them would have created an awkward situation, wouldn't it? Considering too that apart from the air hostess's obviously civilized upbringing, she had been trained to see the comfort of all her passengers."[11]

Power speaks here in this moment of hesitation. Do you go along with it? What does it mean not to go along with it? To create awkwardness is to be read as being awkward. Maintaining public comfort requires that certain bodies "go along with it." To refuse to go along with it, to refuse the place in which you are placed, is to be seen as causing trouble, as making others uncomfortable. There is a political struggle about how we attribute good and bad feelings, which hesitates around the apparently simple question of who introduces what feelings to whom. Feelings can get stuck to certain bodies in the very way we describe spaces, situations, dramas. And bodies can get stuck depending on the feelings with which they get associated.

GETTING IN THE WAY

A killjoy: the one who gets in the way of other people's happiness. Or just the one who is in the way – you can be in the way of *whatever,* if you are already perceived as being in the way. Your

very arrival into a room is a reminder of histories that "get in the way" of the occupation of that room. How many feminist stories are about rooms, about who occupies them, about making room? When to arrive is to get in the way, what happens, what do you do? The figure of the killjoy could be rethought in terms of the politics of wilfulness. I suggested earlier that an activist archive is an unhappiness archive, one shaped by the struggles of those who are willing to struggle against happiness. We might redescribe this struggle in terms of those who are willing to be wilful. An unhappiness archive is a wilfulness archive.

Let's go back: let's listen to what and who is behind us. Alice Walker describes a "womanist" in the following way: "A black feminist or feminist of color ... Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one ... Responsible. In charge. Serious."[12] Julia Penelope describes lesbianism as wilfulness: "The lesbian stands against the world created by the male imagination. What *wilfulness* we possess when we claim our lives!"[13] Marilyn Frye's radical feminism uses the adjective "wilful": "The willful creation of new meaning, new loci of meaning, and new ways of being, together, in the world, seems to be in these mortally dangerous times the best hope we have."[14] Wilfulness as audacity, wilfulness as standing against, wilfulness as creativity.

We can make sense of how wilfulness comes up, if we consider a typical definition of wilfulness: "asserting or disposed to assert one's own will against persuasion, instruction, or command; governed by will without regard to reason; determined to take one's own way; obstinately self-willed or perverse" (OED). To be called obstinate or perverse because you are not persuaded by the reason of others? Is this familiar to you? Have you heard this before? When you are charged with wilfulness it is as if your being is an insistence on being, a refusal to give way, to give up, to give up your way. Can what we are charged with become a charge in Alice Walker's sense, a way of being in charge? If we are charged with wilfulness, we can accept and mobilize this charge.

We have to become wilful, perhaps, to keep going the way we are going, if the way you are going is perceived to be "the wrong way." We all know the experience of "going the wrong way" in a crowd. Everyone seems to be going the opposite way than the way you are going. No one person has to push or shove for you to feel the collective momentum of the crowd as a pushing and shoving. For you to keep going you have to push harder than any of those individuals who are going the right way.

The body "going the wrong way" is the one that is experienced as "in the way" of the will that is acquired as momentum. For some bodies, mere persistence, "to continue steadfastly," requires great effort, an effort that might appear to others as stubbornness or obstinacy, as insistence on going against the flow. You have to become insistent to go against the flow; you are judged to be going against the flow because you are insistent. A life paradox: you have to become what you are judged as being.

It is crucial that we don't assume that wilfulness is simply about lonely individuals going against the tide of the social. At the same time, we can note how the social can be experienced as a force: you can feel a force most directly when you attempt to resist it. It is the experience of "coming up against" that is named by "wilfulness," which is why a wilful politics needs to be a collective politics. The collective here is not assumed as a ground. Rather, wilfulness is a collecting together, of those struggling for a different ground for existence. You need to be supported when you are not going the way things are flowing. This is why I think of a feminist queer politics as a politics of tables: tables give support to gatherings, and we need support when we live our lives in ways that are experienced by others as stubborn or obstinate.

A flow is an effect of bodies that are going the same way. To go is also to gather. A flow can be an effect of gatherings of all kinds: gatherings of tables, for instance, as kinship objects that support human gatherings. How many times have I had the experience of being left waiting at a table when a straight couple walks into the room and is attended to straight away! For some, you have to become insistent to be the recipient of a social action, you might have to announce your presence, wave your arm, saying: "Here I am!" For others, it is enough just to turn up because you have already been given a place at the table *before you take up your place*. Wilfulness describes the uneven consequences of this differentiation.

An attribution of wilfulness involves the attribution of negative affect to those bodies that get in the way, those bodes that "go against the flow" in the way they are going. The attribution of wilfulness is thus effectively a charge of killing joy. Conversations are also flows; they are saturated. We hear this saturation as atmosphere. To be attributed as wilful is to be the one who "ruins the atmosphere." A colleague says to me she just has to open her mouth in meetings to witness eyes rolling as if to say, "oh here she goes." My experience as a feminist daughter in a conventional family taught me a great deal about rolling eyes.

You already know this. However you speak, the one who speaks up as a feminist is usually viewed as "causing the argument," as the one who is disturbing the fragility of peace. To be wilful is to provide a point of tension. Wilfulness is stickiness: it is an accusation that sticks.

If to be attributed as wilful is to be the cause of the problem, then we can claim that wilfulness as a political cause. Queer-feminist histories are full of self-declared wilful subjects. Think of the Heterodoxy Club that operated in Greenwich Village in the early twentieth century, a club for unorthodox women. They described themselves as "this little band of willful women," as Judith Schwarz reveals in her wonderful history of this club.[15] A heterodoxy is "not in agreement with accepted beliefs, or holding unorthodox opinions." To be wilful is to be willing to announce your disagreement, and to put yourself behind a disagreement. To enact a disagreement might even mean to become disagreeable. Feminism we might say is the creation of some rather disagreeable women.

Political histories of striking and of demonstrations are histories of those willing to put their bodies in the way, to turn their bodies into blockage points that stop the flow of human traffic, as well as the wider flow of an economy. When wilfulness becomes a style of politics, it means not only being willing not to go with the flow, but also *being willing to cause its obstruction*. One could think of a hunger strike as the purest form of wilfulness: a body whose agency is expressed by being reduced to obstruction, where the obstruction to others is self-obstruction, the obstruction of the passage into the body. Histories of wilfulness are histories of those who are willing to put their bodies in the way.

Political forms of consciousness can also be thought of as wilfulness: not only is it hard to speak about what has receded from view, but you have to be willing to get in the way of that recession. An argument of second-wave feminism (one shared with Marxism and black politics) that I think is worth holding onto is the argument that political consciousness is achieved: raising consciousness is a crucial aspect of collective political work. Raising consciousness is difficult as consciousness is consciousness of what recedes. If the point of a recession is that it gives some the power to occupy space (occupation is reproduced by the concealment of the signs of occupation), then raising consciousness is a resistance to an occupation.

Take the example of racism. It can be wilful even to name racism: as if the talk about divisions is what is divisive. Given that

racism recedes from social consciousness, it appears as if the ones who "bring it up" are bringing it into existence. We learned that the very talk of racism is experienced as an intrusion from the figure of the angry black woman: as if it is her anger about racism that causes feminist estrangement. To recede is to go back or withdraw. To concede is to give way, to yield. People of colour are often asked to concede to the recession of racism: we are asked to "give way" by letting it "go back." Not only that: more than that. We are often asked to embody a commitment to diversity. We are asked to smile in their brochures. The smile of diversity is a way of not allowing racism to surface; it is a form of political recession.

Racism is very difficult to talk about as racism can operate to censor the very evidence of its existence. Those who talk about racism are thus heard as creating rather than describing a problem. The stakes are indeed very high: to talk about racism is to occupy a space that is saturated with tension. History is saturation. One of the findings of a research project I was involved with on diversity was that because racism saturates everyday and institutional spaces, people of colour often make strategic decisions *not to use* the language of racism.[16] If you already pose a problem, or appear "out of place" in the institutions of whiteness, there can be "good reasons" not to exercise what is heard as a threatening vocabulary.[17] Not speaking about racism can be a way of inhabiting the spaces of racism. You minimize the threat you already are by softening your language and appearance, by keeping as much distance as you can from the figure of the angry person of colour. Of course, as we know, just to walk into a room can be to lose that distance, because that figure gets there before you do.

When you use the very language of racism you are heard as "going on about it," as "not letting it go." It is as if talking about racism is what keeps it going. Racism thus often enters contemporary forms of representation as a representation of a past experience. Take the film *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002, dir. Gurinder Chada): the film is very much premised on the freedom to be happy, as the freedom of the daughter, Jesminder, to do whatever makes her happy (in her case, playing football – her idea of happiness is what puts her in proximity to a national idea of happiness). Her father's memory of racism gets in the way of her happiness. Consider two speeches he makes in the film, the first one takes place early on, and the latter at the end:

> When I was a teenager in Nairobi, I was the best fast bowler in our school. Our team even won the East African cup. But when I came to this country, nothing. And these bloody gora in the club house made fun of my turban and sent me off packing … She will only end up disappointed like me.
>
> When those bloody English cricket players threw me out of their club like a dog, I never complained. On the contrary, I vowed that I would never play again. Who suffered? Me. But I don't want Jess to suffer. I don't want her to make the same mistakes her father made, accepting life, accepting situations. I want her to fight. And I want her to win.

In the first speech, the father says she *should not play* in order not to suffer like him. In the second, he says she *should play* in order not to suffer like him. The desire implicit in both speech acts is the avoidance of the daughter's suffering, which is expressed in terms of the desire that she does not repeat his own. The second speech suggests that the refusal to play a national game is the "truth" behind the migrant's suffering: you suffer because you do not play the game, where not playing is read as self-exclusion. To let Jess be happy, he lets her go. By implication, not only is he letting her go, he is also letting go of his own suffering, the unhappiness caused by accepting racism, as the "point" of his exclusion.

I would suggest that the father is represented in the first speech as melancholic: as refusing to let go of his suffering, as incorporating the very object of his own loss. His refusal to let Jess go is readable as a symptom of melancholia: as a stubborn attachment to his own injury.[18] As he says: "who suffered? Me." Bad feeling thus originates with the migrant who won't let go of racism as a script that explains suffering. The melancholic migrant holds onto the unhappy objects of difference, such as the turban, or at least the memory of being teased about the turban, as that which ties it to a history of racism. It is as if you should let go of the pain of racism by *letting go of racism as a way of remembering that pain*. I would even say that racism becomes readable as what the melancholic migrant is attached *to,* as an attachment to injury that allows migrants to justify their refusal to participate in the national game ("the gora in their club house"). Even to recall an experience of racism, or to describe an experience as racism, can be to get in the way of the happiness of others.

Consciousness of racism becomes understood as a kind of false consciousness, as consciousness of that which is no longer. Racism is framed as a memory that if it were kept alive would just leave us exhausted. The task of citizenship becomes one of conversion: if racism is preserved *only* in our memory and consciousness, then racism would "go away" if only we too would declare it gone. The narrative implicit here is not that we "invent racism," but that we preserve its power to govern social life by not getting over it. The moral task is thus "to get over it," as if when you are over it, it is gone.

CONCLUSION: A KILLJOY MANIFESTO

Audre Lorde teaches us how quickly the freedom to be happy is translated into the freedom to look away from what compromises your happiness.[19] The history of feminist critiques of happiness could be translated into a manifesto: *Don't look over it: don't get over it.* Not to get over it is a form of disloyalty. Wilfulness is a kind of disloyalty: think of Adrienne Rich's call for us to be disloyal to civilization. *We are not over it, if it has not gone. We are not loyal, if it is wrong.*[20] Wilfulness could be rethought as a style of politics: *a refusal to look away from what has already been looked over.* The ones who point out that racism, sexism, and heterosexism are actual are charged with wilfulness; they refuse to allow these realities to be passed over.

Even talking about injustices, violence, power, and subordination in a world that uses "happy diversity" as a technology of social description can mean becoming the obstacle, as the ones who "get in the way" of the happiness of others. Your talk is heard as labouring over sore points, as if you are holding onto something – an individual or collective memory, a *sense* of a history as unfinished – because you are sore. People often say that political struggle against racism is like banging your head against a brick wall. The wall keeps its place, so it is you that gets sore. We might need to stay as sore as our points. Of course, that's not all we say or we do. We can recognize not only that we are not the cause of the unhappiness that has been attributed to us, but also the effects of being attributed *as* the cause. We can talk about being wilful subjects, feminist killjoys, angry black women; we can claim those figures back; we can talk about those conversations we have had at dinner tables or in seminars or meetings. We can laugh in recognition of the familiarity of inhabiting that place, even if we do not inhabit the same place (and we do not). There can be joy in killing joy. Kill joy, we can and we do. Be wilful, we will and we are.

NOTES

This chapter is dedicated to all feminist killjoys. You know who you are! It was originally published in *The Scholar and the Feminist Online* 8, 3 (2010), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/print_ahmed.htm#end22. It has been edited lightly to conform with this book's style for spelling, punctuation, and documentation.

1 Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 59–61.

2 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 138.

3 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* translated by H.M. Parshley (London: Vintage Books, 1997), 28.

4 See, for example, Nancy Garden, *Annie on My Mind* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982), 191.

5 Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1983).

6 Ibid., 2–3.

7 For early work on feminist emotion, see Alison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," in *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy,* ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (New York: Routledge, 1996), 166–90, and Elizabeth Spelman, "Anger and Insubordination," also in *Women, Knowledge and Reality,* 263–74. For an important argument about the need to separate injustice from the experience of pain and hurt, see Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy and Politics," in *Transformations: Thinking through Feminism,* ed. Sara Ahmed, Celia Lury, Jane Kilby, Maureen McNeil, and Beverley Skeggs (London: Routledge, 2000), 33–47. For further discussion of feminism and emotion, see the final chapter, "Feminist Attachments," which considers wonder, hope, and anger as feminist emotions, in Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

8 See Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1984); see bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

9 hooks, *Feminist Theory,* 56.

10 Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* 131.

11 Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), 10.

12 Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (Phoenix: New Edition, 2005).

13 Julia Penelope, *Call Me Lesbian: Lesbian Lives, Lesbian Theory* (Berkeley, CA: The Crossing Press, 1992), 42.

14 Marilyn Frye, *Willful Virgin: Essays in Feminism, 1976–1992* (Berkeley, CA: The Crossing Press, 1992), 9.

15 Judith Schwarz, *Radical Feminists of Heterodoxy* (Chicago: New Victoria Publishers, 1986), 103.

16 Sara Ahmed, Shona Hunter, Sevgi Kilic, Elaine Swan, and Lewis Turner, "Race, Diversity and Leadership in the Learning and Skills Sector," unpublished report, 2006.

17 Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and "Bodies Out of Place"* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).


KILLJOY'S KASTLE:
A LESBIAN FEMINIST HAUNTED HOUSE
Lesbian Feminist Haunted House
frankenstein pre/post OP
witches galore
male baby Sacrafice
dykes with chain saws
ANIMATRONICS
crazy sound track mashup
lorenna Mckinnit w Screaming
w Yoko ono w chain saws
w moaning w rattling cougn
- air shooting up
- build set
- pay actors
- pay artists to help
-all your greatest fears + best dreams will come true
- hire fiona for painting tufport.
- consult Mo Angelos.

PREVIOUS

1
Studio idea wall, with signs underway.

2
Preliminary drawing for the kastle's entrance.

3
Crew hard at work in the studio.

FACING

4
One of our never-ending "to do" lists.

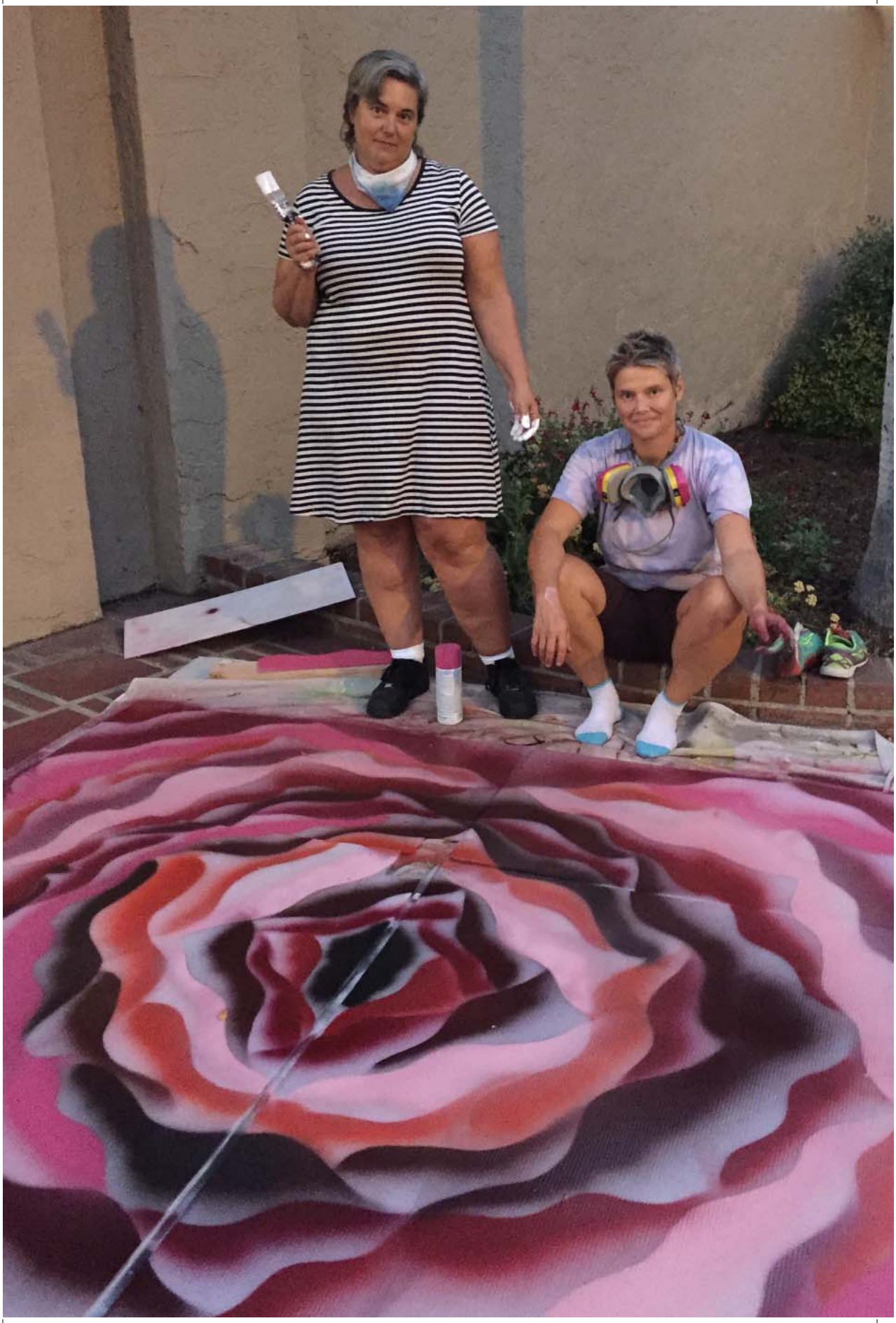
Glamorous Tasks

- taking pictures
- ~~gesso lesbian rule letters~~
- ~~nut casting~~
- ~~paint wall black~~
- ~~paint hidey hole black~~
- ~~gesso small bags~~
- ~~window blast out~~
- ~~garbage~~
- carpet fence feet
- GESSO LABELS

5
Creating the Marvelous Emasculator's jagged arch.

6
The Stitch Witches working it out.

FACING
7
Artists putting a few finishing touches on the kastle's Los Angeles entrance.

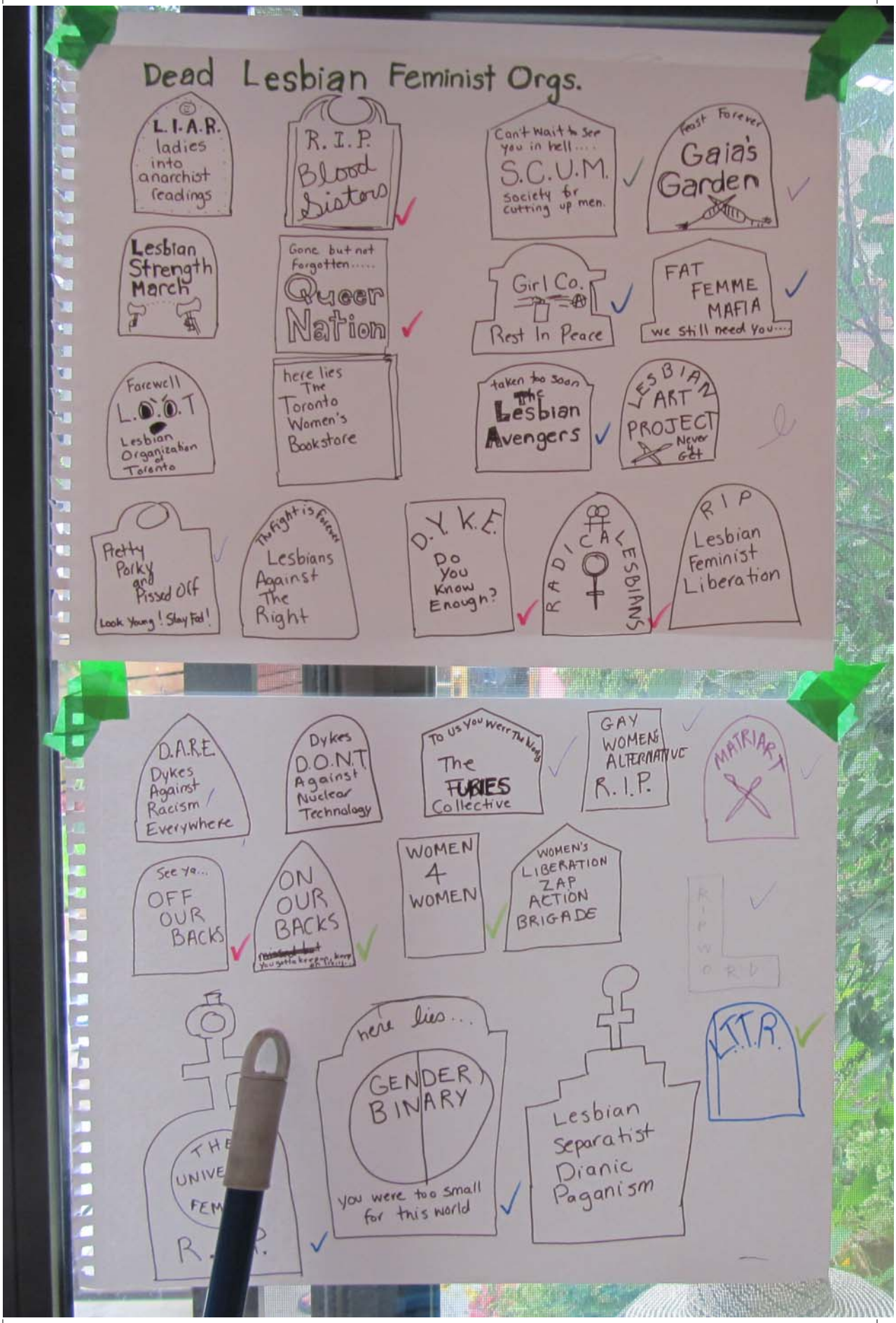


8
Warning signs get a few finishing strokes.

9
Working on the Giant Bearded Clam.

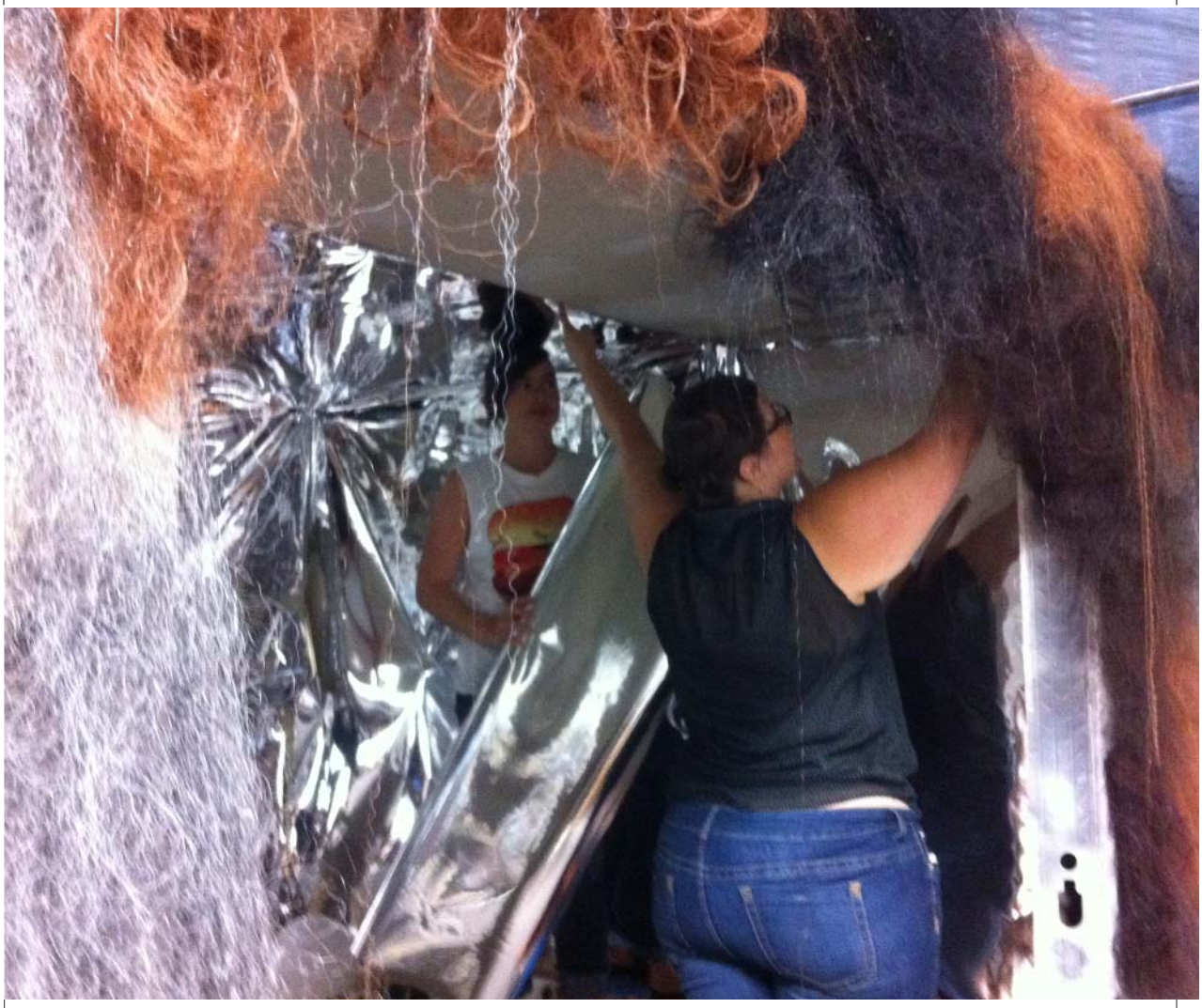
FACING

10
Inventory for completed gravestones from the Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas.


Dead Lesbian Feminist Orgs.
L.I.A.R. ladies into anarchist readings
R.I.P. Blood Sisters
Can't wait to see you in hell.... S.C.U.M. Society for Cutting up men.
Feast Forever Gaia's Garden
Lesbian Strength March
Gone but not Forgotten..... Queer Nation
Girl Co. Rest In Peace
FAT FEMME MAFIA we still need you....
Farewell L.O.O.T. Lesbian Organization of Toronto
here lies The Toronto Women's Bookstore
taken too soon The Lesbian Avengers
LESBIAN ART PROJECT Never Get
Pretty Porky and Pissed Off Look Young! Stay Fat!
The fight is forever Lesbians Against The Right
D.Y.K.E. Do You Know Enough?
RADICAL LESBIANS
RIP Lesbian Feminist Liberation
D.A.R.E. Dykes Against Racism Everywhere
Dykes D.O.N.T. Against Nuclear Technology
To us you were the Vamps The FURIES Collective
GAY WOMENS ALTERNATIVE R.I.P.
MATRIART
See ya... OFF OUR BACKS
ON OUR BACKS
WOMEN 4 WOMEN
WOMEN'S LIBERATION ZAP ACTION BRIGADE
here lies... GENDER BINARY you were too small for this world
Lesbian Separatist Dianic Paganism
L.I.T.R.

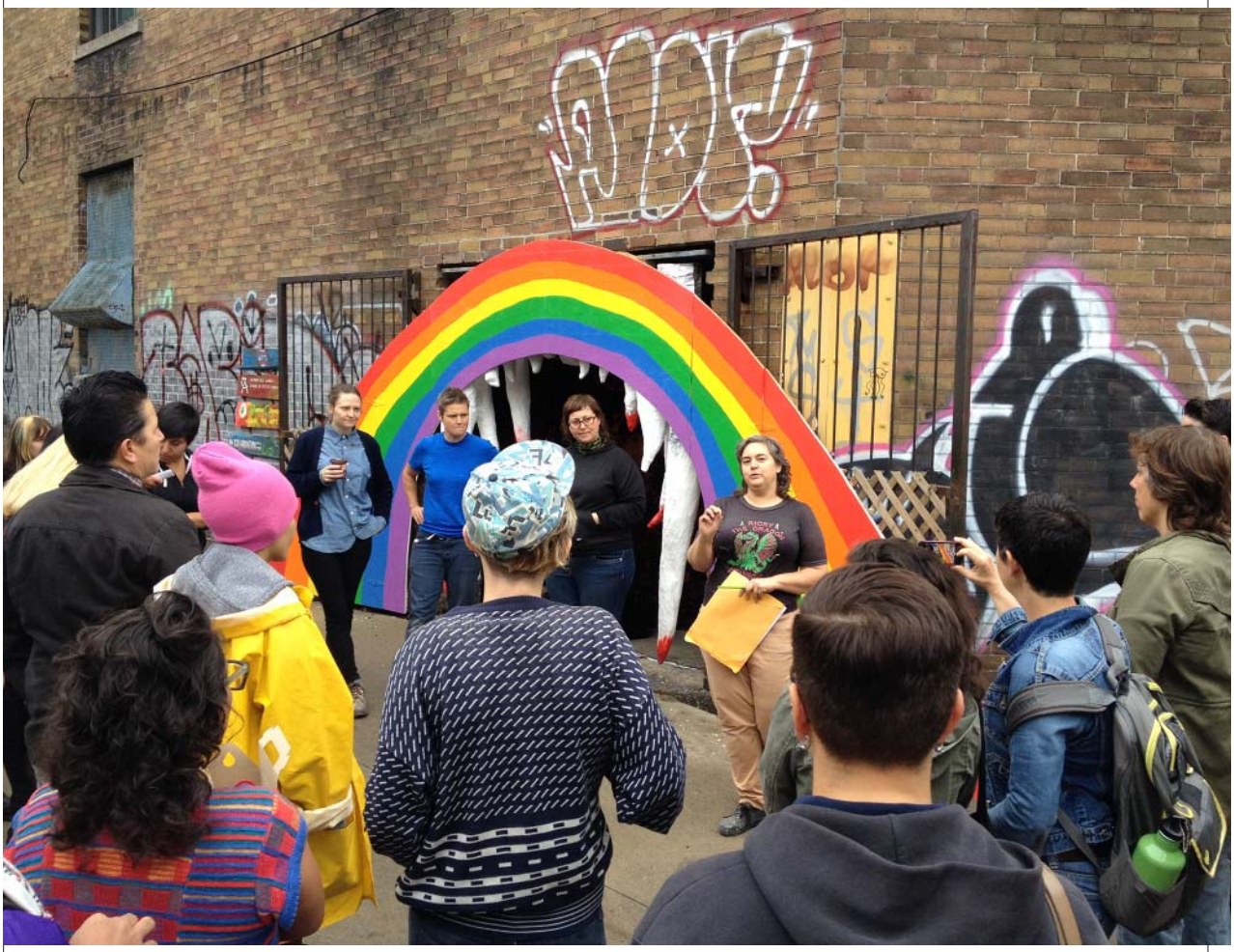
11
Studio full of just-finished creepy crafts.

12
Making entrance teeth.



13
Adding the very hairy fringe around the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers' shiny cubby.

14
Getting started on Killjoy's Kastle, Toronto.



FACING

15
Warning signs in their final stages.

16
Artists introducing the project to performers at the entrance to the kastle in Toronto.

17
Introductions continue inside the kastle.

18
Artists introduce the Real-Life Feminist Killjoys' chilly climate to performers.

19
Demented Women's Studies Professor tour guides gather for course prep.

20
Performers gather before the doors open for a group check-in and quick process.

21
A Demented Women's Studies Professor tour guide sets their grim expression for the semester.

22
Paranormal Consciousness Raisers make their way to their reflective cubby.

23
A group of performers in the process of getting the ghoulish makeup.

FACING
24
Valerie Solanas gets in character to begin crowd indoctrination.

FOLLOWING
25
A lone Paranormal waits for Killjoy to open her fang doors.

18 For excellent discussions of racial melancholia, see Anne-Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholia of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia," in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning,* ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 343–71.

19 Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* 76.

20 Adrienne Rich, "Disloyal to Civilization," in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979).

Killjoy in the ONE Archives: Activating Los Angeles's Queer Art and Activist Histories

DAVID EVANS FRANTZ

With reverence, wit, and spirited critique, Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's *Killjoy's Kastle* reckons with feminism(s) past, revelling in the thorny complications of politics and community. As the curator at ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the University of Southern California Libraries, after observing the overwhelming explosion of elation and discussion that occurred during the kastle's Toronto iteration, I invited Allyson and Deirdre to bring *Killjoy's Kastle* to Los Angeles. Lo and behold, they replied quickly with an enthusiastic yes!

While the feminist killjoy took up public residence in Los Angeles for ten nights in October 2015, her often unacknowledged spectre has long haunted the ONE Archives, which is today the largest LGBTQ archive in the world, collecting every possible object of relevance to queer history, including personal papers, books and periodicals, costumes, protest plaques, flyers, and artworks. If on the surface ONE's presentation of the kastle might have appeared anomalous (why was an archive presenting this artist installation anyways?), the project's engaged politics, collaborative impulse, and community-based consciousness raising could not have been more aligned with the goals and needs of a queer archive such as ONE.

In 2010, ONE became a part of the USC Libraries. Joining a major research university opened new doors for funding, staffing, and other forms of support while also provoking urgent questions about how a community-based archive could retain an independent energy within an increasingly corporatized educational environment. Almost simultaneously, ONE became a space for artistic experimentation and intervention; in 2011, artist Onya Hogan-Finlay mounted her USC MFA show, *My Taste in Men*, drawing on little-seen artworks from ONE's collections. Later that year, the exhibition *Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles, 1945-1980*, which I co-curated with Mia Locks, put artworks and archival materials on public view for the first time in a three-part exhibition. *Cruising the Archive* galvanized public awareness of the archives and was accompanied by a series of artist projects and performances exploring the collection's history and absences.[1]

As the archives have become increasingly formalized as a part of the university, artist projects have continued to pose questions about what a queer archive like ONE can be; how it can foster new forms of community, especially for people that feel intimidated or unwelcome; and how we might unpack difficult histories of gender politics, AIDS trauma, and trans and POC erasure. Queer archives such as ONE are built through abundant and exuberant accumulation in defiance of stigma, neglect, and marginalization. However, archives both hold and exclude; the absences expose the biases, frictions, and shortcomings that haunt queer history.

Killjoy's Kastle's exhumation of lesbian feminism's complicated histories takes on another relevance when understood from within the context of ONE's own knotty history. In many regards, ONE has long been (and in certain respects continues to be) a boys' club. The organization traces its roots to the founding of *ONE Magazine* in 1952, the first publication for the nascent homosexual community. Early on, the magazine struggled to

strike an inclusive voice. On multiple occasions, the magazine's reoccurring column "The Feminine Viewpoint" was composed by men who published under female pseudonyms in an attempt to promote a facade of gender balance.[2] As a new generation of activists propelled lesbian feminism and gay liberation to the forefront in the 1970s, the role of women in the organization remained unsettled and continued to be in subsequent decades.

In 1997, what was then called the ONE Institute founded the Lesbian Legacy Collection (LLC), an initiative of activist librarian Yolanda Retter (1947-2007) to combat the marginalization of lesbian history by "providing a Lesbian space and access to Lesbian history."[3] Retter had dedicated her life to supporting lesbians and particularly lesbians of colour. A self-described "gadfly on the body politic," by all accounts Retter was a proud feminist killjoy. Jeanne Córdova and Lynn Ballen note that Retter, known for her confrontational style, earned the nickname "Yolanda the Terrible" or "Y the T," which she wore as a badge of honour.[4] At a time when ONE was also almost entirely volunteer-run, Retter galvanized funding and support to organize the material traces of lesbian history already in the collections: the publications, papers, buttons, photos, and a newly created LLC subject file system that would classify these materials using the lesbian community's own terminology. Retter also solicited new collections and found avenues to promote the LLC on the emerging World Wide Web.[5]

ONE moved into its current building in 2000, and the LLC was housed in a separate room, the lesbian space Retter had identified as part of the project's guiding force. However, in the early 2000s Retter's relationship to ONE grew combative, and the LLC was eventually folded back into the general collections; its legacy is only distinguishable today because certain subject files Retter compiled have been preserved for posterity. Not uncommon for community-based archives, how and why this occurred remains contentious and unclear; however, from all

recollections, Retter was an insistent rabble-rouser worthy of ONE's remembrance (and celebration), which remains long overdue.

With support from the City of West Hollywood, *Killjoy's Kastle* took shape over a month of installation at a low-slung complex of buildings located in the city's Plummer Park. Long planned for city demolition (and thus empty for the kastle's remaking), Plummer Park's Long Hall and Great Hall complex had an earlier history of queer activation, housing the first meetings of ACT UP Los Angeles in 1987. Allyson and Deirdre deftly divided the neglected, maze-like buildings and large outdoor courtyard into fifteen individual performative installations, many of which engaged LA's queer histories: a former Audubon Society reading room became the Stitch Witch's lair and the Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas, which grew to include new headstones for local groups and places, including the *Lesbian Tide*, the Woman's Building, Little Frida's coffeehouse, and Jewel's Catch One disco. An entranceway with heavy metal bars became an unanticipated site to highlight the Los Angeles Police Department's persecution of queer and trans people. It was repurposed as the Daddy Pen, in reference to LA's "Daddy Tank" (a cell used to hold butch women and gender nonconforming individuals beginning in the 1950s), and visitors were told of the LAPD's policing of gender presentation. These and other installations in the LA kastle grew from Allyson and Deirde's collaboration with numerous other participants and the particular history of Los Angeles.

Bringing together over one hundred collaborators and performers and over five thousand visitors over ten evenings, *Killjoy's Kastle* was (and remains) the largest artist project in ONE's history. A temporary space of communal experience, intergenerational exchange, and raucous play, *Killjoy's Kastle* exemplified the messy, uncompromising ethos of queerness at its most vital and urgent. As this anthology demonstrates, its impact continues to be felt and considered.

NOTES

1 These projects and performances included a site-specific installation by Catherine Lord, *To Whom It May Concern,* which displayed the dedications in books from ONE's library, and an evening of performances by trans artists co-organized with Hogan-Finlay, including works by Cassils, Zackary Drucker, Wu Tsang, and Chris Vargas.

2 Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 133.

3 Yolanda Retter, quoted in "Lesbian Legacy Collection Opens Connections and Doors," *ONE/IGLA Bulletin* 3 (1997): 4.

4 Jeanne Córdova and Lynn Ballen, "Memorial to Honor Yolanda Retter, Activist Scholar," *Radical Reference,* August 8, 2007, https://radicalreference.info/node/1769.

5 The LLC's website is listed in the third issue of the *ONE/IGLA Bulletin* as http://Lib.usc.edu/~retter/one.html; however, this site is no longer available and, unfortunately, an archived version cannot be accessed on the Internet Archive.

THE KASTLE: EXECUTION

3

Inside Job: Learning, Collaboration, and Queer-Feminist Contagion in Killjoy's Kastle

HELENA RECKITT

On July 17, 2013, a press release from the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) announced the launch of an immersive participatory artwork, *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House,* by Toronto artists Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue. Installed in a warehouse in downtown Toronto, it would open on Halloween with a night of interactive performances then continue as an exhibition for fourteen days. Inside a womb-like, textile-festooned environment, Mitchell and scores of collaborators would present tableaux, tropes, and characters from the radical lesbian past. The press release gave a taste of the mock-horrifying exuberance to come: "Dare to be scared by gender-queer apparitions, ball-busting butches, and never-married, happy-as-hell spinsters. For one night only, get down on riot ghouls and radical vampiric grannies while channelling your inner consciousness hell-raiser."

Inspiration for *Killjoy's Kastle* came from the evangelical Christian tradition of the hell house, in which North American churches stage gruesome scenes each Halloween, dramatizing the perils of embracing an unchristian, deviant lifestyle, from abortion to drug taking, premarital sex, occultism, suicide, and homosexuality. Mitchell and Logue's haunted house, in contrast, presented "visitations of the undead lesbian community, who are hell-bent on remaining nightmarishly non-assimilated." It aimed, stated the press release, "to pervert, not convert."[1]

As visitors soon discovered, *Killjoy's Kastle* bridged artistic, activist, and academic fields and vocabularies. Raiding display conventions drawn from freak shows, living history exhibits, and

Ripley's Believe It or Not museums, it explored what makes radical feminism so frightening for mainstream society. At once sending up stereotypes of monstrous misandry and joy-killing political correctness, it also depicted aspects of lesbian-feminist history that might better be laid to rest. Neither a straightforward celebration nor an outright exorcism, *Killjoy's Kastle* encompassed tropes that were simultaneously punitive and puritanical, perverted and perverting.

Word of mouth and social media generated a buzz about the exhibition, which attracted packed audiences from the start. In addition to the enthusiastic responses of most visitors, it provoked critique from a right-wing tabloid, the *Toronto Sun,* and talk radio. From the other end of the political spectrum, queer-identified voices called out the work on grounds of racism and transphobia.[2] While the former response was expected – "I can't believe it took as long as it did for the hateful right to find our muff-diving monster mash," said Mitchell's key collaborator Deirdre Logue – the latter came as a surprise. Despite carrying out extensive discussions with queer-feminist friends and colleagues in advance of opening night, Mitchell and Logue had not anticipated this kind of critical community feedback.

In 2014, a smaller version of *Killjoy's Kastle*, comprising installation and video and curated by Nazmia Jamal, was shown at BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival. The following year, having vowed never to undertake such a massive project again, Mitchell – now working with Logue as coartist – opened an even more ambitious iteration of the work in Los Angeles.[3] Pulling together "a cast of international and local weirdos," performers from Toronto, Los Angeles, and other locales activated the installation over the course of fifteen days.[4]

The project's basis in participatory research and improvised performance is rare within the visual arts. While group authorship is not unusual and artist collectives enjoy a certain contemporary cachet, Mitchell's model of inviting multiple contributors to co-create a work within a framework of her construction has more in common with the performance traditions of cabaret and devised theatre than with the visual arts' emphasis on individual authorship. Project collaborator Moynan King sees Mitchell's crediting of Logue as co-artist in London and Los Angeles as "a bit of a queer model. You don't see that much with one solo artist changing it to two to acknowledge the collaboration." Perhaps even more unusual in the visual art context is *Killjoy's Kastle*'s tone of exuberant humour, haptic immersion, and emotional intensity,

coming from the overtly minoritarian queer-feminist perspective explored by Mitchell and her collaborators as subject matter and identified with as subject positions.

Drawing on interviews with collaborators, I document the central role played by participation, collaboration, and improvisation in *Killjoy's Kastle,* offering insight not only into what participants did to help realize the project but also into the emotions they experienced in the process. Their observations about *Killjoy's Kastle*'s multivalent tone and intentions broadened my understanding of the work's function as an agent of world making, debate, and viral contagion. Because I only saw the slimmed-down, non-performance-based version at the BFI in London, their accounts helped me to visualize the work at one remove. The experience of interviewing collaborators made me wonder why more writers on ephemeral art and performance do not incorporate the oral testimony of participants and performers (not to mention audiences) into their accounts.

KEY COLLABORATORS

The ten key collaborators I interviewed had worked on various aspects of *Killjoy's Kastle,* from conception to production, construction, and enactment.[5] Of them, Logue, Mitchell's "partner in both life and art," was most integrally involved from the start. Her contribution to all aspects of *Killjoy's Kastle* was reflected in London and then in Los Angeles, where, as previously mentioned, Mitchell credited her as cocreator. Also involved from early on was FASTWÜRMS, the witch-identified artist collective. They first joined Mitchell and Logue for a playful brainstorming session on queer-feminist stereotypes in 2009, subsequently performing in Toronto and Los Angeles. Brette Gabel, studio assistant, and Johnson Ngo, who describes himself as Mitchell's "right-hand person, other than Deirdre," worked behind the scenes and on opening night in Toronto. Don Pyle composed soundscapes for each installation. Three interviewees – Moynan King, Natalie Kouri-Towe, and Dainty Smith – performed as Demented Women's Studies Professors, the guides who led visitors through the haunted house (acting in the spirit of museum docents and referencing how the tour guides for Christian hell houses dressed as demons). With a background in theatre, King also edited and reworked Mitchell's script. Kalale Dalton-Lutale was one of several Riot Ghouls, whose riot grrrl/mean girl dance parties aimed to deliberately intimidate visitors. Joining the project in Los Angeles, Lex Vaughn worked with Mitchell to contribute to the installation's construction (including an entrance resembling

a vast pubic wig) and performed as a butch detainee in the Daddy Pen.

Collaborators recalled their profound pleasure in participating in *Killjoy's Kastle*, their satisfaction in witnessing visitors' responses, and their deep sense of being part of a queer-feminist community, both in terms of its working ethos and its public presence. They reflected on the piece's tongue-in-cheek yet serious didactic tone and aims. To my question about what they found most rewarding, Johnson replied, "Everything." Pyle described it as "a golden project." King said, "I just love the work. So being involved at that really core level is the biggest reward. I love the material; I love Allyson's aesthetic. I love performing and going through with a new crowd every time. I relished every minute of it." While Dalton-Lutale recalled, "I was a new queer and was so honoured to be part of this historic and momentous queer cultural experience."

Visitors' heightened responses to the work featured in most collaborators' accounts. Smith recalled the pleasure she took in "interacting with the audience, getting to see surprise, a moment of discovery in an audience member," and how thrilling it was to see "folks examine their own assumptions and questioning themselves." Kouri-Towe asked, "How can you not be enamored by the construction of an immersive space like that? It's so exciting and playful and creates a sense of euphoria and anticipation of what you are going to discover next."

While gender scholar Kouri-Towe enjoyed stepping outside her regular academic milieu to perform in *Killjoy's Kastle*, most collaborators – chosen by Mitchell because they shared her aesthetic and political and cultural allegiances – built on and expanded their artistic and activist backgrounds within this context. Gabel explained, "We were already speaking in the same muddy cauldron." Corresponding with Mitchell's maximalist aesthetic and uncompromising ambitions, contributors also remarked on the exhausting demands that the work placed on themselves and their fellow collaborators.

CROWD-SOURCED HAUNTINGS AND QUEER CONTAGIONS

Dialogue and exchange shaped *Killjoy's Kastle* from the start. In 2009, FASTWÜRMS joined Mitchell and Logue in New York to explore stereotypes and fears about queer feminism. Logue remembers the fun they had "drawing drops of blood dripping from grinning cat whiskers and brainstorming about what might be served at a Riot Ghoul, postprotest pot luck." In January 2013, having worked up ideas in her Toronto studio, Mitchell broadened

her circle of collaborators during a community consultation think tank. Hosting some twenty-six people in her and Logue's home for a "consensual vampiric brain sucking," she stated her intention to use guests as a sounding board and to credit them as "an inner cloister knowledge source."[6] Although Mitchell had already identified most of the tropes that eventually featured in the house,[7] the meeting generated excitement among her peers, stimulating the "gossip and grapevines"[8] that ensured its widespread anticipation.

Just as evangelical Christian hell houses function as PR and marketing exercises, binding congregations closer together and persuading new members to take Jesus as their saviour, *Killjoy's Kastle,* in Mitchell's missionary agenda, was envisaged as a tool of queer-feminist education and recruitment. By reclaiming the hell house from Christian pageantry, a tradition that itself annexes Halloween from its pagan roots, she attempted to reappropriate that which had already been appropriated.[9] *Killjoy's Kastle* emulated the symbiotic operations of Christianity and capitalism, systems that FASTWÜRMS characterize as "dangerous, self-replicating, voracious, synergistic meme machines, participatory frameworks that generate contagious visual and semiotic tropes using appropriation and reappropriation, replication, proliferation … and repeat." Throwing the language of sex play into the witchy mix, FASTWÜRMS described *Killjoy's Kastle*'s challenge to become "a meta-contagion; a Switch Witch topping the hell house meme from the bottom and every other possible position with maximalist critical reflexivity."

LEARNING FROM AND IN THE KASTLE

With its Demented Women's Studies Professors, library of oversized papier-mâché books, hand-written signs and warnings, and Processing Room, where visitors shared and worked through their feelings, the kastle acted self-consciously, albeit playfully, as a pedagogic space. Kouri-Towe noted: "It invited active participation not only from the people who were invited as artists to create the space but from every person who walked through it." On entering, visitors were divided into groups and asked to come up with a collective name. Prominent signs warned them to leave "no preconceptions intact," while Demented Women's Studies Professors explained that there was no turning back from the problematic situations that they would soon encounter. Demented Women's Studies Professors also provided contextual information about the exhibits, helping visitors understand the

numerous feminist references – something that many of them needed, King realized after setting a feminist pop quiz.

> There was this space called the Terrifying Tunnel of Two Adult Women in Love, up a staircase, a very narrow thing. You wouldn't have time to send all the people through, so I would ask skill-testing questions about who goes through. I would ask feminist questions, and a lot of people couldn't answer them. Finally, I'd be, like, "Name a feminist." Do you know who they knew? bell hooks and, occasionally, Gloria Steinem and, once or twice, Sara Ahmed. And there was one spectator who was, like, "You?" "Okay, good enough," I said. Like, I was the only feminist they could think of because I was standing right there. There is something about those questions that tells you something about the audience.

The guides' interpretations expanded in response to the publicity and controversy that the kastle provoked. King recalled:

> I would do a lot of theorizing as I went along, especially as the critiques of the piece came out, then I would get really specific. I would explain metonymic conflation – "What is a symbol? What are symbols? Why do we use them?" – try to get them engaged on this level of "When we see this exhibit of the ball buster,[10] what are we really saying? Are we saying that we want to smash men's balls? Of course not. We are saying patriarchy is represented by these nuts, these plaster of Paris balls that are modelled after truck nuts. We are conflating patriarchy with the symbol of the balls. We are smashing patriarchy."

Finally, after entering a door warning them to "get your shit together this way," visitors wound up in the Processing Room. There, they were joined by Real-Life Feminist Killjoys, in the form of prominent queer-feminist writers, scholars, and activists who facilitated group discussions.[11]

Visitors were not the only ones to have their consciousness raised. In developing their own contributions, collaborators deepened their knowledge of queer-feminist history. To devise the soundscapes, Pyle researched second-wave separatist women's music and 1990s riot grrrl. The process proved instructive. Where he had previously dismissed women's music as boring and

dowdy – "a singer-songwriter with an acoustic guitar and a hand-held tambourine" – Pyle developed a new respect for the movement, seeing its DIY ethos as an underappreciated precursor to punk. To Pyle's surprise, he found wit and humour too. "I had this song, 'Every Woman Can Be a Lesbian,' by Alix Dobkin, on the brain for months," he recalled. He came to appreciate the inclusive politics and community spirit of the women's music scene, which he found so much more developed than that of most gay men at the time, "who were preoccupied with hedonism – 'Let's all go to the baths!'" Riot grrrl was also a key reference for Dalton-Lutale. Studying the movement helped her to flesh out details of her Riot Ghoul persona, making her "peripheral knowledge" of the movement concrete.

The ethos of "freaky feminist skill sharing" was central.[12] Acting as a bridge between older forms of material knowledge and future generations, Gabel recollected how Mitchell taught contributors to crochet the spider webs that filled the kastle. Gabel expanded her own familiarity with craft and hobby arts. In working with Mitchell to create the Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies – fashioned from nylon tights, with glass eyes, mop wigs, needlework tattoos, and extenuated fingers with which to stimulate their lovers' erogenous zones – she consulted one of Mitchell's craft books. Further demonstrating the project's ethos of intergenerational exchange, the idea for the grannies' pool noodle skeleton came from Gabel's future mother-in-law.

EMBODIED EDUCATION

The learning that occurred in *Killjoy's Kastle* was of a thoroughly haptic kind. Travelling through a series of immersive, surprising, sometimes scary, and often humorous labyrinths and installations, visitors' senses of touch and smell, sound and taste were provoked. Waiting in the queues that snaked round the block, they were entertained and corralled by performers. They entered through a wooden vagina dentata/glory hole rainbow with papier-mâché fangs that rested below a large sign that read "Lesbian Rule."[13] Visitors then walked, stooped, and crawled through fabric-covered tunnels and rooms, each with its own spooky soundtrack. Because every element of the exhibition was part of one overwhelming artwork, Johnson noted that, from a production perspective, it "was almost frustrating in that practically everything had to be considered and touched. When you install in a gallery, there is an understanding that there are white walls and negative space. But in this sense, transforming that bare-bones container into a haunted-house experience was quite

the feat."[14] Characterizing Mitchell's approach as maximalist, Johnson observed: "Completion was never completion until she felt it was. It kept on going and going. She had anxieties. Right up to the last minute, she was continuing to make these crocheted spider webs to be hung. It kept getting bigger and bigger and better and better."

From behind Lycra partitions, performers grasped visitors and moaned and whispered phrases such as "trans women belong here" and "two adult women in love." With blood-streaked hands, a trans man passed out a diva cup overflowing with fake menstrual blood, which he asked visitors to empty for him. A group of performers in the mirrored Paranormal Consciousness-Raising Room, sheets covering their heads and naked from the waist down, examined their vulvas. King remembered instructing visitors: "Come in close, nice and close. Breathe in. Breathe out. Doesn't that smell wonderful? Aaaah, pussy!"

After this abundance of sights and sensations, the kastle's dystopian/utopian spell broke, and groups entered the Processing Room, which was decorated with ice flows and kept deliberately cold. Exiting through the gift shop, visitors could reclaim their composure and commemorate their visit if they chose by purchasing queer, witch, and feminist memorabilia. Outside, a food truck selling fish tacos continued the deep lez theme.

FASTWÜRMS recalled the kastle's simultaneously disturbing and intoxicating impact on guests. They described visitors' surprise in "having so many binary cultural constructions collapse all at once," reflecting how this "feels dangerous, and it is dangerous, but it's just a matter of the kastle's spellbinding queer space and time." Part of this danger stemmed from the complexity of the histories the kastle had excavated. As Kouri-Towe noted:

> It is very layered. It's not just a celebration of queer feminism – or an attack. It's not an exorcism or a cautionary tale. It's a reconciling with the contradictions of what that history entails and a desire not to relinquish it to the past. Part of what happened in gender studies is that the two most controversial aspects of second-wave feminism, radical feminism and lesbian feminism, became marginalized. No one wants to read Andrea Dworkin or Adrienne Rich or Catharine MacKinnon any more. There are reasons why people don't want to read those texts, because those authors became platformers for violence, such as antitrans and antisex work, in ways

> that were harmful. But by refusing to read those texts, we lose something too.

Characterizing Mitchell's approach to stereotypes as "exploding them, putting the heat back on them," King said, "Some of these histories are supposed to fill us with shame." But while these histories can be faulted retroactively, King rejected the idea that they should be suppressed. Earlier feminists found solutions that responded to the time and nature of the problems they faced, she argued, which in part produced new problems. "And we are standing on their shoulders." The figure of the feminist killjoy – taken from Sara Ahmed's 2010 book, *The Promise of Happiness* – is itself far from straightforward. Some reviewers saw *Killjoy's Kastle* as an antidote to "uptight killjoys" who wage political correctness. Lisa Derrick, for instance, commented:

> At the end of the tour, it's clear that in the drive for political correctness, uptight killjoys have taken the transgressive and sexy fun out being queer, while glossing over the unpleasantries in a drive for moral supremacy. As a countermeasure, KillJoy's Kastle has resurrected the past – the good, the bad and the ugly – and laid it out in a high camp, super-smart, ultimately loving way.[15]

But for many others who encountered and participated in the work, the killjoy is an inspiring figure of resistance who risks "killing the joy" when it promotes prejudice and oppression. To pay tribute to the resilient spirit of joy killing, and to commemorate their participation in the kastle, Dalton-Lutale and two fellow Riot Ghouls had "Killjoy" tattooed on their biceps.

Of the range of responses that the haunted house stimulated, the Ball Busta room proved especially divisive. While Kouri-Towe found the smashing of patriarchy evoked in the piece "incredibly satisfying and exciting," she acknowledged that "because it's a symbol of real anatomy," the work disturbed some people. She observed:

> The kastle provoked implications for people's experiences of trauma around gendered violence and especially violence done to bodies and anatomy. Certainly, there were trans women and allies who found it problematic because anti-trans rhetoric often involves self-proclaimed feminists using violent language to talk

about trans women's bodies. Because people carry their traumatic experiences with them, the analytic space of the performance can also be a space where people can be triggered. Even if intended as playful, not everything can be fun, especially when we're playing with topics connected to real experiences of violence.

IMPROVISATION AND ADAPTATION

While Mitchell provided performers with basic details about their roles and hired a makeup artist to create horror-themed special effects – "zombie makeup, gashes, wounds," Johnson explained – the details of how her collaborators interpreted their characters were left largely up to them. After all, as King suggested, the piece would have fallen flat had Mitchell tried to retain too much control. In response to the varying times that it took to lead visitors through the installation, tour guides developed their own scripts and routines. Assuming the persona of an acerbic freelance professor who'd "fired her pimp" in order to break her institutional dependency, King explained to guests how confusing "all this feminist stuff can be. Even I get caught up in the crush of the ideological grid." She then snarled, "If you have any questions, just keep them to yourself." King's girlfriend, actor Carolyn Taylor, developed a complementary character, a besotted teaching assistant, with whom King was having an affair. "From time to time, when we saw each other, we would start grabbing each other and make out," King reminisced, a spectacle that seemed to shock visitors more than anything else on show. "There's something about that real visceral lesbianism, that queerness on the ground, that is more shocking than nylon grannies with engorged clitorises," she said. As the anxious Regina Lickedher, Kouri-Towe also built on her own biography: "I had disgusting stuff on my teeth. My teeth were rotted. The backstory was that I was a precariously employed sessional instructor without dental benefits, which was not really so different to my life at the time."

The Demented Women's Studies Professors' palpable insecurity was exacerbated by the presence of gender scholars – Riot Ghouls – who, in the kastle's narrative, had usurped them in academic trendiness. Overtly alienating visitors, Riot Ghouls thrust sculptures of queer and feminist books at them and taunted, "You haven't read this." Or they singled out individuals as "problematic!" Dalton-Lutale recalled the pleasure she and the other Riot Ghouls experienced dancing fiendishly before freezing in place and forcing groups to walk through them. One

ghoul "lifted up her skirt and shoved her fucking crotch in their faces," she remembered. "Then we would start laughing, a powerful group cackle that made visitors really afraid. I remember people grabbing their loved ones." The Riot Ghouls' actions evoked the bullying and cliquishness, the herd mentality and school playground atmosphere, that subcultural groups can sometimes instill.

For a new sketch in Los Angeles, Lex Vaughn performed in the Daddy Pen, which referenced the cells in which butch dykes and gender non-conforming people had once been segregated in Los Angeles jails. She decorated the cell with personal items – "nudie cards, bone dice, roadside trinkets" – adding gifts from visitors such as "cigarettes, lip-printed toilet paper, baby Aspirin, caramels." With fellow performer Arisce Wanzer, and joined for two nights by Alex Hischier, "a great butch creature," she "lifted bricks as weights, threw cards into a hat, drew chalk drawings of women, and winsomely greeted every group that passed through, assuaging their 'fears' that the tour guide tried to spook them with before entering our area."

Also referring to the prison system, FASTWÜRMS presented a witch-identified installation in Toronto and then again in Los Angeles, the second time adapting it to account for local and national developments and concerns. Based in an industrial elevator for the Toronto iteration, FASTWÜRMS' installation presented craft objects made by prisoners that alluded to Pussy Riot. A volunteer from each tour group was invited to show solidarity with the incarcerated Russian feminists by toasting them with "witch piss" (lemon vodka). One of the FASTWÜRMS urinated into a shot glass with a realistic fake penis known as the Wizzinator. Marketed to help people evade drug tests, the Wizzinator comes in hues of "white, tan, Latino, brown, and black," according to the company's website. FASTWÜRMS alternated several Wizzinator colours during their performance to "confuse and conflate normative constructions around gender, race, sexuality and biology," underscoring the many ways in which their piece was "wrong."

In Los Angeles, FASTWÜRMS tweaked their piece, eliminating references to Pussy Riot (who had been released from prison) and replacing vodka with apple juice to assuage local preoccupations with sobriety.[16] Some audience members bypassed the shot glass and went "right to the source, on their knees engaging in fake fellatio with Kim's fake dick and enthusiastically sucking sticky apple fake jizz." This presented the artists with the challenge of how to keep their equipment sterile and witch piss sanitary in

order to avoid "the cliché of witches being responsible for a real poisoning."[17]

Responding to message board feedback they had received from participants, audience members, and other artists, Logue and Mitchell made several adaptations to the Los Angeles version. They scheduled live performance throughout its run, an addition that proved popular with visitors, albeit exhausting for participants.[18] They updated the Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas to feature Styrofoam tombstones dedicated to local icons, including *The L-Word,* Fresno State College's Feminist Art Program, and the black, gay disco Catch One. They added women of colour to the fake feminists in the Straw Feminist Hall of Shame. Other new characters included the rainbow-clad Intersectional Activist, who battled in the Crumbling Pillars of Society Room, and the Multifaced Lesbian Internet Troll, who scours the internet and shames those with diverging views, a nod to anonymous online comments made about the kastle. Reworking some of the handmade signs, they replaced "Don't Trip on the Severed Penises," which had provoked charges of transphobia, with "Don't Trip Out, There's NO Severed Penises." In their press release, Logue and Mitchell also finessed how they described the kastle, taking pains to underscore its complexity. Characterizing their craftivist world view as "dystopic/utopic," they described how the kastle "reanimates the archive of lesbian herstory with all its wonders and thorny complications."[19]

Because of these various revisions and the anticipation that accompanied the Los Angeles premiere, the revamped kastle attracted even more attention than it had in Toronto. Provoking extensive online coverage and packed audiences, Logue and Mitchell and their collaborators faced the quandary of how to cope with such intense public interest. Vaughn recalls how, on closing night, "Deidre and Al asked the group if we wanted to extend the hours to facilitate the swelling crowds. We all voted no, which felt incredible, because, first of all, it stuck with the theme of killjoy (You didn't get here early enough? Tough titty!) and, for the first time ever in history, someone got to say, 'The lesbian separatist event sold out!'"

RECOGNITION AND RESPONSE

Despite the huge audiences that *Killjoy's Kastle* attracted, the work received little notice in the art press.[20] This oversight is notable, especially when compared to the high critical regard that has been meted out to some recent artworks that address

the queer and feminist past in tones of earnestness, reverence, and melancholia.[21] It seems that the modernist critical aversion to humour, emotion, tactility, and popular "kitsch" entertainment still determines aesthetic value.[22] The critical resistance to art that reflects the experiences of sexually marginalized groups, especially when it does so in an overtly political or emotive register, was reflected in the mainstream art establishment's lukewarm response to *Killjoy's Kastle*.[23]

In contrast, *Killjoy's Kastle* prompted intense online and popular commentary. Logue is still trying to come to terms with the online critique, to place it in the project's history: "Was it a response, or was it part of it? As it can't be separated from the work now, isn't it really within its walls – part fear, part hope, ongoing and influential?" Many interviewees echoed Logue's sentiments. Yet far from dismissing the emotional difficulties that some observers registered with the kastle, most collaborators that I interviewed considered these reactions integral to the work that it carried out.

Commenting that "the online media response didn't overwhelm the haunted house," Kouri-Towe remarked that "it's just part of what happens with any provocative public installation and particularly one that is speaking for a community, particularly a minority community." Some participants suggested that the burden of representation placed on the kastle was exacerbated by the lack of institutional support for, and visibility of, queer-feminist art in Toronto at the time. King pointed out that in the period leading up to the exhibition's opening, the city's performance sector had seen a paucity of work by queer female artists and performers.[24] Within a context of such cultural "scarcity," a project of *Killjoy's Kastle*'s scale and ambition can stimulate collective expectations, some of which it will perhaps inevitably fail to meet.[25] "There will always be someone who says, 'You don't represent us. Where is my experience in this? This is not the queer-feminism that I recognize,'" added Kouri-Towe. "This will always be the burden of a project that gets a lot of attention and that speaks for a subcultural or countercultural movement."

Killjoy Kastle's complex status as an artwork that spoke to and on behalf of a minority group while operating under the name of one artist (or two, in Los Angeles and London) adds further nuance to how it was publicly received.[26] In an event that would merit inclusion in the kastle itself, Demented Women's Studies Professor Smith was subjected to an "undercover" investigation by a writer attempting to record the Toronto exhibition via spy

glasses for the Sun News Network. King also remembered that some visitors seemed determined to be "offended, angry, and unable to see the humour or criticism." Yet, King concluded, "Art is supposed to be somewhat confrontational. It should make one sit up, ask questions, make you uncomfortable. It doesn't have to just be entertaining or pleasing. The best art in fact won't do that. That's more than okay. Art isn't required to make you feel good. It is required to make you feel."

In fact, as noted earlier, the Riot Ghouls specifically addressed the sense of exclusion and cliquishness that subcultural groups can instill. On her encounter with the Riot Ghouls performance in Toronto, writer Alison Cooley commented: "Amid the sense of lesbian-feminist revelry, it was a visceral reminder that, for many, experiences of queer and feminist communities are often (and still) accompanied by a sense of alienation and confusion rather than warm acceptance." Cooley concluded: "The online discussion effectively demonstrates the necessity of vocalizing critiques and concerns that risk ruining the fun, even for an installation that engages in imagining a queer and feminist world at such an unprecedented scale."[27] As Cooley suggests, the emotionally and politically invested responses to the kastle are an inevitable, albeit sometimes painful, element of the exhibition's function as a site of agonistic debate.[28] Jacques Rancière uses the term "dissensus" to account for the process through which formerly unrecognized desires and singularities enter the public realm, a process that *Killjoy's Kastle* epitomizes.[29]

COLLECTIVE COAPPEARANCE AND TRUST

Killjoy's Kastle's promotion of creative and critical participation and world making evokes José Esteban Muñoz's understanding of queerness as something that is never "here" but that is "distilled from the past and used to imagine a future."[30] Throughout the interviews I carried out, participants described their satisfaction in being part of such a visible, emotionally charged, queer-feminist art project. Pyle related the sense of community spirit he had observed to "the energy of women's knitting circles, the pleasure of coming together to make things." In Los Angeles, performers took effort to "stay connected, informed, and safe and keep the collective strong and energized," Vaughn recollected, through daily check-ins, introductions to new performers, and debriefings. "Even though many performers never even get to see what is going on in the next room, we all know that we are doing it together." Rather than coalescing around a fixed notion of identity – what a sign in the kastle called "the sinking pit of

identity politics" – the subjectivities and collectivities imagined were relational, affective, and contingent.

These observations about group identity and visibility resonate with Adriana Cavarero's understanding of coappearance, in which one person does not own or tell the other's story but engages in a process of reciprocal narration.[31] Echoing Cavarero's discussion of "entrustment" among members of feminist collectives in Italy, participants emphasized the intergenerational trust and exchange that they had experienced in the kastle.[32] Remarking on the sense of intimacy fostered by conversations in Mitchell's studio, Gabel said, "Allyson trusted me so much that I felt I could trust her back. I have never worked collaboratively with another creative person who was the lead and who trusted people to know what they were doing." Mitchell's faith in her collaborators inspired their confidence in turn. "It was a huge boost to my – I don't want to say 'ego' – but to my sense of self-worth, as a creator and a craft person," said Gabel.[33] Gabel explained how Mitchell consistently shared resources, from teaching craft processes to making sure that contributors were well paid,[34] and sustained them with tasty snacks.[35] One of the works in the installation that Gabel contributed to visualized the project's ethos of nonbiological generation, presenting plush kittens erupting from the stomach of Mitchell's sasquatch/goddess figure, *Big Trubs*. Also emphasizing queer forms of kinship, Johnson said: "I feel like Allyson and Deirdre have been my bosses, my friends, my adoptive lesbian moms. We are like family."

Just eighteen when she joined the project, Dalton-Lutale approached it in terms of intergenerational mentorship, which connected her with "queer peers and queer elders." She described Mitchell as "a numero uno queer elder" who inspires "young queer feminists to add to the discourse."[36] The sense of collective security and strength Dalton-Lutale experienced was thrown into relief in Los Angeles. Because the installation spanned two buildings, at one point a group of linked-armed "security guards" (including Logue) escorted visitors between spaces. In a reference to volunteers who had defended the patrons of abortion clinics against pro-life protestors, guards warned, "It's not safe out here for you. You have to get back inside." Dalton-Lutale observed: "This was the most impactful part of the haunted house, the epitome of how I felt about the experience. The place outside this beautiful queer-feminist utopia is not safe for you. You need to get back inside this house where feminist queer culture lives. Although it isn't perfect, it really lives. I will

remember that for so long." Echoing FASTWÜRMS' understanding of the kastle's participatory, meme-making operations, Dalton-Lutale considered it an unfinished project with the potential to inspire new versions: "There ought to be young, little brown and black girls making a *Killjoy's Kastle;* and trans brown and black girls; and trans, masculine, brown and fucking black people creating a *Killjoy's Kastle* – that allows the in-jokes or whatever to happen in that context."

The complex responses that the work generated highlight the quandary facing politically engaged artists: how to reflect the experiences of marginalized groups without suppressing the derogatory stereotypes that have circulated about them or the damaging exclusions that they, in turn, have perpetuated? Mitchell and Logue's determination to foreground uncomfortable aspects of queer-feminist history activated what scholar Heather Love terms "feeling backward," in which the act of acknowledging regressive, potentially shameful elements of the past contests the normalizing effect of gay pride.[37] The sense that queer-feminist culture is stronger when its members are not afraid to laugh at themselves connects to Catherine Grant's reading of contemporary art practices that revisit and re-enact earlier feminisms as forms of fandom, where attitudes of reverence combine with creative antagonism and revision.[38]

A mode of embodied encounter that courts humour and surprise, pleasure and pain, *Killjoy's Kastle* stimulated new forms of collective knowledge and visibility. Mitchell and Logue's conception of the installation as one of shared exploration and affective encounter resonates with Simon Sheikh's understanding of exhibitions as critical sites where research does not just take place in advance but is realized through actualization.[39] As FASTWÜRMS reflected:

> *Killjoy's Kastle* was powerful and scary because most of the "inside" exchange of effect and affect was beyond representation in language or otherwise. This was a radical work of maximalist performance/installation art: the complexity of politics and positions and subjectivities was overwhelming. Even with many layers of humour and fiction and buffers of mediation and ideation and loving, carefully crafted consideration, *Killjoy's Kastle* was going to get to you.

With its exuberant aesthetics and collective ethos, *Killjoy's Kastle* interpellated everyone who encountered it, from comakers

and performers to audience members and antagonists, as subjects of creative and critical participation. For key collaborators, the extent of research, improvisation, and adaptation that the project demanded instilled in them a deep sense of queer-feminist connection, community, and trust. The kastle's project of bringing to light earlier moments of lesbian-feminist history resonated with its grounding in intergenerational exchange, mentorship, and nonbiological reproduction. Fusing tropes drawn from the radical fringes of two unlikely bedfellows, fundamentalist Christianity and second-wave feminism, *Killjoy's Kastle* appropriated the hell house's melodramatic staging and recruitment techniques. It riffed on born-again Christianity's use of participant engagement and haptic immersion to operate as an agent of queer-feminist education, disruption, and viral contagion.

NOTES

1 Art Gallery of York University, "Lesbian Rule," *Akimbo,* July 17, 2013, http://www.akimbo.ca/61256.

2 A radio program, Michael Coren, "Taxpayers Funding This," *The Arena SNN,* October 30, 2013, has subsequently been taken down from the internet. Details can be found on the Facebook page for *Killjoy's Kastle*. See Allyson Mitchell, "Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House," *Facebook,* August 23, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/events/166258290234212/permalink/172523529607688/.

3 Matt Stromberg, "A Queer Feminist Haunted House Filled with Riot Ghouls and Polyamorous Grannies," *Hyperallergic,* August 16, 2017, https://hyperallergic.com/245803/a-queer-feminist-haunted-house-filled-with-riot-ghouls-and-polyamorous-vampires/. The Los Angeles iteration was organized at the invitation of the University of Southern California's ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives.

4 ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries, "Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House," press release, October 2015, http://one.usc.edu/killjoys-kastle.

5 All quotations from participants, who Mitchell terms her "key collaborators," come from interviews that I carried out in July and August 2017. I circulated questions in advance and conducted five follow-up interviews on Skype. Five other participants responded via email.

6 Email sent by Allyson Mitchell, January 18, 2013; shared with the author on August 3, 2017. Mitchell's invitation directed guests to a link for the 2001 documentary *Hell's House,* directed by George Ratliff, filmed at the Trinity Assembly Church of God in Texas.

7 In this sense, the AGYU press release's characterization of the work as "crowd-sourced" somewhat overstates its collectively produced nature.

8 Mitchell, email, January 18, 2013.

9 FASTWÜRMS recalled how these initial discussions "focused on how fundamentalist Christians waged cultural, ideological, and rhetorical war against supposedly 'pagan' practices (like celebrating Halloween) and the homosexual agenda. Evangelical Christians answered the perceived threat of heavy metal music by replacing it with Christian metal music, which they played on Christian radio stations which disseminated through Christian marketing and distribution systems." FASTWÜRMS likened this practice to how

evangelical Christians take over school boards, which they then use to propagate creationist myths.

10 Visitors encountered a room where butch dykes stood at a bench smashing plaster casts of truck nuts, the testicle-shaped objects hung from the rear bumpers of pickup trucks and other vehicles as displays of machismo.

11 In Toronto, processing was facilitated by Julia Creet, Kim Katrin Milan, Ann Cvetkovich, Deirdre Logue, Ann Pelligrini, Sarah Schulman, and Tracy Tidgwell; in Los Angeles, by Patty Ahn, Anjali Arondekar, Lucy Burns, Ann Cvetkovich, Mathias Danbolt, Andrea Fontenot, Jack Halberstam, Amelia Jones, Alex Juhasz, Gelare Khoshgozaran, Greta LaFleur, Molly Larkey, Erin O'Brien, Karen Tongson, Chris Vargas, Jane Ward, Martabel Wasserman, Kyla Wazana Tompkins, and Jessie Womyn-Friend.

12 Art Gallery of York University, "Lesbian Rule."

13 To Toronto residents and those familiar with the city, the rainbow would have evoked the mural of a rainbow that had been painted at the entrance to a tunnel visible from the Don Valley Parkway, a major artery into downtown.

14 On Mitchell's lack of compromise as opening night approached, Johnson added: "Sleep? Food? Time? We just kept working through."

15 Lisa Derrick, "Killjoy's Kastle: Sexiest, Smartest Haunted House Ever!," *Huffpost*, October 27, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-derrick/killjoys-kastle-smartest-_b_8402546.html.

16 Nicole Vogelzang, who joined Kim Kozzi and Dai Skuse for the performance in Toronto, did not participate in Los Angeles. She told the other two that "the improvisation structure and performance anxiety of pissing on demand in public was so incredibly stressful that she would never do performance art with us ever again!"

17 FASTWÜRMS ended this hilarious anecdote by asking, "We hope this answers the question of 'Thoughts on the humorous nature of the piece?'"

18 King noted that during the day before the performances she and Taylor wouldn't speak for fear of losing their voices. They both fell sick after the exhibition. The exhaustive nature of the production, coupled with sensitivities regarding potential negative backlash, created an environment in which King felt that she couldn't complain about her tiredness. On the popularity of the Los Angeles show, Vaughn remarked: "It was hard to watch those poor tour guides get worked like sled dogs when the crowds were so intense. Some nights, they had over twenty people in a group, which was far too big to fit in most of the spaces, and then a lot of people were left out of the experience because they couldn't hear or see what was happening."

19 ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries, "Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House," press release, October 2015, http://one.usc.edu/killjoys-kastle/.

20 Highlighting her frustration with "a lack of interest by the art scene overall, especially in London and LA," Logue pointed out that *Killjoy's Kastle* was "embraced by the activist, queer and feminist community (even when the critique was difficult), but the art scene couldn't form an attachment, leaving KJK on the outside to fend for itself as an artwork, undervalued and isolated."

21 Some examples are critically applauded artists such as Andrea Bowers, Andrea Geyer, and Sharon Hayes. See Giovanna Zapperi's consideration of feminist artistic uses of archival documents, "Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art – Feminist Perspectives," *Feminist Review* 105, 1 (2013): 21–47.

22 See Jennifer Higgie, ed., *The Artist's Joke: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London/Cambridge: Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press, 2007). For a discussion of art's critical aversion to displays of emotion and political content in visual art, especially by artists seen as representing the experiences of marginalized sexual and racialized groups, see

Jennifer Doyle's *Hold It against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). Jess Dorrance gives an insightful account of how the ideas of Doyle (among other queer and feminist scholars) play out in reference to contemporary queer-feminist artistic practice in "An Archive of Toxic Feelings: Queer, Feminist, and Anti-racist History and Insidious Visual Trauma" (master's thesis, McGill University, 2014). On how the history of performance art excludes popular forms, including cabaret and stand-up comedy, see Gavin Butt, "The Common Turn in Performance," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 22, 1 (2012): 46–61.

23 See Doyle, *Hold It against Me*.

24 In a follow-up email, King elaborated: "In my opinion, the lack of resources available to queer women's work in the years leading up to *Killjoy's Kastle* directly affected its reception. Up until the end of 2009, Buddies (the big LGBTQ mandated theatre company in Toronto) had been producing annual and biannual events that served and supported the queer women's arts community directly – events like the Hysteria Festival and Strange Sisters Cabaret. When a new artistic director was hired at Buddies at the end of 2009 he cancelled both of these important and well-supported events. Certainly queer women continued to create work and get productions in Toronto between 2009 and 2013 (eg. Flerida Pena, Catherine Hernandez, Jess Dobkin, Alex Tigchelaar, d'bi.young anitafrika, Christina Zeidler etc) but on a much smaller scale, with fewer resources and smaller casts. I think that these kinds of material conditions have a real impact on the way performance productions are perceived. There had been nothing as big (in sheer size and involving as many people) as *Killjoy's Kastle* in nearly four years."

25 Kate Eichhorn makes a similar point in reference to the Canadian literary scene, noting that critics have largely overlooked at least two generations of innovative women writers in Canada. See "Beyond Stasis: Proceedings of an Unrealized Conference," *Open Letter: A Canadian Journal of Writing and Theory* 13, 9 (2009): 7–10.

26 As Mitchell wrote on the Facebook page for the Toronto event: "My name is Allyson Mitchell. This *Killjoy's Kastle* is my vision and I take responsibility for it. Your accusations are true. The kastle is a project of my own vision with my shortcomings, blind spots, humour, passion, creativity and privileges."

27 Alison Cooley, "The Haunting of Allyson Mitchell's Kill Joy's Kastle," *Canadian Art,* October 29, 2014, http://canadianart.ca/reviews/haunting-allyson-mitchells-kill-joys-kastle.

28 See, for example, Chantal Mouffe's "Art and Democracy: Art as an Agonistic Intervention in Public Space," *open! Platform for Art, Culture and the Public Domain,* January 1, 2007, https://www.onlineopen.org/art-and-democracy.

29 Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *Artforum,* March 2007.

30 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

31 See Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood,* trans. Paul A. Kottman (New York: Routledge, 2014).

32 For a discussion about relations of entrustment (or "affidamento") among members of women's groups, see Cavarero, *Relating Narratives,* 55–66.

33 As an artist who describes working with materials that comprise "kitschy shit," the faith that Mitchell put in Gabel to "to work things out" instilled her with a new sense of confidence and ambition. The size of her work has increased in response to Mitchell's attitude of "You want to make something that's ten feet, why not make it thirty feet?"

34 Gabel noted that she was paid well as a studio assistant, describing her time working on the kastle as one of her most stable periods of employment.

35 In relation to their work with the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG), the space and infrastructure that they established in 2010, Logue and Mitchell refer to their habit of sharing resources with those who might benefit from them as "fagging it forward." See Deirdre Logue, Allyson Mitchell, and Helena Reckitt, "Not at the Beginning and Not at the End: A Conversation among Deidre Logue, Allyson Mitchell and Helena Reckitt," in *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories,* ed. Amelia Jones and Erin Silver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 356–70.

36 Dalton-Lutale added: "And she does it in a really colloquial, accessible way. It isn't just about a wall of books that you ought to read, and if you don't you're a shitty feminist or a shitty queer person."

37 Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

38 Catherine Grant, "Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 34, 2 (2011): 265–86.

39 Simon Sheikh, "Towards the Exhibition as Research," in *Curating Research,* ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2013), 32–46.

Valerie Solanas as the Goddamned Welcoming Committee

FELICE SHAYS

So here's the thing.
Valerie was perfectly Valerie.
Rage-fuelled and not shutting up, Valerie Solanas wanted men dead. Then women would run everything with their natural power, love, and brains.
Fuck sex, fuck money, fuck women who sucked up to men.

Valerie Solanas as the goddamned welcoming committee – the first face of *Killjoy's Kastle*.
And me as Valerie Solanas. I fucking loved my job; it punched me in the gut and flew me over the moon.

So. The mortals wait – possibly hours – to get into the kastle. Valerie needs to tell them they're scum and useless. Felice needs to tell them a few rules. Valerie says Fuck Off. Felice says Welcome. No shortage of attitude from either of them. Every night, repeating and morphing the script – maybe 80 times or more a night – juggling the personal, the political, and the performative – left me spent and elated.

I wrote my own script. I didn't actually write it down until I had to go back to New York and someone else was going to play Valerie. I never memorized it. I wanted it fresh like improv. Every

person who went through the kastle doors met Valerie, and I met each of the thousands of them. And I changed my words because of them. Valerie would have spit on my softness. But I couldn't stomach being a gruff asshole all night. Her "kill men and the women who coddle them" got stuck in my throat. But as a performer it also felt crappy to not bring full-on Valerie. She had plenty more to say than "kill men" and was undeniably witty and sharp, even if you hated her proposed methods of revolution. Besides, patriarchal bullshit is beyond real, and tepid language makes me wince. How the hell do you privilege the cunt without trashing the rest? How to keep Valerie and also keep Felice?

Here's a little of that script. "CUT," "ADDED," and "CHANGED" are the Felice-ifying of Valerie's revolution.

> VALERIE. Welcome to *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House*.
>
> I'm Valerie Solanas. I wrote this book (*pulls messed up, tattered book from her overcoat pocket – displays the book to each person in the circle*), *The SCUM Manifesto. Society of Cutting Up Men*. You should read it. Every night before bed. Also, read it to your very, very, very small (*CUT:* daughters) (*CHANGED:* children) every night – in utero is best. Start 'em young ...
>
> First off? You can take pictures. But ... matter of fact, why not keep your phone in your goddamned pocket or purse and just experience the beautiful darkness that is this kastle? Let the only light that exists be the light that emanates from your cunts (*ADDED:* or assholes) and shines up to the sky leading us to the magnificent truth! (*SOMETIMES CUT NEXT LINE:* If you don't have a cunt [*ADDED:* or an asshole] [CUT: I pity you], stand near someone who does.)

Revolutionary separatist as welcoming committee? Welcome to *Killjoy's Kastle*.

Valerie Solanas Script

This script was used by the Valerie Solanas performers, who greeted and entertained visitors waiting in line to enter the kastle in Toronto and Los Angeles. The Solanas character introduced visitors to the ground rules for touring the kastle and helped organize the visitors into small tour groups. The character is based on the radical feminist Valerie Solanas (1936-88), who wrote the SCUM Manifesto *and shot artist Andy Warhol, both in 1968.*

VALERIE. Come! Come here! You, yeah – get over, here ... yeah ... here. Jesus, how many times should I say a thing? Step inside my cat anus circle. Come closer. I know, I didn't even draw this, and then I looked down and I was like – fuck! So, lesbian, right? Cat anus.

Come close. I don't want to yell – I've been saying this shit for days. Good, so good – better. I want you all to see each other and me. Good. ***SOMETIMES ADD:*** **Goddamn, you're a gorgeous bunch of freaks and perverts.**

Welcome to *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House*.

I'm Valerie Solanas. I wrote this book (*pulls messed up, tattered book from her overcoat pocket – displays the book to each person in the circle***),** *The SCUM Manifesto. Society of Cutting*

Up Men. You should read it. Every night before bed. Also, read it to your very, very, very small children, every night – in utero is best. Start 'em young.

Inside here you will see things you have never seen before. Unless, of course, you were here last weekend. To that end, I need to tell you a couple of things.

First off? You can take pictures. But no flash. No video. No movies. No audio record – matter of fact, why not keep your phone in your goddamned pocket or purse and just experience the beautiful darkness that is this kastle? Let the only light that exists be the light that emanates from your cunts (*ADDED:* or assholes) and shines up to the sky leading us to the magnificent truth! (*SOMETIMES CUT NEXT LINE:* If you don't have a cunt [*ADDED:* or an asshole] [*CUT:* I pity you], stand near someone who does.)

Also, okay, there are naked bodies in there. Not your scene? Cool, leave. I don't give a shit. I got like five hundred other people who are dying to come in.

And because we know not everyone is so smart, we've hired Demented Women Studies Professors to guide you through the kastle so that you can truly understand what it is you are experiencing. But they need to find you, so let me explain what's going to happen.

You are, all of you – not just the beautiful, groovy freaks you came here with – are now a group. A band – a clan. So, through lesbian processing, you will come up with your group name.

In a few minutes, I'll come back, ask you for the name of your group and the number of people in that group. Then you will go inside and sit on the chairs or hay bales on the grassy area. Stay on the grass! Don't leave the grass! You might not all sit together, but you will travel through the haunted house together. You'll wait and experience what might be your version of heaven or hell – the "Lesbian" Zombie Folk Singers.

If you happen to have a bodily need during that time, you will see two signs on the back wall: "Oppressed" and "Oppressor." These are the places you shit and piss (*CUT:* and change your tampon). If you don't know which one to go to, I can't help you with that one. Identity shifts every minute.

Are there any questions? Good, I didn't think so.

(*Return to group when seats are available inside. Rush up – touch any two people on their shoulders.*)

Quick! Tell me the name of your group! (*If they are still processing, make fun of them and get them to choose a name.*)

Fuck! That's an amazing, perfect name! (*Short riff on why it's great.*)

Okay – go see the Dead Dyke (*or Dead Dagger*) at the door, who will lead you to the Dead Dyke (*or Dagger*) inside, who will direct you to your seats.

GO! Get the fuck out of here. Don't make me keep looking at you!

4

Playing Demented Women's Studies Professor Tour Guide, or Performing Monstrosity in Killjoy's Kastle

MOYNAN KING

On Saturday, January 26, 2013, Allyson Mitchell and her partner, Deirdre Logue, held a meeting at their home in Parkdale, in the west end of Toronto, to introduce a project that they had been developing for a number of years. Logue acted as coordinator and Mitchell as creative lead in the introduction of a project called *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House*.[1] Among those invited to this community consultation–cum–brainstorming session were graduate students from the program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies at York University (where Mitchell is on the faculty), selected members of the queer and feminist arts community in Toronto (including me), and a group of young artists that Mitchell and Logue referred to as the Montreal Millennials. In a way, the performance of *Killjoy's Kastle* began that day when the idea was let loose on a group of artists and thinkers who instantly took up its monstrous charge.

In the Toronto (2013) and Los Angeles (2015) productions of *Killjoy's Kastle,* I played one of the Demented Women's Studies Professors. The Demented Women's Studies Professors acted as tour guides, leading groups through the work, approaching everything from a pseudo-pedagogical stance, and lending scripted and improvised contextualization to every aspect of the experience. We defined and described as we went. In this chapter, I will take you, the reader, on a tour through some of the key components of *Killjoy's Kastle,* as performed on the opening night of the event, on October 16, 2013, in Toronto. As we go, we will explore the temporal, aesthetic, and theoretical strategies that the kastle exploited, and I will demonstrate some of the ways the kastle challenged stereotypes and scrambled the

representational frames of contemporary queer feminism. Finally, I will deconstruct the right-wing media coverage of the kastle and analyze the enduring nature of lesbophobia. But first, I will introduce the inspiration for the project along with some of the theoretical terrain over which the work traverses and against which it struggles to exist.

Killjoy's Kastle is an act of feminist historiography and queer theory come to (larger than) life, one that teases out the activist impulses that underscore the Christian hell house performances that were its inspiration. Situating itself within the stylistic conventions of carnival haunted houses, *Killjoy's Kastle* emerged from a desire to reimagine the Christian fright night as feminist performance art with lesbianism at its definitional centre. Traditional haunted houses are designed to stimulate a fear response, to thrill and excite with spooky imagery such as skeletons, ghosts, and mangled or tortured bodies. Christian fright nights, or hell houses, showcase the horrific consequences of a sinful life (a tortured existence on earth and an eternity in hell) in order to convert the spectator to a better (that is, Christian) life or affirm the righteousness of an already Christian lifestyle. The kastle dabbles in the dramatics of this oppositional model. John Fletcher, in his theorization of Christian conversion performance, reminds us that "activism – performance activism particularly – has no natural configuration," no universal or ideal end. "Evangelicals evangelize," Fletcher says, "they seek to convert."[2] Hell houses, like all activist performance projects, are intended to function, after J.L. Austin, as felicitous performatives.[3] They want to *do* something; they want to affect real change and manifest real consequences, in this case, in the form of Christian conversion. *Killjoy's Kastle,* on the other hand, seeks not to convert but to deconstruct; its goal is to process the fragments of information, histories, and bodies that render the queer woman abject and monstrous. Mitchell says that she was "blown away" by the campy elements of the documentary film *Hell House,* by the "way that the community builds the Hell House together," and by "the sheer theatricality of it all." The earnest haunted house performances based in evangelical faith take everything to the limit; the wrath of God is made manifest with devils at the ready to punish and to damn. The camp theatricality and absolute conviction that Mitchell saw in these performances inspired the paradoxical conversion of a Christian scare tactic into feminist performance art, which involved a type of "brain flipping," as she put it, that made her ask, "What would be scary" about a lesbian feminist haunted house, and "who would be scared" by it?[4]

Killjoy's Kastle stages a display of historical and contemporary feminist types and stereotypes to unearth the phobic (fear-driven) expectations of its nebulous and marginalized identities. Grounded in the craft aesthetic that is Mitchell's signature style across her many diverse projects, this installation is a sculptural reflection on and of queer and feminist identities. Queer feminism stands ghosted by endless identifications accumulated over time, and the challenge for contemporary feminist performance is not to "banish these ghosts to find some pure unghosted authenticity" but rather, as Rebecca Schneider has suggested, "to summon the ghosts, to bring them out of the shadows and into the scene where they already exist, to make them apparent as *players*."[5] The complex realities of queer feminism (historically and now) are vastly underrepresented in performance. Making apparent these ghosts (and bodies) provides, as J. Jack Halberstam has suggested, "exciting opportunities for collaborations between queer cultural producers and queer academics."[6] Here, I am writing as both academic and cultural producer. I am theorizing from inside of the performance as both show and show-er. The kastle, in Richard Schechner's terminology, engages with "showing doing" (which is performance that is engaged in "pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing") and "explaining showing doing" (which is the work of theory).[7] In the kastle, theoretical reflection and performative enactment double into each other. Representation and social constructivism animate each other in a space where the ghosts and shadows of the done, doing, been, and being are always at the ready for their imminent return. Rebecca Schneider points out that in contemporary social reality "we are always a step or more behind or ahead or to the side, watching through the open windows being watched, performing ourselves performing or being performed."[8] As a feminist performance event, *Killjoy's Kastle* is not separate from social reality; it is a direct correlative that relies on, refracts, and talks back to the perceptions, operations, and disgust that are projected onto the mysterious and contestatory multiplicity of the lived realities of queer feminism and the agents of its cultural production. *Killjoy's Kastle,* in Elizabeth Freeman's terms, "mines the present for signs of undetonated energy from past revolutions."[9] Mining for undetonated energy from the past means seeking inside the cleavages of representations to follow new veins of logic, to scramble the truth claims of systemic historical narratives and calcified stereotypes. In our so-called postfeminist culture, Angela McRobbie says that "feminism is cast into the shadows, where at best it can expect to have some

afterlife" in the present.[10] To suggest that there really is an "after" to feminism, a "post" that seals our agony in the past, repeats a historical disavowal of the significance of feminism's role by the very promise of its transcendence.

MONSTROUS REPRESENTATION

The word "monstrous" is defined variously by the ***Merriam-Webster Dictionary*** as "strange and unnatural; gigantic (having extraordinary often overwhelming size); teeming with monsters; shockingly wrong or ridiculous; very great; and deviating greatly from the natural form or character." "All human societies," Barbara Creed suggests, "have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject."[11] This conception clings to a "narrative about the difference of female sexuality as a difference which is grounded in monstrousness."[12] Thus, the queer woman is doubly different and, as Hélène Cixous has said, "sublime, abject, and riveted, between the Medusa and the abyss."[13] Ghostly and chimerical, the lesbian is more likely to suffer from disavowal than prohibition, and when she does register in the field of the visible, she is often seen as monstrous – sterile, hideous, and filled with rage. *Killjoy's Kastle* disparages representations such as these by participating in them, by blowing them up to show their component parts – through exaggeration, theatricalization, and metonymic conflation – to a monstrous degree. Monsters have the capacity to transform and destabilize; they lurk, always shadowlike, in the margins. They possess the fear-inducing power of the unknown and tap into the giddy and ridiculous aspects of the uncanny and the grotesque. *Killjoy's Kastle* is a large-scale performance piece filled with feminist monsters that illustrates their histories of abjection, to trouble the popular stereotypes that engulf their representations, and to grapple with some of the very real and very scary skeletons hiding in feminist closets even still. The work's carnivalesque humour and chaos demonstrate its objective to entertain even as it engages in "showing doing" and "explaining showing doing." Humour, in performance, has long been regarded as an effective tactic for dealing with difficult knowledge. The humour in *Killjoy*'s *Kastle* is self-reflexive; it is a boomerang humour that is thrown out by the feminist artist to clock mainstream phobias of lesbian and feminist identities and then swing back to land in the lap of the one who hurled it. The feminist killjoy, as an appellation and reclamation, is mobilized to give a paradoxical levity to the cantankerous demeanour stereotypical of the angry feminist.

The feminist killjoy gets at the heart of what Mel Y. Chen calls the "dizzying is-and-is-not politics of the reclaiming of insults,"[14] because as Sara Ahmed asserts, "feminists do kill joy in a certain sense: they disturb the very fantasy that happiness can be found in certain places."[15] The feminist killjoy is here re-reclaimed and set up in a castle (albeit a haunted one) by Mitchell and Logue. This performance grabs onto feminist and lesbian stereotypes and tries them on for size to trouble the way that queer subjectivities are formed from representational impersonation in the present.

The practice of disidentification, José Esteban Muñoz's theorization of the subcultural process of reclaiming phobic representation, is central to the methodology employed in *Killjoy's Kastle,* which "is about rethinking and recycling encoded meaning" and using the codes of "majority identities and identifications" as "raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture"; in doing so, it "[cracks] open the code."[16] The kastle remediates (simultaneously reclaims and reconfigures) both mainstream phobic representations of queer and some of the subcultural manifestations of queer being.

The systems of networks at play in *Killjoy's Kastle* are made of malleable sculptural materials and, as a monstrous collaboration, these materials are shaped by a series of agents throughout its creation and presentation. Additionally, the materials change with each hand (or mind) that touches them and refocuses their intentions. The kastle is plethora. It is too much, and its fragmented invocation of past/present/future scrambles linearity and the attachments to progress that linearity seeks to support. During the kastle tour, the audience is led, for example, from the Polyamourous Vampiric Grannies (featuring a tableau of fanged, stuffed, pantyhose grannies who have engorged woolen genitalia covered in cobwebs and who are variously supported by walkers, a wheelchair, and a macramé swing, all under a large banner that reads "Just Not Married") to the Ball Bustas (two butch dykes in a dusty chamber who methodically smash plaster replicas of truck nuts). Directly after that is the Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party (where rowdy young ghoul's dance with oversized books of feminist and queer theory) followed by the Straw Feminist Hall of Shame (featuring the Spice Girls, Carrie Bradshaw from *Sex in the City,* and Lena Dunham). In the kastle, fiction butts up against reality, and the present inflects the past. This nonlinear mode of presentation embraces the possibility that ghosts can sometimes

return to places they never were or return from places they never left; it troubles the "framework of expectation." Lee Edelman, in conversation with Lauren Berlant, parses the nature of story to remind us that without a framework of expectation a story isn't a story but rather "just metonymic associations attached to a given nucleus."[17] As a mode of performance analysis, Edelman's theorization provides a unique starting point for thinking through the scrambled and syncretic nature of *Killjoy's Kastle*. Additionally, the kastle engages with the chance encounters of performative becoming that, after Elizabeth Grosz, "cannot be regarded as indetermination, as the absence of cause," because nonlinear performance and the open-endedness it engenders revels in "the *excess,* the superfluity, of causes, the profusion of causes, which no longer produces singular or even complex events but generates events, which have a temporal continuity quite separate from that of their causes."[18] This plethora – this too-much*ness* – and the generative open-endedness of temporal discontinuity lead me to wonder if, perhaps, what is queerest about a queer methodology is its inability to stay on message – that and, in Annamarie Jagose's formulation, its "fragmented and changing views," which liken the queer methodology to the effects of a mirror ball, a system of networks always in conversation, reflecting back onto one another.[19]

Through its ideological hauntings, its mirror ball/funhouse mirror modes of reflecting and refracting, and its monstrous dimensions and sexualities, *Killjoy's Kastle* is a sculptural performance event whose materials consist of the animate, the thought, the considered, the judged, the real, and the performed in order to destabilize the spectators' relationship to a subculture that is excessively, and sometimes parodically, displayed.

I'LL BE YOUR GUIDE ...

On October 16, 2013, *Killjoy's Kastle* opened in Toronto with a special one-time four-hour performance presentation, which involved a cast of nearly fifty people (lesbian, queer, trans, and other feminist performers) playing a variety of roles. By the time the doors opened, a line had formed that extended from the kastle's entrance (which was situated in a warehouse space behind the corner of Lansdowne and College Streets), down the alley and onto St. Clarens Avenue. The lineup would continue to accumulate new spectators throughout the evening's performance until more than six hundred people had toured *Killjoy's Kastle* in a single night.

What did they encounter? Let me be your guide.

After entering under large papier-mâché fangs topped by a rainbow and three-dimensional lettering spelling out the words "Lesbian Rule," you enter a hallway of hand-painted signs. Part warning and part foreshadowing, the signs declaring "Warning. Danger. Supernatural Pussy Ahead," "Expect Nudity," "Danger: Lesbian Performance Art," and "Back Tickling and Hair Braiding Indoctrination Ahead" introduce a paradigm shift that implicates a collage of lesbian rage and woo. Within the hallway, the ridiculous and the unthinkable are staged with humour and craftiness. The hall of signs is an open introduction to what is to come. "This is feminist performance art," the signs seem to say, "You will be triggered. Consider yourselves warned." And while these signs are humorous, they are also intentionally vivid in their desire to remind you that the conjectural world you are about to enter signifies the messy potential of lesbian rule in all its gory incompletion and division.

The kastle is a temporal scramble of beginnings – multiple, repeated, and inchoate. Beginning with performances in the lineup outside, the exhibition gives way to the beginning of the kastle with the hallways of signs, which in turn leads to the beginning of a show performed by the Lesbian Zombie Folk Singers, from whence you're put into groups of six to ten people and assigned a Demented Women's Studies Professor tour guide. Then the kastle tour begins. At the entranceway to the inner sanctum, you're introduced to the Giant Bearded Clam, a large figure with glistening ooze that has a giant finger protruding from its maw and long strands of gooey hair straggling from its edges. Many of the kastle's exhibits are supported by substantial descriptions from the guides, but this one needs only the pronouncement of its title. Then, after passing under the clam, we find ourselves in the inner sanctum, and the kastle performance begins … again. This multiply-staged set of beginnings scrambles the temporal frame, disturbs the frame of expectation, and creates space for new nonlinear forms of logic; the logic of ghosts, intuition, monsters, and fantasy; the logic of immersive performance, carnival haunted houses, and theatricality.

Inside the kastle proper, you're taken through a series of circuitous passages and introduced to a variety of exhibits, creatures, and images. In the first section alone, you're bombarded with sounds, sights, and ideologies. If you look one way, you will see a mirrored chamber filled with half-naked women (the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers) chanting and crying out in ecstasy. Turn around, and you'll see a small carpeted nook where

a trans man (the Carpet Muncher) sits gnawing on a piece of shag rug, reading Pat Califia's *Macho Sluts,* his beard glistening with pussy juice. Look a few feet over, and you'll find a stairway that leads to the Terrifying Tunnel of Two Adult Women in Love. And right in the middle of it all is a monstrous plush goddess (the Big Trubs Earth Mother) with a horde of kittens emerging from her split-open belly and apples bobbing in her menstrual blood in a bucket between her legs. The trajectory of the kastle does not build one layer upon the next. It is too much. It is too-much*ness*. It is scrambled. And in its scrambled trajectory, it seeks to offer a queerer set of possibilities while us guides – with our individual performances of faux, fantastic, and sometimes very real feminist pedagogy – "normalize" the experience by directing your attention to each exhibit in turn.

Inside this first chamber of hauntings, we direct your attention to the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers. A shimmering, reflective cave is occupied by four performers dressed only in hip-length ghost costumes (sheets over their heads with eyes and mouths cut out). They face one another in a circle with mirrors aimed at their naked and glistening vulvas. They rock and exclaim in a state of sexual excitation. This haunted (and haunting) exhibit summons the politics of twentieth-century feminism, which gleaned its tactics from the civil rights movement to mobilize the very potent concept that the personal is political. The movements that perpetuated the proclamation that the personal is political understood that to shake off the fear and shame of so-called personal problems had the potential to change the very fabric of society. This important political agenda, enacted in the form of consciousness raising by some twentieth-century feminists is, in its phobic contemporary representation, reduced to the stereotype of bored housewives staring at their genitals – a stereotype that attempts to return the personal to its diminished status as merely *personal*. In the kastle, the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers exaggerate this image and perform it as a highly sexualized representation, as ghostly creatures seeking comfort in their own and one another's exposed genitalia inside a mirrored chamber that is separated from the audience by a cord of thick, nasty hair. *Killjoy's Kastle,* in many ways, is as reminiscent of a freak show as it is a haunted house. In it, subcultural others are exaggerated and put on display for the audience (who represent the *normal* members of mainstream society) to gawk at. Staging these hauntings as a freak show displays queer feminism like a fun-house mirror that projects a belief system back to the audience to confirm their normalcy in

the face of these freakish characters who are simultaneously recognizable and inscrutable. The kastle resists the imperatives of two-dimensional representations, imperatives implicit in normal mirror reflections. A freak theory may be seen as an intervention into the concept of performativity, one that suggests iterations, not to produce norms or to produce normative antinormativity; it may be seen as non-normativity that is recognizable and inscrutable, as non-normativity that is comforting in its reassertion of one's own normalness.[20] Additionally, a freak theory is an intervention into queer theory in so much as it returns "queer" to its historical association with deviance and deviance studies. Heather Love reminds us that, "queer theory borrowed its account of difference from deviance studies."[21] The freak show draws connections to binary concepts of normativity and antinormativity by differentiating them in the extreme. Returning "queer" to its pathological state, as defined by its categorization as deviant, scrambles systemic historical frames to suggest the very real way in which political positions do not always progress – there is always the potential for circling back.

WHAT'S SCARY, AND WHO WILL BE SCARED?

When Mitchell and Logue launched an artistic inquiry motivated by the question, "What would be scary about a lesbian feminist haunted house, and who would be scared?," they were diving straight into the mess of Chen's "dizzying is-and-is-not politics of the reclaiming of insults" by embracing an aesthetic and a position composed of multiple concurrent identity attachments that trouble assimilationism and defy homogenous categorization.[22] Summoning the challenge of feminist temporalities past and present, and staging them in a gory, graphic, and parodic setting (the haunted house), is an effort to make connections that go beyond disgust, an effort to let queer life and identity be as chaotic and multifarious as it actually is. The mirror Mitchell and Logue hold up to the community for its self-and-other reflection is neither clear nor well lit. It is a queer mirror, and a reinscription of the queer mandate to unsettle, and unsettle it did.

Toronto's right-wing news outlet, Sun News, reported on *Killjoy's Kastle* for three days leading up to closing night on October 30. What was interesting about this reportage was not the sensationalism of rolling taglines on televised reports announcing "Lesbian Fright" and "Government Funding This!" on *Sun TV News*.[23] Nor was it the rape joke about how to get rid of a lesbian ghost by getting her "banged by the right guy" on Mike Bullard's radio show.[24] As terrifying as it was for those of us in the

show to know that mainstream media was encouraging the rape of the kastle's participants, what was most interesting to me, from a performance-studies perspective, was the way that this reportage defined and cemented the identities of the artists and performers involved in the work as *unperformed,* that is, as evidence of contemporary queer feminism in *reality* rather than as a theatricalization of its stereotypes and tropes. In these news reports, Mitchell is identified as "*the* feminist" or "*this* feminist" in an excitable speech act whose content is neither false, exactly, nor true, because, as Judith Butler articulates, the purpose of excitable speech is not to describe per se but "to indicate and establish a subject in subjection" and "to produce its social contours."[25] The process of tagging and categorizing Mitchell is an attempt to dehumanize her and objectify her because, as Chen asserts, nominal labelling articulates a bounded and knowable position that objectifies and renders one's identity finite – a state that is in direct contrast to the constant becoming of queer-feminist identities.[26]

Dainty Smith was the performer who, as a Demented Women's Studies Professor tour guide, led Sun reporter Marissa Semkiw on the tour that she documented for her televised report on *Sun TV News*. Smith remembers Semkiw and said, "My spider senses started tingling because I had her in my tour group, and as soon as I saw her, I remember thinking something wasn't right."[27] Semkiw (who video recorded Smith's tour without permission) tried to bait her with ridiculous questions, which Smith dealt with calmly and professionally, never really falling into Semkiw's trap. For example, while in front of the den of the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers, Smith asked the group if any of them would like to take this opportunity to look at their own vaginas – to which Semkiw asked, "How would I do that?" Smith replied, calmly and precisely, "Well, I suppose that you would lift up your skirt and look at your vagina." On the televised news report, which aired Semkiw's undercover video recording of Smith's performance, Smith was identified as an overpaid academic with a government-funded salary. In reality, Dainty Smith, a storyteller, burlesque performer, and performance artist, was paid one hundred dollars a night (for a four-hour performance shift) to play a role. She was not, as Semkiw reported, the authoritarian women's studies professor with a tenure-range salary; she was simply a queer performer performing a different kind of queer in a queer performance-art project for twenty-five dollars an hour. The fact that, in the midst of giant bearded clams, semi-naked ghosts, and rooms filled with crocheted

cobwebs, Smith's performance was taken to be real demonstrates the enduring stickiness of the phobic stereotypes that *Killjoy's Kastle* stages in excess. Marginalized identities cannot escape the limits of their representational frame. The chaotic complexity of queer identity formation also draws on its own representational types in a sort of "dizzying is and is not" performance/representation/doing/being loop. *Doing being* is not limited to the realm of cultural production; it is everywhere apparent in queer culture. The carnivalesque nature of this show gestures to the way that everyone participates constantly in its ongoing production.

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If what is queerest about a queer methodology is its inability to stay on message and its "fragmented and changing views," then the networks at play in the ideological systems of identity formation and fragmentation repeat, reiterate, and reflect one another in an ongoing act of moving on.[28] *Killjoy's Kastle* ends as it begins, in a temporal scramble of too-much*ness* – multiple and inchoate. After a tour through the Straw Feminist Hall of Shame, you're deposited at the entrance to the Marvelous Emasculator. Your guide wishes you luck and sends you off, implying that this exhibit marks the end of the tour. After touring through the Marvelous Emasculator, which is a dark passage that replicates classic carnival haunted house sensory-deprivation scare tactics, you re-emerge into the light, only to be greeted, once again, by your tour guide. The kastle ends with multiple endings. Ending with the Marvelous Emasculator gives way to ending up back in the hands of the tour guides only to be introduced to the Stitch Witches, a group of gender queers who toil sweatshop-style at crafts and offer you, as you come through, a shot of "witch piss" from a prosthetic penis. After this "last" exhibit, the tour guide once again bids you adieu and sends you into the Processing Room, where you are told to expect to be accountable and to contribute to ongoing discussions about the experience that you just had. The Processing Room (you guessed it) is still not the end of the kastle performance; you have to stop in Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppee, exit the building, pass a dumpster animated by ghoulish spectres such as a pro-choice activist in a knit jumpsuit covered in yarn-wrapped coat hangers, and then, finally, stop for a fish taco at the food truck before returning to the regular world of a cool fall night in the city.

What is terrifying to some is comforting to others, and what is progress to some is failure to others. As a performer in the show, I felt at ease in the immersive world of the kastle. I enjoyed going to work each night for nearly two weeks to a space full of queer feminists – cis, trans, and gender queer. As members of a queer subculture, we are uniquely affected by the impact of our cultural experiences and, as Sara Ahmed writes, "to be affected by something is to evaluate something."[29] To be affected and to evaluate can also be a personal practice that insinuates itself as a queer practice of turning and not turning towards our own always-in-process relationships to power and forever confronting our own always-in-process identities. *Killjoy's Kastle* embraces constant investigation; there is no getting over, not over it, nor over to the other side. The too-much*ness* of the kastle stages a paradoxical gesture to the paucity of queer-feminist cultural production in Canada in the present. *Killjoy's Kastle* is a cultural contribution to the queer loop of representation that is forever explaining *doing being*, doing being, evaluating doing, being affected by *doing being*, and struggling to just be.

NOTES

1 Later, it would become evident that Logue was also making a vital creative contribution to the kastle, and in the second full performance of the work, in Los Angeles in October 2015, Logue was credited as cocreator of the work.

2 John Fletcher, *Preaching to Convert* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 6.

3 See J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1975), 42.

4 Allyson Mitchell, interview with author, November 12, 2016.

5 Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 23.

6 J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 161.

7 Richard Schechner's terminology. See Richard Schechner and Sara Brady, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 22.

8 Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 25.

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

10 Angela McRobbie, "Post-feminism and Popular Culture," *Feminist Media Studies* 4, 3 (2004): 255.

11 Barbara Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," *Screen* 27, 1 (1986): 44.

12 Ibid.

13 Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, 4 (1975): 885.

14 Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 35.

15 Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 65.

16 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 31.

17 Lee Edelman and Lauren Berlant, *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 3.

18 Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 4.

19 For Annamarie Jagose's formulation, see *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 14.

20 Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art: A Freak Theory* (London: Transcript, 2012).

21 Heather Love, "Doing Being Deviant," *differences* 26, 1 (2015): 75.

22 Chen, *Animacies,* 35.

23 Marissa Semkiw, *Sun TV News,* October 27, 2013.

24 Mike Bullard, *NewsTalk 1010 Radio,* October 28, 2013.

25 Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 33.

26 Chen, *Animacies,* 74.

27 Dainty Smith, interview with author, July 20, 2015.

28 Annamarie Jagose, *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 14.

29 Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 23.

Demented Women's Studies Professor Tour Guide Script

This text was used by the Demented Women's Studies Professors, who led groups of visitors through the Killjoy's Kastle *in Los Angeles.*

DEMENTED WOMEN'S STUDIES PROFFESSOR. Are you ready?

Welcome to *Killjoy's Kastle*. I have been selected by a committee of killjoys who confirm that I am qualified to lead this tour.

(*Introduce yourself and list your qualifications.*)

It is a commonly suggested that feminists (particularly lesbian feminists) are, in fact, killjoys. They just aren't any fun, just won't play the game – revelling in the destruction of good times, they are happiness murderesses.

Millennium upon millennium of persecution, ridicule, erasure, and abject misunderstanding would put anyone in a bad mood.

(*Demonstrate with a look or gesture how you feel about this. Suggestions: shrug, smile, finger dragged on neck, gun to head, noose being yanked, etc.*)

People have also said that women's studies is a training camp for hardline man haters and that our program of study has ruined the nuclear family.

Yes, we are that powerful. But we aren't here today to talk about the pros and cons of academe.

We are here to talk about the lesbian feminists who "made" this haunted house (*use exaggerated air quotes*).

Let me get this crooked for you – some lesbian feminists are maligned, pushed into corners and intentionally wounded by lesbophobes, misogynists and the like ... There are other lesbian feminists who are indeed monstrous, ones who would rather stomp their own movement, resting comfortably in race and class privilege, then budge on stale ideas about gender and sex and bodies and ... Let's face it, it can all be very confusing, even if you are an insider like me ... chained to this duty.

Killjoy, who lives in this kastle, tries to find balance – being mean when necessary and nimble as required.

(*Gesture to suggest the group come in close.*)

Here we are at the entrance of the Marvelous Emasculator.

Gender is indeed a drag! And those (*pause*) of any gender who dare to enter the unknown of this space and open their minds to transformation will be amazed. Those who think they know everything will be terrified.

Now we enter the inner sanctum of a complicated killjoy to see what she has to offer and learn what she knows.

(*Gesture to the signs and point to one or two you like ... Slow this down so people have time to look.*)

Killjoy's Kastle is inhabited by a vast array of creatures. Some are nice, and (for good reason) some are not.

(*Gesture "this way."*)

Witness the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers. Great spirits of yore who come together to share truths about their lives – a valuable strategy gleaned from civil rights activism – now desperately trapped in a cultural stereotype about lonely, uptight, suburban, white women gazing at their own vaginas.

But these Paranormal Consciousness Raisers have, like the savvy killjoys they are, turned

that stereotype back on itself, reviving it as sex-positive show-and-tellers – telling all your dirty secrets.

Watch you don't slip on the pussy juice!

(*Gather the group closer before you enter the next space*)

(*If the performer is present ...*)

The Intersectional Activist spends her days battling these seemingly unmoveable structures while keeping it all together. An Olympian by any standards, she serves as a threat to simplistic feminisims as well as the structures themselves.

These are the crumbling pillars of society (*turn them each to the audience and read them*), the structures of racism, colonialism, transphobia, ableism, misogyny, et cetera. We all make our way through these structures daily, some with benefit and many to their detriment, but according to killjoy, this architecture must be taken down as it hurts us all. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US. Watch your footing on the rubble. Help us dismantle them by pushing your way through and onto the other side together.

Don't fool yourself. You can't go around. You must go through. Deal bitches!

(*Enter the next space.*)

Things are getting more freaky. Here we are at the dance floor, and it looks like we have a Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party in full swing.

They have been trained in this library (or labia) by leading thinkers. (*Point out some of the books on the shelves* – Gender Outlaw, *for example.*) Take a minute to familiarize yourself with this required reading, the radical nature of it as a collection of knowledge that many hold dearly and look to for inspiration. But don't take too long. They've had their noses poked into books for too long – their studies have fanned their feminist flames, and they want action.

You may want to move briskly through their celebration. They are in a frenzy, and they can be mighty bullies if they get any whiff of your

fear, and when they will strike, they strike hard ... Don't get too caught up in their clique!

(*Riot Ghouls laugh at people as they go through.*)

We move through this ambiguous hairy, hairy hole into the Daddy Pen, a space that holds the most ferocious of creatures in the kastle. I cannot guarantee your safety, so stick together. These are violent and vengeful criminals – so much so that the LAPD has placed these trans folks and butch dykes in the Daddy Pen from time eternal until the 1970s, separated from other degenerates for the illegal activity of "masquerading." Try not to make eye contact.

(*The performer is totally nice and says, "Hi, can I get you guys anything?" and opens the door. Eye contact: "You doing okay with all of this?"*)

(*Enter the next building.*)

Our history lesson continues as we enter the crypt. Here is the graveyard of dead lesbian-feminist ideas and organizations. Take your time with these spirits – mark their absence, their impact, and their loss. Perhaps you never knew, perhaps it is what forms your existence. Let's have a moment of silence.

(*Ask the group if they recognize any of their elders or herstories. You could ask if anyone has experienced a loss in their family. Take some time in the space then move them towards the Cat Tunnel.*)

How fitting that we enter the inner sanctum of the kastle through this archway of cats, familiar spirit animal and, well, as you know, the love of pussy runs deep with lesbians.

Killjoy has built this beautiful archway with her own hands to revise a creation myth or two.

Here we have the splitting open of the universe, a caesarean section that spillith forth its progeny of many kinds of pussies.

Here kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty ...

We are entering into the domestic space – the living space – the most normative of all ... or is it??????

Let your eyes adjust, and you will see, illuminated by the funky light, the Multifaced Internet Troll. Here she spins with her fingers ablaze, a beautiful creation of glorious proportions ... Don't get too close, though. She will friend you and then fuck you up with a single poke at those buttons, destroy your reputation, malign your good name, and confuse your allegiances. By day, her politics are right on. By night, she is a fucking dick – trolling, trolling, waiting for you to slip up. She is young, impetuous, and super queer. Or is she actually an old cisfart?

(*Troll snarls out hash tags.*)

Ah, the kitchen! The really fun part of any killjoy's house. It looks like she has been busy spinning something really fun for us to enjoy. Oh!

(*Clapping.*)

The Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies! They've been together for forever and a day. Their fangs have evolved to slip easily between the best and juiciest parts of the body. We're not just talking about old ladies having sex ... We're talking about *groups* of old ladies having sex!!!! Don't get too close – they are quite territorial. You are very lucky people to witness the inner sanctum.

Looks like it's dinner time always around here ... maybe we should move along quickly.

(*Move group through the washroom.*)

The toilette. A horror in itself – oh dear! It looks like someone is on their moon times.

(*There may be a performer hidden on the toilet who reaches around and asks someone to empty their diva cup.*)

(*Move into Straw Feminist room.*)

This is the Straw Feminist Hall of Shame. Anyone know what that is? (*See if anyone in the group knows.*)

I will enlighten you. Straw Feminists are the hybrid ghouls of feminism constructed by popular culture in an attempt to scare us away from true feminist practice. These "gals" call themselves feminist but have a highly suspicious (and

highly assimilated) politic. Watch out for those two in the corner especially. It has been told that they can cast evil spells with their eyes alone. The curator of this display has some really messed up politics – judgmental and turncoated.

(*If the character is there ...*)

Let me introduce you to Ms. Gallerist. She runs a large art gallery, and here she sits drinking the blood of her artists.

(*The Straw Feminist says some empty statements of "empowerment" to the group and talks about how she is improving the neighbourhood with her art space, moving transients out for "culture."*)

(*Hearing the noise of hammering and breaking plaster.*)

I bet you've been wondering what all the commotion is about!

Here we find a very controversial part of the kastle – the Ball Bustas hard at work. They can hardly keep up with the demand for their ritualistic ball smashing. These sweethearts got tired of the old adage "ball-busting dyke" and decided to just go for it full time. The balls, naturally, are symbolic of one of multiple interwoven oppressions emerging from the rule of white patriarchy. Looks like they really are just a symbol, though, judging from that pile of rubble.

(*Ball Busta says, "Turn back."*)

(*Move group quickly back through the Straw Feminist room and out the door into the outside, along the sidewalk towards the Daddy Pen.*)

Move quickly and peacefully. You are not totally under Killjoy's protection out here.

(*Shiver – terrifying.*)

(*Now you enter the Stitch Witches space.*)

Regard these Stitch Witches. They strike a balance in spirituality, gender awkwardness, and truly sexy and imaginative craftiness that killjoy finds very compelling.

These witches are hard thinking and soft working, and they are stitching away to make your minds fly with them. The oppression of witches

predates the colonization of the Americas, and the sign of the pentagram challenges the exclusionary values of white Judeo-Christian settler culture and the continuous persecution of witches – the original evil other that informs the current political discourse of the Islamic terrorist other, the homosexual other, and other others.

And these Stitch Witches fight back with their creation rather than destruction. Their weapons of choice? The needle.

Witchcraft to political action.

To the white, privileged, hetero/homo, normative one percent, witches are still darkness, evil, malevolence, and the binary opposition to "white" as good and pure.

Their needles point to a perverse stitching together of the war on drugs, the military-industrial-prison complex, and how mandatory drug testing for toilers of the profit machine destroys the lives of the working class and people of colour. With one last queering of the phallus, they offer you a sacrament ... Who will be brave enough to sip drips from the stich witch's needle?

(*Witches offer the group a shot of "witch piss" from their wizinators. After the brave one who comes forward and takes the shot, move the group back through the Daddy Pen.*)

Let's move along everyone.

And now the pièce de résistance, my favorite stop on the tour.

(*Move group to the doorway of the Real-Life Feminist Killjoys.*)

I now invite you to what may appear to some to be a bit of a chilly climate – in this room you will be in the awesome presence of several real-life killjoys! Get ready for a tsunami of processing!

You are welcome to sit down and discourse with them. Talk about your feelings, your doubts, your worries in connection with the experience you just had. They are professionals, yes, but this isn't a one-way street. You will be expected to contribute, to be accountable, and to feel.

Feel free to kill some time in the Killjoy's gift shop, and let me tell you that I had a great time sharing my valuable knowledge ... If you ever need a reference, just drop me an email. But remember, I need at least six months' notice.

Bye now.

A new semester means a new batch of students!!!!

The Sound of White Girls Crying

NAZMIA JAMAL

Gather round. Yes, closer ... no, too close ... boundaries! My name is Dr. Yoni Ladoo. I'm a women's studies professor. I'll be your tour guide tonight. I'm actually visiting LA from London to do a little research for my book. You should get your university library to order a copy when it's out – academic publishing being what it is, only white men are going to be able to afford to actually own a copy ... It's about sonic oppression in queer and feminist spaces – it is called The Sound of White Girls Crying. *But enough about me. Before we begin, let's go through the rules. You are going to have questions. Don't ask them. Please bottle them up with any feelings you might have and push them right down. You are free to cough these up like a nice big hairball in the Processing Room at the end of your visit.*

In late 2015, I packed a pair of tie-dyed dungarees, a shirt emblazoned with "My Girlfriend went to Greenham Common and all I got was this lousy T-shirt," and a polystyrene gravestone engraved with the words "Black Fist" and got on a plane to the west coast of America. It wasn't until I was at the airport that I wondered what I would actually say to Homeland Security if they asked about the purpose of my visit or the contents of my suitcase, but I arrived mercifully

uninterrogated and showed up at Plummer Park, headstone under my arm, to begin a week as a Demented Women's Studies Professor Tour Guide in *Killjoy's Kastle*.

Arriving felt like a homecoming. I'd already spent a lot of time with *Killjoy's Kastle* in London. The more portable parts – crocheted spider webs, stuffed rat, sponge labrys – had even lived in a suitcase in my kitchen until they were installed at the British Film Institute. At the London incarnation, I'd watched footage of the original Toronto house on a loop for days, wishing that I could have been there in person. Everywhere I looked in Plummer Park there was something or someone familiar.

Of course, I brought some of my own ghosts with me. The Black Fist headstone that went to live in the kastle graveyard wasn't just a relic from the London installation, it commemorated a long-dead group and relationship. The group's logo, which I'd gouged into the polystyrene myself, is my own fist, drawn by my sweetheart at the time at Lambeth Women's Project. Other hauntings were of the more sonic variety, as Dr. Ladoo might say. The soundtrack to the Riot Ghouls' dance party always seemed to be playing my most recent ex's new partner's band when I walked into the room ... But the hauntings were fun/ny too – an old lover appeared like a romantic visitation, words I'd spoken in a squat in 2002 were repeated back to me by a fellow earnest workshop attendee ... and in the end, I returned home a headstone lighter knowing that a gang of ball-busting dykes had my back.

Paranormal Killjoys

GINGER BROOKS TAKAHASHI

My genitals are my pleasure!
They don't define my gender!!!

– CHANT OF THE LA PARANORMAL CONSCIOUSNESS RAISERS[1]

We became the ghosts, channelling those who had gathered in living rooms with speculums and mirrors to explore our bodies ourselves.[2] Together, we learned about our genitals, what lay beyond the pubis. Typically unseen by ourselves, What does a uterus look like?[3] What about my cervix? Where is my G-spot? Well, maybe that came later. What does a lesbian vagina look like? Long hair, don't care? Trimmed? Waxed? Shaved? Can you even see anything? You have to get close.

Trapped in a darkened, carpeted, mirrored den, and anonymized[4] by donning sheets and face paint around our eye holes, we popped our vagineyes up and out. How much of us was visible? Was that a reflection, or did we just flash you in the eye with a flashlight? Was it the smell of our holes, or was it the sight of them that stopped you in your tracks? It smells like pussy in here, we were told. Get a room full of bare-bottomed performers together gyrating for hours on end, and we will create a potpourri, an

experiential womb room, the scent of lesbian bodies in motion.

vagina vagina vagina vagina vagina vagina vagina
vagina vagina vagina
vaGInah
cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt
cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt
laaaabiiiaaaaaaaa
cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt
vageeeeeeeeeen
vagina vagina vagina vagiiiiinahhhhhhhhhhh
Laaaaaaabbbbiiiiaaaa

Through hours of centring chant and dance, we tapped into the existential questions, queering the third eye: What is vagina? Who has vagina? What does a vagina look like? What does nonbinary vagina look like? Can we get some more difference in here? More vaginas? One performer brought movement; another, laughter; and another, eyeballs to accessorize their genitals.

We projected our vaginas, centred in our actions, and knew also that we were being observed/objectified from this intention. But could the explicit lesbian-feminist context shift us out of the space of being objectified, out of what our vaginas signify? At least one performer could feel someone's deeply objectifying gaze, and later it was confirmed that a person was taking photos zoomed in on our genitals and with the same lens throughout the haunted house.

In our lesbian-feminist ghost drag, we navigated the non-neutral space of the (lesbian) vagina, a collective improvisational endurance dance that received gazes of objectification, fear, and ambivalence through performing embodied vagina.

NOTES

1 I performed alongside Dana Bishop-Root, Jess Dobkin, and Jaye Fishel.

2 The practice of women gathering to self-explore their genitals using hand mirrors was a tactic of (predominantly white North American) feminist consciousness-raising circles in the late 1960s and '70s.

3 I just saw a uterus on Instagram; postsurgery, it looks like a drumstick!

4 Anonymizing myself by covering my face was potentially erasing my Asianness and other forms of difference, potentially rendering my body to be read as white. I navigated this cloak of erasure quietly, thinking about how some bodies are read as (white) lesbian feminist, how history and fantasy erase some bodies, erasing difference.

Menstruating Trans Man

CHASE JOYNT

I learned of Allyson Mitchell's plans for *Killjoy's Kastle* long before I sat behind a rickety door holding a blood-filled diva cup and screaming, "Why won't somebody show me how to use this?" I had been in a women's studies grad class where Mitchell screened *Womanhouse* (1974) – a documentary that chronicled the takeover of an old Hollywood mansion by women-identified artists in the early 1970s. A hypertextual meditation on women's labour, public-private space, sex, and isolation, *Womanhouse* both embodied and agitated growing debates about race, class, and gender in art and culture. When I wondered aloud about what a Transhouse could look like in this current moment of artistic and activist proliferation, Mitchell mentioned her long-standing plans to dyke up similar questions. Our ongoing conversations evolved to include what role trans and gender nonconforming people have played – and continue to play – in the artistic making and breaking of community histories. Ever a loyal fan of Mitchell, Logue, and their Feminist Art Gallery–inspired interventions, I followed closely as plans for the project emerged in public.

Trans and gender nonconforming people have long been at the epicentre of moral panics and debates about the use of – and privileged access to – public space. Most recently, bathrooms have

become the battleground upon which tensions between legal documentation, self-identification, and gender presentation have been staged. Thus, my motivations for performing as the Menstruating Trans Man were threefold: (1) to embody fractures between visual, aural, and affective languages (When denied access to the markers of a gendered body, what else do we hear/feel/face?); (2) to manipulate expectations about the political performance of masculinities within the project itself (What is made possible by and through the collision of the Menstruating Trans Man with the weighted significance of the ball-busters or the daddies in a pen?); (3) to playfully engage insider, multigender, feminist knowledges about health, eco-consumption, and histories of bodily maintenance.

Propped on a rusting-but-still-flushable toilet – and sandwiched between the genius performance of Chelsey Lichtman as the Polyamorous Vampiric Lesbian Granny and an ever-rotating cast of Straw Feminists – I screamed bloody murder/mother/martyr at each group of passing participants. I screamed stridently about the troubling procedural technicalities of the diva cup and silently about the brutalized classification and continued confinement of trans bodies in public space. Outside the performance area, visitors to the kastle were forced to contend with similar questions, as the bathrooms were no longer labelled for men and women but rather for oppressor and oppressed. The place of transness in narrative histories of lesbian communities is wrought with racialized and classed complication. Here, Mitchell and Logue didn't erase but rather staged the ongoing debates by making visible their authorial investments. Late in the evening – in a small but welcome moment of peace – a nameless human approached the stall to whisper, "Don't worry, buddy, we've got you. Just pinch, insert, and release."

A Ring around Your Finger Is a Cord around Your Genitals!

CHELSEY LICHTMAN

At twenty years old, I was an annoying but eager women's studies student of Allyson Mitchell's. I never would have thought that thirteen years later we would stand face to face every night for two weeks straight, alone but together, while she sewed me into a nylon bodysuit before each of my performances as the Polyamorous Lesbian Vampiric Granny in the kastle. The kastle was a tribute to the rituals created and maintained by lesbians over the course of many years, and here we were creating a ritual within the ritual. Like many, this ritual started out of necessity. My costume was a kind of mask made of pantyhose that had white yarn pulled through the top to make a wig, and my nude body was covered by a bunch of see-through nylon stockings that had to be sewn together into a full body suit in order to stay on properly. However, the stitches had to be undone in order for me to take the costume off. That meant that every night, a half hour before the performance was set to begin, Allyson and I would retreat to a room in the back of the kastle, where she would sew me into my costume. I trusted her with a needle even though all that separated it from my skin was a thin layer of nylon. I cherished this uninterrupted time that she spent focusing on my body. In some sense, I only knew my body because of Allyson.

Had I not learned about fat activism in her classes, I never would have realized that being fat didn't have to mean a lifetime of body hatred. I rarely feel safe in my body, but here I was, safe in my body and safe in this ritual.

I have lived a lifetime of shame as a fat person, a lifetime of trying not to fulfill stereotypes of fat bodies. I am especially obsessed with hygiene and making sure I never smell. The smell of a nylon bodysuit after a night of wearing it was dank at best; the crotch was especially sour. The shame of the smell of that nylon suit could have been my worst nightmare had it been someone other than Allyson in such close proximity. Only another fat person, most likely a fat lesbian with a sense of humour, could have made me feel okay knowing that the pungent smell of my sweaty nylon crotch might be wafting into their nostrils. We didn't need to stay in awkward silence about the smelly elephant in the room; we could joke about it together. It was a genuine joke, though. I wasn't the joke.

My role as the Kastle Granny felt as much of a ritual as mine and Allyson's nightly sew session. I was her, and she was me, just the way my nylon bodysuit wouldn't have been what it was had it not been for our nightly pre-performance ritual. Certain elements just need each other in order to exist as a whole, and this could be said about my costume and about how we all contributed to the creation of the kastle as a whole.

Once upon a Time I Was a Riot Ghoul

KALALE DALTON-LUTALE

I changed my outfit three times before leaving the house for the first Toronto run-through of the kastle, where I would meet everyone involved. I was twenty, fresh into my first year at York University, and kinda bummed my closest friends were all living in Montreal. I like to think that Allyson and Deirdre asked me to be a part of the project because they could smell the sad baby queer reeking off me. In Toronto, I played a Riot Ghoul, giving nasty faces to people who passed through our dance party. We were set up in a hallway that had all these lockers painted on the walls, giant women's studies books, and a cauldron in the corner, and all our faces were painted white and dead. On the opening night of the Toronto performance, I remember getting text messages from my friends who were waiting in line. They said it was out of control, around the block. I felt so special.

I remember more clearly the second time we performed, in LA. My friend Madelyne and I had landed after a terrible flying experience and cabbed over to West Hollywood with all our baggage and only twenty minutes to spare before we were supposed to perform. We slapped some makeup on in the cab and were ready to go. When we arrived, the other performers were, like, "Have a snack," "Have some water," "Not to worry. You're home.

You're here. You're safe." We caught our breath and got to look around the community centre that had been so transformed into a haunted house. Our Riot Ghoul room was decorated with the same books and wallpaper, and the same playlist from Toronto was playing. The familiarity made me smile. We warmed up with our other friend, Delilah, who had come from Toronto. We met our fellow Riot Ghouls and got excited: it was about to start.

Each Demented Women's Studies Professor had a different way of introducing our room, which meant there was a lot of improvisation on our part to respond to their cues. Mostly, the tour groups would enter as we danced ghoulishly, and they were warned not to "get too close." Once most of the group had moved across the room, we would all jump and yell "Problematic!" or "Have you read this?" pointing to one of the books and making sure to look creepily into their eyes.

On one of the last nights, I went through the haunted house with a tour. At some point, each tour takes a scripted "wrong turn" and stumbles outside. I will always remember this moment: surrounding you out there, hand in hand, were people making sure you found your way back, people who said, "It's not safe out here, get back inside." I really felt like I knew this place, these spaces of community and queer utopia, where I cut my teeth per se, where I met and made memories with my best friends. These were beautiful safe zones. Out there – in the world – isn't always like that. It might sound lame to other people, but Delilah, Madelyne, and I got "killjoy" tattooed on our shoulders while we were in LA to make sure we wouldn't forget.


LESBIA
ARTS
COUNCIL
ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
COUNCIL
THE ARTS
28YU

PREVIOUS 2 PHOTOS

26
Spectres such as the Undead Pro-choice Activist haunt the kastle's perimeter.

27
Valerie Solanas and Because I Am a Ghoul volunteers supervise the first few participants, October 16, 2013, opening night in Toronto.

28
"Back Tickling and Hair Braiding Indoctrination AHEAD" and "Super Natural Pussy" signage in the Hall of Warning Signs.

29
"Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers on stage in the Crypt.

30
"Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers pause for the paparazzi.

31
A Demented Women's Studies Professor tour guide describes the appetite of the Giant Bearded Clam.

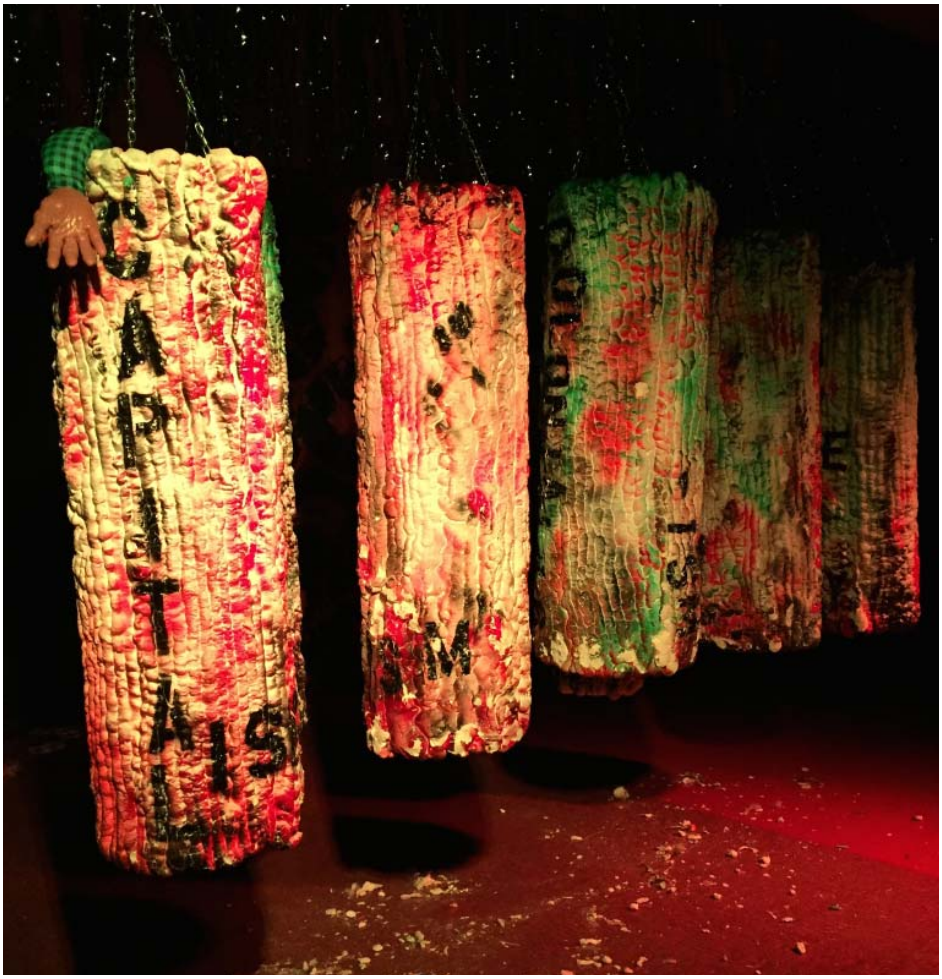
32
A Demented Women's Studies Professor tour guide picks her students from the crowd.

33
The kastle's ghostly Paranormal Consciousness Raisers work on getting to know themselves better.

34
The Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas.

FACING

35
A legendary "Lesbian" Zombie Folksinger eyes up the crowd.



36
The Crumbling Pillars of Society dangle and wait.

37
At the end of the kastle's terrifying Marvelous Emasculator, Chris Crocker cries out for gendered empathy, "LEAVE BRITNEY ALONE!!!"

38
The entrance to the kastle's most feared Marvelous Emasculator, the last light before kastle-goers spend a few moments in total darkness.

39
Some of the most interesting visitors get a scare inside the dark Marvelous Emasculator.

40
The Riot Ghoul's rage and disorientation is unparalleled in *Killjoy's Kastle*.

41
A clique in the centre of the Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party.

42
Mr. Daddy and Lady Daddy pose for their adoring fans in the Daddy Pen.

43
A Demented Women's Studies Professor tour guide contemplates the power of the goddess.

44
Participants get an eyeful observing the Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies' play party.

45
The Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies' "glam" participants by making meaningful eye contact.

46
Menstruating Trans Man asks for help with his diva cup.

47
The Dank Cave Monster shows off their damp, fragrant, mutant fingerlings.

48
Participants cower in the Straw Feminist Hall of Shame! Shame, Spice Girls, Shame!

49
The Queer As Fuck Labrys operator is at your service.

50
Plaid-wearing Ball Bustas hard at work.

51
Stitch Witches prepare their offering of sacred witch piss to participants.

52
Real-Life Feminist Killjoys help participants process what they've seen in the kastle's chilly climate.

53
Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppee staff pose with the "at your service," on-site, undead Calamity Midwife.

FOLLOWING

54
Activist trash overflows a dumpster's edges outside the kastle.


PUSSY
RIGHTS
THAN ME
EQUAL
This is a
PARADE

Riot Ghoul

ANDIE SHABBAR

You are now entering the Gender Studies Professors' dance party, populated by the undead but never underread Riot Ghouls. Like the belly of a beast, the room is warm, sweaty, and swollen with anticipation. We ghouls lay in wait, ready to swallow up or spit out anyone who dares pass through our party. Dancing to the beats of feminist punk rock, around a cauldron of giant razor-sharp pencils, we are ready to write you out of herstory! Under the dizzying pink light of the disco ball, you'll see that the room is wallpapered with a meticulous drawing of the Lesbian Herstory Archives. You better study hard; we will test your gender studies knowledge and scold those who are not in the know. We caress and hug sculptures of our favourite books to our ghoulish bodies and summon the spirits of feminist theory when we shout out the X-Ray Spex lyrics "Some people think little girls should be seen and not heard. But I say ... Oh, Bondage, Up Yours!"

When everyone leaves, the party dies down, and the archive comes to life. As the music fades out into a momentary silence and we Riot Ghouls take a moment to rest in peace, the Real-Life Feminist Killjoys can be heard from the other side of the wall. They are in the Processing Room talking to groups about their experience in the kastle. The killjoys' voices ripple through

wallpaper, swollen and bubbled up from the humidity. Although we can barely make out their words, the occasional outburst of killjoy laughter fills our dance cave as if it were coming from the pages of the books sketched on the wall. The archive is not simply a surface or backdrop; it lives, breathes, and its knowledge resonates into the room. Lesbian-feminist theory folds into the music and our dancing bodies as the soundtrack to our party starts up again. The killjoys that make up our well of knowledge cannot be seen, but they are heard; they are the DJs to our dance party, the ghostwriters of our performance.

Crossing boundaries both physical and political, the Gender Studies and Riot Ghoul Dance Party throws back the sensation of unease, fear, and anxiety that women and trans and gender nonconforming people experience in everyday space. Some visitors are clearly shocked by our unapologetic movements and attire. The immediacy of queer women's sexuality renders them speechless. They stand there, staring and stunned by sensory overload. Others express disgust by immediately recoiling their bodies away from us; some fidget nervously, scanning for the exit. A few people snicker and puff out their chests and make snide remarks. But we do not care; this is our layer, and we're in charge. We are here to penetrate your perception. Willingly or unwillingly, we ghoulishly thrust and gyrate upon your senses. Our bodies entangle with yours in the sticky hot atmosphere. You are caught in the thickness of the kastle's killjoy contagion.

Inconvenienced

MADELYNE BECKLES

"From the moment K and I had hailed a cab on the New York City Street that afternoon we were confronting racism." This sentence is the first of the third paragraph of bell hooks's 1995 essay "Killing Rage: Militant Resistance." She goes on to recount an instance of a seemingly simple and seemingly exciting action: travelling with a friend. But her friend is black, and so is she, so instead of a bourgeois tale inflicted with humour, or irony, this story contains a sequence of racialized incidents involving black women that provoked so much rage that they result in hooks's desire to stab the white man sitting next to her. Of course, with no outlet for the violence, the author is instead overwhelmed with grief and a feeling of invisibility.

I read these words for the first time on a bus from New York to Montreal. I was naive to have let them slip my mind, to assume that it would never happen to me; I would be experiencing a more drastic occurrence just one month later.

Kalale and I travelled together for the first time when we went to LA to perform as Riot Ghouls in *Killjoy's Kastle*!!! It was the first time that either of us had travelled with another woman of colour. We were both recently heartbroken and ready to escape.

From the moment K and I arrived at the airport, we began confronting racism. When we asked at the ticket desk to sit together, the young woman was so "inconvenienced" that she refused to look at us (hooks describes similar hostility when they stood in line at the airport). We got in line to board, and I began to feel ill. It was early, and I have a weak stomach. By the time we sat down, I was panicked. I was going to be sick but was too afraid to ask the glaring flight attendant to use the restroom, as she too had given us that "inconvenienced" look as we settled into the first flight of a three-flight journey. We hadn't even been prompted to buckle our seatbelts when I felt it come up.

K could see what was happening in my eyes – she was, after all, my best friend. We both scoured the seats for paper bags: I could be discreet, and it was only an hour flight. There was nothing there, though. I had no choice. K said that I was silent and graceful, that no one had noticed, and that I could go to sleep and deal with the consequences when I woke up. Instead, I decided to be honest and rang my service bell. Glaring flight attendant came over, but she still didn't notice anything. "I'm so sorry, I've just been sick under my chair. I know we are about to take off shortly, but I wanted to let you know." Her eyes widened, and she ran to the phone. She covered her mouth and continued to glare while she spoke. She hung up.

"You both need to exit the plane immediately."

She took our overhead bags and all but pushed us out. We had no chance to register what was happening and found ourselves on the bridge: cold, confused, and weak but with killing rage.

On the Cusp of the Kastle

KAREN TONGSON

Aftercare is rarely construed as the most glamorous, or scintillating, part of an encounter – an experience that arouses our sensations with bare flesh, witches' piss, daddies in the tank, and lots of lesbian feminists both straw and formidable. But apropos my day job as a Real-Life Lesbian Killjoy – a women and gender studies professor at a research university – there was, perhaps, no role better suited for me than hunkering down at the cusp of *Killjoy's Kastle*, in a big white tent, with others like me who were there to mediate the thrills and confusion with some good old-fashioned processing.

Isn't it a hallmark of lesbian experience to leaven what makes us high, what beckons us to soar, with hard questions about what you're *actually* feeling? No, tell me what you're *really* feeling. Some guests aptly noted ours was the scariest room of all. Others fled upon seeing what was in store.

Encased in blue and white tie-dyed canvas walls warmed ever so slightly by the kind of ambient lighting you might find in, say, a dorm room at Hampshire College, visitors to *Killjoy's Kastle* landed with me, with us. Most of us were "real scholars" (whatever that means); others were artists and community activists. For some guests, the scene felt all too familiar: "Sit in a circle,

say your name, state your preferred gender pronoun ...” For others, it was entirely new, a primer to the kind of “wokeness” that too often comes with a hefty tuition bill.

I was struck by the genuine traumas that needed work and care in the wake of moving through the kastle. Lots of gay boys expressed both titillation and disgust at “having to see a real-life vagina for the first time.” Several gung-ho drinkers of the witches’ piss were shocked to realize the concoction had alcohol and wanted earnestly to work through what it meant to break one’s sobriety, even unwittingly, for the first time in over a decade. (The alcohol was extracted in subsequent performances.) Older lesbians were brought to tears talking about the graveyard of lesbian venues, realizing how much the gathering places of their youth, of their prime, had been disappeared by capitalism, the creative classes, and even the cultural transformations within LGBTQ+ communities themselves.

What I anticipated would only be a pantomime, or parodic re-enactment of the work we all do with students, community members, and patients, made itself apparent as the real thing – an even realer set of encounters with people we didn’t know or understand within our institutional contexts or preexisting worlds.

It is all too fitting, in my mind, that this all transpired in a space that was peripheral to the heart of the action. Los Angeles, in all its glorious, gnarled sprawl, disavows centres. In so doing, I would argue, it also disavows improvised imaginaries about so-called peripheries. It is, though, in its interstices, in its edges, corners, and unremarkable spaces, that we are able to find real work, consolation, and community.

5
Processing Killjoy's Kastle: A Deep Lez Performance

ANN CVETKOVICH

My primary vantage point on *Killjoy's Kastle* is my experience as one of four killjoys assigned to help visitors process their experiences on the opening night of the installation in Toronto and, subsequently, as one of a rotating team of killjoys in Los Angeles. I wasn't quite sure what affective tone or mood we should aim to project that first time around, stationed in the kastle's final Processing Room, where the icy blue decor provided a calming but also chilling environment. Was it our job as killjoys to further harass and upset people, perhaps performing some version of a hell house conversion, or were we supposed to practise the deep listening and attention that exemplify the utopian lesbian-feminist values whose demise was being simultaneously mourned and celebrated in the kastle? As the Demented Women's Studies Professors said farewell to their tour groups and turned them over to us for a "tsunami of processing" we improvised on the fly.

For anyone interested in reception studies as a way to gauge a work's impact, the Processing Room was a good place to get immediate reactions about what stood out for people as they made their way through the blood and the ghouls, the "Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers, the Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies, and the Straw Feminists. Although we were given licence to harangue our charges, I found myself settling into the role of discussion facilitator, familiar to me from the feminist classroom, and I tried both to listen and to get people thinking. I wondered what it had been like, for example, for those not used to feminist self-help culture to see the exposed cunts (stuffed with eyeballs!) of the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers. I wanted to know whether

visitors were familiar with any of the oversized papier-maché replicas of classic feminist theory books in the Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party, or the defunct organizations, cultural locations, and ideas memorialized in the lesbian-feminist graveyard.

And, of course, I wanted to know about visitors' feelings: Were they scared? offended? amused? In general, the tour groups of six to ten people were pretty easy to please – the immediate reactions tended to be enthusiasm as well as amazement about the scale and lavishness of Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's maximalist vision. As I knew from having taken the tour myself in order to prepare, it was virtually impossible to see and hear everything as the dazzling visual installations were set in motion by live performances, an often abrasive soundtrack, and the constant patter of Demented Women's Studies Professors narrating the experience. If one of the tour's aims was sensory overload, the Processing Room, with its emphasis on conversation and "chill out," suggested that our job as killjoys was to counterbalance that affective register by providing space to reflect and unpack. Over time, my strategy for prompting group conversation was simply to ask people what they saw, rather than how they felt or what they thought, using the techniques of the review session to create more lasting impressions of the action-packed, high-intensity experience.

From there, I prompted discussion about particular rooms or locations as visitors brought them up, and some recurrent points of controversy emerged. We facilitated a group discussion about whether the Ball Bustas, two flannel-shirted butch dykes hammering plaster truck nuts, might be transphobic.[1] The by then large discussion group bandied about the issue of how satire and humour had been used to make literal stereotypes of feminist horror. One of the crucial points of variation in responses was generational. Some of the older participants who had direct memories of lesbian feminism said that the kastle made them feel nostalgic for how much had been lost. Many were not aware of missing lesbian feminism before revisiting it through the haunted house. For younger people who came through, including a group of high school students, the kastle was an introduction to feminist histories through a fun house version of a women's studies classroom or museum, where slogans and a bibliography were available through monsters, zombies, and humour. Indeed, given the number of professors in the house, *Killjoy's Kastle* was an opportunity to think about our work as teachers – to perhaps indulge in the places where we hold back

in the classroom. In the manner of the Demented Women's Studies Professors, we could give ourselves permission to engage in the kinds of bad behaviour that feminist pedagogy discourages, playing the killjoy by asking overly demanding questions or lecturing pedantically. Yet even as we were able to take refuge in performance as a way to reflect on the theory and practice of feminist processing, the experience was not always fun.

KILLJOY AS DURATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Some of the details of the killjoy experience are a bit of a blur because over the course of the six-hour event in Toronto the processing and facilitating also became durational performance art. As the groups kept coming through, I grew increasingly tired and felt like I was working a service-industry assembly line rather than giving good attention or maintaining sharp, proactive conversations. Indeed, through sheer fatigue I might eventually have become the killjoy I set out to resist – hurting people's feelings by saying the wrong thing or, perhaps worse yet, by communicating indifference or lack of interest. As the groups got bigger and bigger, it was harder to give each person a chance to speak or to linger with them long enough to get a meaningful discussion going. Sometimes, it felt like we were simply replicating the faux attention of the service industries, including schools, that have so often exploited women's affective labour.

In fact, in part because of killjoy fatigue, I might well have incited a critique of the kastle by a local blogger named Kalmplex, who wrote about their negative experience of the kastle in a post that circulated on social media. Although I didn't know it then, by the time Kalmplex arrived in the Processing Room, very late in the proceedings, they were already quite disturbed by their visit. Standing in the very long line outside the kastle, they had been alienated not only by their sense that the crowd was overwhelmingly white but also by some of the performances designed to hold people's attention while waiting to enter: among them, the blond dreadlocks worn by one of the performers, a nonconsensual encounter with the glitter that was scattered on visitors at the entry, and the man-hating lyrics of the "Zombie" Lesbian Folksingers (sentiments also echoed by snarling comments from Felice Shays as Valerie Solanas outside).[2]

Although the details are somewhat fuzzy, my memory is that Kalmplex entered the Processing Room pacing and talking to themselves in what I sensed to be comments about racism. I didn't quite catch the details of what they were saying, but I was aware of their agitated energy because so few people who had

come through were overtly negative or critical. I wanted to see the salon function as a place that could address strong reactions, and I looked around for my fellow killjoy Kim Crosby, thinking that it would be better for a person of colour to talk about race with another person of colour, but she was not there. I tried to engage Kalmplex by offering to listen and, using a line that I had come up with at earlier points in the evening as a bit of a joke about the dream of magical processing, I invited them to leave their feelings behind on the Processing Room floor so as to be able to exit the kastle with a lighter load. But the exchange was awkward because they didn't really want to be appeased. And, as they rightly pointed out in their later post, my implication that their feelings could be adequately worked through in that context or "processed" to the point of disappearing could be seen as patronizing or presumptuous. Strategies for de-escalating (or chilling and killing) feelings can also incite them, and this encounter suggests the double-edged status of lesbian-feminist processing as a practice that can domesticate or contain feelings as much as encourage their expression. My failure to respond adequately to Kalmplex's feelings continues to haunt me.

TAKE TWO: LOS ANGELES

Acting as a killjoy in Los Angeles was much easier than Toronto for many reasons, including a longer run over three weekends with shorter hours each evening and better control over the numbers. I was also better prepared because I'd had time to think about what had happened in Toronto and to figure out both how to make the labour more sustainable, especially since I would be doing three nights in a row not just one night, and what kind of image I wanted to project. Logue and Mitchell had assembled a rotating team of killjoys, so there were different combinations of people each time, many of them scholars from the LA area whom I knew, including Lucy Burns, Kyla Wazana Tompkins, Jack Halberstam, and Greta LaFleur (although one of my favourite partners was a fellow coworker from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival [a.k.a. Michfest] with whom I have so often shared tasks). Sometimes we shared the work by facilitating in pairs, sometimes by breaking into smaller groups so as to have fewer people to assist. I was able to take breaks to regroup, shift gears, and plan different strategies. Maybe I could be a better killjoy if I didn't have to perform – or teach – for hours at a time without a break! The unexpected similarity between teaching and performing killjoy was a reminder to me of how exhausting the affective labour of teaching can be – especially in the

women's studies classroom, where there is a high premium on listening rather than lecturing, which can sometimes be much easier. In fact, one of the reasons our role in the Processing Room might have been difficult is because we had to decide whether to serve as antidote to the nonstop and aggressive monologue of the Demented Women's Studies Professors and give the visitors their first chance to speak or be heard.

The setting in LA was also very different – the kastle's rooms were clustered around an open-air reception space in which the "Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers performed. While the California outdoors might seem at cross-purposes with Toronto's dark haunted house claustrophobia, the space functioned as a way for people to mix and mingle once they were inside the gates, and it probably cut down on the anxiety and anticipation of waiting in line in advance of being shuffled through the installation. Our Processing Room also opened out into this area, which included merchandise from local lezzie emporium Otherwild. Those leaving the house could continue to hang out in the reception space for as long as they wanted and reconnect with the place where they first entered, which in its own way helped with the processing. We killjoys also had easy access to this gathering so that we could plug in to the vibe, talk to friends, and listen to the "Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers, who provided some of the camaraderie and slow processing I wanted for myself and others.

The LA crowds were also more relaxed than the Toronto ones – more willing both to have fun and to learn, and they included a number of earnest undergrad feminist students, who were excited about their field trip into the histories of feminism. Which is not to say I didn't continue to experience some of the challenges that I had faced in Toronto, especially as I settled into the role of women's studies teacher with many of the participants, gamely trying to hear from each one of them and respond to their interests. I got a little tired of hearing about the Straw Feminist Hall of Shame and facilitating protracted debates about whether celebrities such as Lena Dunham and Beyoncé are feminists or not. Although this room was accessible to those who didn't know the back stories invoked in other rooms, the focus on contemporary media pulled attention away from *Killjoy's Kastle* as history lesson. I gently but firmly tried to focus attention on the graveyard or the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers to see if people had fully taken in the kastle's representation of lesbian-feminist histories that have often been castigated and stigmatized. One of my favourite ploys was to ask what they thought about the tombstone for the

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, the demise of which has been welcomed by some because of its failure to embrace transwomen. I would then explain that a number of the haunted house performers had Michfest connections in hopes of inviting further discussion of the festival's controversial status. I also tried to ask about racial representation whenever possible and to stimulate discussion about what might be missing from the kastle.

But there wasn't time for the full give and take of a seminar! And I kept getting tired. One system I came up with for saving time and energy was to ask each person in the group for a one-word response to their experience. I would offer up a "reading" of the combined set of terms, suggest that I was stirring the magic pot of all of the feelings, and, *poof,* send them on their way. With this fairy-wand version of processing, I tried to invoke the slightly hucksterish feeling of the carnival or haunted house, because it's a sham to imply that processing could be done so quickly. But this method only worked for me up to a point because I wasn't really getting the input from people or performing the back and forth that I consider central to processing.

Even with a reduced workload and numbers in Los Angeles, at the end of each night and the weekend, I was still aware of the performative labour required by *Killjoy's Kastle*. We had a sweet circle of introductions at the beginning of each evening as a way to acknowledge the many people who would be participating – the volunteers who performed in the kastle were doing hard work, and one reason it is such an ambitious project, and one that can't necessarily be held to a static or singular meaning, is that it depends on collective participation to make it come alive. It was interesting to debrief with those working in other areas of the kastle about their experiences with the *longue durée* of performance – for those who were not having to directly engage with the audience, there was still the physical challenge of repetition without a break. Would it have been different if we could have paused between groups or changed our script? The kastle seeks to create collectivity, but just as the Processing Room seemed to promise understanding and closure yet also performed processing as incomplete or conflicted, those of us who were participants were not always able to find an optimal way of being together.

PERFORMING THE KILLJOY

My chance to perform the killjoy and my difficulties in doing so have prompted me to think about Sara Ahmed's coinage of the

term "killjoy," especially since it has been taken up so vigorously not just by Mitchell and Logue in paying homage through the title of their work but by feminists, especially young ones. Originating with Ahmed's refusal of normative versions of "the promise of happiness," the feminist killjoy provides a brilliantly catchy hook to insist on the power of negative affect and a refusal to be happy as a form of feminist affective politics.[3] The touchstone for her was the childhood scene of interrupting the dinner table to refuse what others are saying, a performative drama that also carries the spatial orientation that runs through Ahmed's work on queer phenomenology and institutional racism. Ahmed herself has continued to live and work under the rubric of the term through, for example, her very successful blog, *Feminist Killjoy,* the subtitle of which is *Killing Joy as World Making,* which signals the killjoy's productive power against those who see her as deflating situations by saying no.

In her capacity for world making, the feminist killjoy has gone viral within feminist circles. A web search shows blog posts that have taken up the phrase and turned it into a point of pride, and especially notable is the merchandise for sale on Etsy and other websites, where buttons and banners and other products circulate the phrase as a point of identification. One of my favourite designs is a necklace, available in gold mirror or pink-and-black glitter, in which the phrase "feminist killjoy" is spelled out in jagged horror-movie script. When attached to "feminist," "killjoy" seems to transform the bad reputation of feminism to one that can be celebrated, making disidentification attractive enough to wear as a badge of honour. Under the sign of the killjoy, a cross-generational cadre of academics and activists can embrace a feminism that no longer has to be purged of its bad feelings or its reputation for political correctness or humourlessness. Who saw that coming?

Ahmed's rehabilitation of feminism through the figure of the killjoy is a perfect inspiration for *Killjoy's Kastle*. Her focus on affect and on space, areas of inquiry that represent recent developments in queer feminism, builds bridges between feminist generations,[4] which has also been a hallmark of Mitchell's work, as exemplified by her "Deep Lez" manifesto. Like other queer affect theorists, Ahmed focuses on negative affects (including happiness as a negative affect), thus avoiding overly romanticized understandings of feminist space. In her writings on the table, the chair, the meeting room, and the wall, she has been attentive to how mood and affective dynamics are produced by material encounters with environments. Recent trends in queer

affect theory that are sometimes pitted against earlier generations of feminism have been combined in Ahmed's work, a tendency even more explicit in her recent *Living a Feminist Life,* which continues to engage with the figure of the killjoy, as well as her work on the complaint as a feminist genre, so resonant in a #MeToo moment. Mitchell's invocation of Ahmed's killjoy (and her work more generally) is central to the affective capacity of *Killjoy's Kastle* not just to celebrate or mourn lesbian feminism unproblematically but to open space for its conflicts.

Ahmed describes the killjoy's capacity to cause trouble as emerging from the discrepancy between how you should feel and how you actually do feel that can produce the "affect alien" (another form of lesbian-feminist monster). For Ahmed, the feminist of colour who gets tagged with being angry when she calls out racism is an important manifestation of the killjoy – and Kalmplex's critique of *Killjoy's Kastle* could be seen as exemplary of killjoy dynamics. If the killjoy refuses to feel as others tell her she should and is willing to make trouble in order to articulate her feelings, then she is doing her work – even if she makes trouble for teachers or sympathetic listeners in the processing zone. At the same time, acknowledging Lauren Berlant's critique of "the subject of true feeling," Ahmed also notes that "feelings are not critique"; they are a starting point for processing rather than the final analysis. Not being able to close the gap between how you do feel and how you should feel, according to Ahmed often a space of disappointment, is an important place from which to work. For the processor as killjoy, disappointment might be one of the affective registers that emerges when creating space for "all the feels" generated by feminisms, past and present.

What does it mean to use the killjoy's affective complexity as a point of departure for Mitchell and Logue's design of the kastle? What kinds of spaces and installations can make room for affect aliens and killjoys? Among its many inspirations, the killjoy, in giving its name to Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's project, provides a helpful sign of the haunted house's feminist politics. *Killjoy's Kastle* seeks to explore the messiness of feminism, to encourage those who have some relation to feminism, however problematic, to continue to look at the monsters, the hairy, fat, and bloody bodies, the things that make us uncomfortable or cranky. Building on the conceptual space that the killjoy opens up for negative affect, Mitchell and Logue provide the literal spaces of the haunted house to bring to life that which may seem ugly, scary, dead, unlikeable. Combining humour with the colours, material textures, and imagination of art, the project invites

viewers, even skeptical ones, to enter the space of feminism, to look at its separatisms, transinclusions and exclusions, racisms, and odd cultural practices head on. If the killjoy can be held up as a renewed sign of feminism, the haunted house can also bring lesbian feminisms often declared dead back to life again.

The fusion of the killjoy with the haunted house (and hell house?) makes it possible to flaunt all the negative stereotypes associated with lesbian feminism. Ahmed talks about how the feminist killjoy becomes the problem when she points out a problem. *Killjoy's Kastle* takes on a number of "problems" – the ball buster, the hairy vagina, the old woman, the faux feminist – and transforms them into monsters. It's a lot to take in, possibly too much, whether for the newcomer who is not acquainted with the histories being invoked or for those who bring their own baggage about 1970s feminisms. By heightening both scariness and humour, the kastle provides a chance to indulge, as the Demented Women's Studies Professors do, in a kind of teaching that might rub some the wrong way. Books and ideas are blown up large, embodied and performed in ways that not only move you but might also assault you with their shrieks and stares. It's a wild ride. And like the haunted house, what makes you scared or uncomfortable might also make you laugh, albeit nervously.

KILLJOY IN THE HOUSE

Is it possible to be a failure as a killjoy? In giving permission for bad behaviour, perhaps the killjoy can also encompass the earnest, and potentially boring, feminist teacher that I felt myself become in the processing salon, the one who wants to know how you're feeling and who accepts without judgment whatever you have to say. That behaviour can also kill joy, not only for the listener but for the facilitator, in so far as it levels out or quiets feelings rather than igniting rage and indignation. The role of killjoy can also give licence to the teacher who is quietly frustrated that her students aren't getting it right and that her lessons are not being heard or understood to express the feelings of hostility and rage that lie just below the surface of passive-aggressive professions of sincerity or receptivity. In warning their tours to expect a "tsunami of processing," the Demented Women's Studies Professors implied that processing is often overwhelming and not always fun, that even in its more benign forms it is a killjoy experience.

In thinking back on how I might have performed the role of killjoy differently, I often wish I could have brought my killjoy charges back through the space for the feminist pedagogy of

experiential learning. I wanted to be with them as they were seeing, hearing, and feeling the different rooms and installations. I wanted to catch and work with their more immediate affective and visceral responses, including confusion, ambivalence, and possibly outrage, distress, or other feelings increasingly described as "being triggered." Although I, too, might have indulged in the lecture verging on harangue of the Demented Women's Studies Professors, I'm imagining a slower process of absorption, a combination of sensory attention and group discussion. I would want my groups to slow down to read book titles, tombstones, and other signs; to touch the cobwebs or stare into the vaginas of the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers; to listen to the "Lesbian" Zombie folksingers closely enough to catch the lyrics; or to get physical by fighting the pillars of patriarchy or dancing with the Riot Ghouls to the point of physical exhaustion that would produce other kinds of thinking. I wanted people to be able to occupy the spaces more slowly since by the time they got to the Processing Room, they had been so bombarded with sights and sounds that they couldn't always remember what they had seen or heard. And I wanted to be something other than a neutral or all-absorbing emotional facilitator who is supposed to be the feminist counterpoint to the didactic, overly intellectualizing lecturer.

One of the powers of Mitchell's artistic practice is her capacity to make feminism material through her commitment to a maximalism of colours and textures that produces knowledge through appeal to the senses and through repulsion as well as attraction.[5] In making lesbian feminism's excesses and stereotypes something you can see and feel, Mitchell and Logue are able to tap into ambivalences around feminism and incorporate critique into their installations. For example, the sign in the entryway that reads "Sinking Pit of Identity Politics" announces a self-awareness about the messiness of feminist politics and a humorous and knowing take on an oft-derided lesbian earnestness or political correctness. Ideas are as visceral as bodies in the kastle; the "sinking pit" is quite literal in the visitor's "exposure" to the real live vaginas of the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers, the ghastly bodies of the Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies, and the endless supply of truck nuts being hammered with ear-splitting ferocity by the Ball Bustas. Returning to the scene of essentialism's grounding in the female body, the kastle dares us to admit that we can still be made uncomfortable by vaginas that bleed and ejaculate, fat and aging bodies, and the impulse to violence and castration. Although the Paranormals are

conveniently shrouded in white ghost costumes so that you don't have to look them in the eyes and their vaginas are plugged and/or decorated with fake eyeballs and other accessories, can you really look them directly in the pussy? Although I fantasize about dwelling in the spaces, the moving-tour experience is partly the point; the spaces are animated, brought to life by these moving monsters for an evanescent performance. Part of the power of the haunted house is the "one night only" magic of having a space come alive through the collective labour of so many different people. It would not have been the same to walk through at one's own pace as though in a gallery. The haunting of the haunted house happens because we are engaging with live monstrous bodies that engage us, throw us off, demand a reaction. The maximalism of *Killjoy's Kastle* is that it offers so much, so many rooms, so many media, so many different points of view for each performer and each participant. I can't control it, much as, in my feminist professor way, even with its emphasis on process and on lateral feelings, I want to.

The kastle works on a visceral level, making feminist monstrosity iconic, but it is also loaded with information and histories at the textual level. There is a lot to see but also a lot to read: the signs in the opening hallway; the book covers in the Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party; the names on the portraits of the Straw Feminists; and the tombstones paying homage to dead organizations, bars, and publications. The Demented Women's Studies Professors, who act as guides or docents, combine the library and the museum with the classroom (as well as the haunted/hell house) to investigate scenes of learning, which have been an important site of feminist contestation, as well as a place where feminist histories have been passed on. In the Riot Ghoul salon, classic texts of feminism blown up large and the wallpaper from an earlier installation provide a reading list that would take an entire graduate degree to master, and the giant size of the book replicas highlights their value as art objects whose covers are their attraction. In the graveyard of feminisms, each sign could be the subject of a history lesson or a research project, one that might take viewers past the more familiar pantheon of straw feminists, who were the subject of many of the killjoy discussions – Lena Dunham, Oprah, Beyoncé. Although one was filled with the frenetic activity of the Riot Ghouls and the other was more somber, both were places to learn about feminisms, past and present. Also important were the signs that point to lesbian in-jokes and stereotypes, such as "Don't Trip over the Severed Penises," "Back Tickling and Hair

Braiding Indoctrination Ahead," or "Accountability around the Corner." Placed at the entrance to the kastle or in passageways where they might be passed by quickly, these signs were nonetheless part of the richness of the space in which every aspect of the experience was curated and provided both pleasure and knowledge.

Any one of these text-heavy locations could have been a site to pause for the killjoy version of the Demented Women's Studies lecture, perhaps heavy on didactic accounts of the connections among the plus-size replicas of books, such as the lineage that extends from my book *Depression: A Public Feeling* or Jack Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* back to classics such as *Lesbian Ethics* or *Our Right to Love,* or the intersectional histories that include women of colour classics such as Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought* or Trinh T. Minh-Ha's *Woman Native Other,* or the importance to theory of experimental writers such as Kathy Acker or the artists in the collection *Gay Genius.*[6] Staging a dance party in the library also enables a pedagogy of movement through which to absorb a feminist theory that is embedded in the environment quite literally as wallpaper or as books that are sculptural objects to be worshipped like icons at an altar.

This tension between somatic processing and verbal processing, made possible by the multimedia and performative nature of the kastle, was also present in my ambivalent approach to the affective labour of being a killjoy. One way I was able to prepare for the LA *Killjoy's Kastle* was to arrive early and spend time in the kastle before it was opened. Teachers can prepare as performers do – I would do physical exercises and breathing and meditation as well as imagining my lines, reviewing the spaces in order to learn more about them by being in them. I always discovered something new, whether a sign I hadn't noticed before or details from the installations, such as the intricate mesh of crochet cobwebs that adorned the Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies' space and that could absorb one's attention at the level of textural detail beyond the initial shock of their grotesque pantyhose bodies. Available for sale on the merch table set up at the end of the tour, the queer cobwebs offered the opportunity to haunt your own domestic space with witches and ghosts.

For a more meditative experience, the witches' salon was my favourite place to hang out preshow for what was also a ritual gathering of energy. Mitchell and Logue's close fellow travellers the FASTWÜRMS created this space for LA after spending the Toronto performance in an elevator shaft where, as the

penultimate performance before the processing zone, they peed "witchy brew" into a cup and then offered it to their visitors. In LA, the space was a dark sanctuary decorated with a cobweb of lacy black bras, black lace curtains with spiders on them, vessels filled with salt and candles, and a row of upside-down brooms. Practising witches themselves, the FASTWÜRMS brought their own sensibility and art/life practice to the kastle, linking lesbian feminism to a history of witchcraft that includes both persecution and the magical power of transformation. Starhawk has defined witchcraft as the "power to change consciousness at will," and the FASTWÜRMS created a space that worked that way for me and was a reminder of the kastle's ambition to do the same.[7] During the show, the Stitch Witch would sit at the sewing machine, putting the witches' pentangle on a rainbow flag. Before it, I had the darkened room to myself, the LA sun just outside the black lace windows but shut out from me. I was mostly on my own, and as the soundtrack for the evening started, I would lie on the floor and do yoga, feeling a special relation to these spaces. The chance to linger in a space haunted by witches who provide magic spells of protection was comforting, a way of meditating on the overloaded histories embedded throughout the exhibition. My own experience of pausing to metabolize the kastle through a bodily practice was what I needed to do to get ready to absorb the responses of those coming through the processing zone, and my own form of "processing" was embodied in sensory dialogue with witches rather than the "talking cure" of analysis that I was asked to do as killjoy. Perhaps this tension between sensory and verbal processing explains my ambivalence about my experience as a killjoy as well as some of the challenges for feminist pedagogy when it aims to address affective and sensory experience.

Killjoy's Kastle lets its participants celebrate, mourn, and critique lesbian feminism, and it also asks that we take a good hard look at the skeletons in the closet. The killjoy salon ideally suggests that there is no reaction that is not welcome. Those who find aspects of the kastle experience offensive or disturbing are the perfect audience for the killjoy, who wants to examine conflict and dissent. I would prefer that people be upset by the experience rather than just laughing about it, although having fun is another good outcome. Critiques of the kastle for failing to include all feminisms or for causing distress actually reflect the killjoy spirit the project aims to cultivate. The swirl of affects generated by the living, pulsing kastle can't fully be grasped by any one participant, including the killjoys, and my moments of

failure are part of its herstory. Serving as killjoy forced me to confront the limits of my own utopian aspirations for versions of processing that begin from a critique of safe space as messy not peaceful and that don't seek to prevent triggers but nonetheless hope to embrace or absorb them. With its multitudes of performers and visitors, bodies and feelings, texts and images, the kastle cannot be controlled or contained by conversation or discussion … but feminist teachers and killjoys will no doubt keep talking.

NOTES

1 For more on this issue, see Kyla Wazana Tompkins' essay in this volume.

2 Kalmplex's blog post is no longer available online, and I draw here from my memory of having read it shortly after the event. My aim here is not to comment directly on the blog post itself but rather to reflect on the memory of my own encounter with Kalmplex in the Processing Room.

3 In addition to Ahmed's essay on the feminist killjoy included in this volume, see *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) and ongoing commentary on the figure of the killjoy in *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

4 In addition to *The Promise of Happiness,* see *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004) and *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

5 For more on Mitchell's maximalism and her commitment to sensory experience, especially texture and touch, see Ann Cvetkovich, "Touching the Monster: Deep Lez in Fun Fur," in *Allyson Mitchell: Ladies Sasquatch* (Hamilton, ON: McMaster University Press, 2009), 26–31, and the discussion of "Hungry Purse: The Vagina Dentata in Late Capitalism," in *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

6 I've had a chance to think about the lesbian-feminist bibliography in Mitchell's work in writing about her installation *A Girl's Journey into the Well of Forbidden Knowledge,* which included the wallpaper based on the bookshelves at the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which was also used in *Killjoy's Kastle*. See Ann Cvetkovich and Allyson Mitchell, "A Girl's Journey into the Well of Forbidden Knowledge," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, 4 (2011): 603–18.

7 See, for example, Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance* (New York: HarperCollins, 1979) and Starhawk and Hillary Valentine, *The Twelve Wild Swans: A Journey to the Realm of Magic, Healing and Action* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000).

THE CRYPT: ARCHIVING AND REFLECTIONS

Facebook Statements: "We Learn More Every Time We Do This"

These letters were posted on Facebook by Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue in response to community concerns, articulated on the platform, about politics of representation in the Toronto and Los Angeles iterations of Killjoy's Kastle.

KILLJOY'S KASTLE FACEBOOK RESPONSE, TORONTO, OCTOBER 18, 2013

My name is Allyson Mitchell. This Killjoy's Kastle is my vision and I take responsibility for it. Your accusations are true. The Kastle is a project of my own vision with my shortcomings, blind spots, humour, passion, creativity and privileges. The Kastle is built to be a space of horror for many people for many reasons. This includes the horror of whiteness and the horror of cis-genderedness. The project began with a community consultation and was built by a team of collaborating artists who all believe in it. I am leery of falling into a pit of identity politics by identifying the subjectivities and identities of all the artists who performed, painted, workshopped, stitched and ran errands for this project.

In Killjoy's Kastle I have attempted to create a non-oppressive and inclusive space. Saying that, the space inside the kastle is still informed by the politics and problems that exist outside its

walls so it is not perfect. As well, it is a haunted house in which I am trying to play with stereotypes and realities of some of the greatest fears held about lesbians and feminists (as ball busters, carpet munchers, indoctrinators, collaborators and so on). I also chose to represent some of the more monstrous elements of lesbian feminist movements (such as racist cultural appropriators, gender binary orthodoxy protectors and self-righteous judgers).

With limited success I endeavored to create a non-racist and trans* space. At the entrance there is a sign that says "*no transphobic satanic humans allowed,*" there is light board messaging in the tunnel of two adult women in love which reads "*trans women belong here.*" The library, where the Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance party takes place, includes large paper mache replicas of Julie Serano's *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* and Angela Davis' *Women, Race & Class,* Trin T Minha's *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism,* and Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* ... among others. In the construction of the space I tried to replace essentialist representations of vaginas and vulvas with unexpected ones as well as work with a diverse crew of performers and representations of bodies in order to undermine whiteness. I take the criticisms and feedback of the project in relation to this work seriously and happily.

The haunted house uses unsettling images, sounds and odours (as there would be in any haunted house), in an attempt to be scary. Areas that may be of concern are 1. The ball busta room. In this room there are baskets of cast plaster truck nutz. In case you are not familiar with truck nutz – they are plastic testicles the people hang from the back of their vehicles. Playing on the stereotype of the "ball busting dyke" I cast the truck nutz in white plaster and some are pulverized. The Demented Women's Studies

Professor guides provide a context for the ball busta and clearly indicate that these nuts are the symbolic type that represent a kind of posturing of white masculinity that we usually see dangling from the back of a pick-up truck going 100 km/hr down the highway. The guide tells people that the nutz represent the intersecting oppressions of white patriarchal rule being smashed. 2. There is a sign in the entrance that says *"beware: don't trip over the severed penises."* This is a reference to queer cultural icon Hot Head Paisan by Dianne Dimassa – and it is the one sign that flags the fear that feminists are symbolic castrators. Other signs say things like *"danger: sinking pit of identity politics," "warning: lesbian performance art," "be careful: hair braiding and back tickling indoctrinators ahead" "don't slip on the pussy juice"* and so on. None of these signs are meant to be taken literally. I will post the full script that I wrote for the demented women's studies professor guides soon.

As for Morgan Sea's suggestion, I love her idea of a lez/transwoman pot luck/make out session and propose that it takes place in the haunted house.

I apologize to Kalmplex and Melanie for unruly performers who were too forceful with their glitter. What happened to you with the sparkles was really wrong. I apologize to everyone for the damaging representation of the zombie white girl Temagami tree hugger with dreads and chains. She is buried and will never return.

The Kastle is an art project. The space and concept are haunted by the undead ghosts and spirits of the whiteness and transmisogyny of feminisms past and present as well as the iconographies of queer and feminist art histories and activist spirits that will not die. It is meant to be an apt and symbolic funeral for dead and dying lesbian feminist monsters as well as a place to cathartically face fears, self-critique and contradictions. As the t-shirts in the gift shop read "I'm With Problematic." While not

everyone likes the processing room it seems to exceed the boundaries of the space and it too will not die and live forever on facebook and beyond.

Eternal love and please keep on killing the joy. I know that I'm going to ... ... Boo!

Allyson

KILLJOY'S KASTLE FACEBOOK RESPONSE, LOS ANGELES, OCTOBER 18, 2015

We are Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue, the artists who have been invited to perform Killjoy's Kastle in Los Angeles. We want to respond to these conversations. We welcome trans and gender queer people to perform in the haunted house and as guests. We arrived in Los Angeles from Toronto in September and have relied on networks of connection and trust to meet and speak with local performers to animate the house and this process is ongoing. The house is meant to be trans inclusive. We have created specific installations for LA that highlight and critique LA histories of intersectional trans oppression such as "the Daddy Pen" and the "Crumbling Pillars of Society Room." We hold space for trans women, trans men and gender queer people (specifically POC) to perform in the house and we have many roles to fill. We had organized transwomen to join the cast for opening weekend but unfortunately/ fortunately, they are highly in demand and their schedules got too complicated. We have only been open two days and have plenty of performer slots to fill and endeavor to search out (barring a tokenizing call for specifically identified performers) trans women, trans men and gender queer people to join our performance cast (that already includes gender queer and trans men). The house holds approximately 30 performers each evening and we welcome folks with our cold zombie arms who are interested in participating. If that is you, and you want to learn more, please contact us.

When we first presented this art exhibition in Toronto two years ago we were also open to discussing the complexities of representation, inclusion, silencing and privilege. The discussions raged on facebook as well as in the Kastle every night in the killjoy processing room. This is where we used the space to encourage conversations about these controversies and sites of contention that may not have occurred to our visitors otherwise. In the LA iteration we have taken great strides to respond to feedback from the Toronto exhibition. We have added portraits of women of colour to the straw feminist hall of shame, we created more gravestones for dead (but still haunting) lesbian feminist ideas like cisterhood and womyn born womyn, we have edited the signs, nuanced our script, and we have held more space for performers of colour and we have added the intersectional activist and 4 faced internet troll. That said, this is a project that will always be in process. It is not a celebration of lesbian feminism – but a nimble attempt to think through ghoulish stereotypes and monstrous histories from Valerie Solanas to Straw Feminists. Our intent is to refuse the simplicity of one story about queer/feminist art and activist histories. It will always fail.

We learn more every time we do this. Thank you for all of your contributions to the conversation. We encourage you to see the show and process with the killjoys and us. We are here for 8 more nights October 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30. Not on Halloween.

Allyson and Deirdre

6
Reflections of a Real-Life Feminist Killjoy: Ball-Busters and the Recurring Trauma of Intergenerational Queer-Feminist Life

KYLA WAZANA TOMPKINS

I've been paying attention to the most recent intergenerational, ideological feminist-queer wars with some exasperation, no little tiredness, and a sense of déjà vu all over again. I remember during the last two rounds of ideological wars – the race wars and the sex wars – that I was on the angry/wounded/not-yet-institutionalized side of the issue, and I then sounded a lot like the generation coming up now, a generation who are doing a lot of the necessary and exhausting push work around trans issues. Now, I'm that cliché – a tenured gender studies professor – and I'm on the other side of things. It's better than still being poor, but it kind of sucks to lose the high moral ground, that's for sure. I want to explore some of the history and ongoing present of feminist intergenerational ideological conflict, which has most recently and most often been framed in terms of the tensions between second-wave feminists and transgender activists. My reasons for doing this are twofold. First, I want to think less about the specificities of the issues at hand and make an argument for paying close and textured attention to generational anger as a recurrent sign of shifts in feminist thinking. Second, by proposing that feminists and queers engaged in intergenerational political tensions shift our conversational practice to honour anger, I want to put forward a different ethics of feminist intergenerational conversation than the one I think we are stuck in now by recognizing that intergenerational anger is a key mechanism through which feminist thought develops dialectically and it might just be the key to opening up new possibilities for building on past feminist praxis while undoing the exclusions of current thinking.

▼▼▼

I count myself among the people who have a lot of learning to do around trans issues. In 2015, three internet explosions unfolded between trans folks and (largely white, often lesbian, sometimes big-R radical) feminist structures: the social media explosion that accompanied the screening of *Paris Is Burning* in Brooklyn in July 2015; internal battles and letters addressing the Midwives Alliance of North America's new transinclusive policies later that same summer; and, closer to home for me, blogs and Facebook battles about *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House,* a performer-animated installation that showed in Toronto in 2013 and in Los Angeles in 2015.[1] A lot of the time, as a former domestic-violence worker and activist and now a solidly middle-class professor, I'm trying to just shut up and listen and learn from the new work and the activists in the field. I have a reading list I'm working through, though, as ever, not fast enough. I wonder at the energy it takes to mount a work of art, or organize a political action, and I wonder at the level of rage and vitriol that our era's comments sections and call-out politics seem to provoke. But while tensions between feminist and queer generations seem sui generis to feminist and queer life itself, the tenor, speed, and volume of these online battles don't seem to have improved anything; if anything, the anger seems to have escalated, grown sharper.

My first exposure to queer politics came through a childhood spent in the heart of early radical/liberal feminisms. Some of that history was documented in a film my mother, Lydia Wazana, made with our then roommate Kay Armatage (Armatage went on to become a women's studies professor at the University of Toronto). The film, *Jill Johnston: October 1975,* about lesbian writer, journalist, and dance critic Jill Johnston, depicts Johnston's trip to give a lecture at the University of Toronto.[2] At that time, Johnston had written three books – *Marmalade Me, Lesbian Nation,* and *Gullibles Travels* – and had achieved some fame as a dance critic at the *Village Voice*. She was also an out lesbian writer at a time when radical feminism and cultural feminism were beginning to find visibility in the mainstream press.

There's a lot to say about the limits of Jill Johnston's feminism, starting with whether it was feminism at all and ending with the fact that she herself ultimately disavowed what she called her "political period." At this point in history, it seems a bit too easy to pick off what contemporary feminists and queer theorists could dislike about Johnston's ideas, especially those

with the good sense to be politically centred in the work of woman of colour and intersectional feminist theory. Anyone schooled in contemporary feminist thought or movement politics might object, for instance, to the biological essentialism that underwrites Johnston's idea of womanhood as a stable category or to her tracing out of female identity through a kind of operatic Oedipal model. Certainly, her temperamental and diva-like behaviour was well known and came to haunt the film's producer-director duo.[3] Once the film was finished, Johnston publicly disavowed it and refused to let it to be shown in the United States. Much of this history is taken up in performance scholar Sara Warner's article about the film, "A Gay Old Time."[4]

Lydia Wazana, Kay Armatage, and crew in production. Still, *Jill Johnston: October 1975,* Kay Armatage and Lydia Wazana, dirs., CFMDC, 1977

One thing you can't say about Jill Johnston is that she wasn't what was then called a ball-buster: a take-no-prisoners dyke (her own term and also the term, hilariously, that she uses to describe herself and Kate Millett in *Jill Johnston* on the occasion of a shared trip to a strip club in London.) There's even a key scene in the film where she is interrupted by two men during a reading she gave at a local gallery, and she vituperatively loses her temper at one of them. Noting his presence in the room, she says, "Like, I feel a hostile male element in here, and it's bothering me … I don't mind guys being here, but I feel a hostile male element that I don't like and, um, that's making me, that's making me agitated."

When the young man attempts to engage her, seemingly protesting that not all men are hostile, she explodes at him:

I didn't say that … You're making a generalization, man. See, I'm feeling your hostility, man. You better get the fuck out of here, or I'm going to kick you right in the balls and get you out of here so fast, man. You better get the fuck out of here right away, cuz I don't like it … I don't like your generalizations, man, see? Your generalizations about [audio unclear]. I talk to plenty of men. I've got a son. So, sit down, shut up, or get out. Okay? I said, I feel a hostile male vibe in here, okay, and I don't like it … You don't feel it, and I feel it. You feel something different than I feel!

"I feel a hostile male element that I don't like … " Still, ***Jill Johnston: October 1975***

I want to linger here with the shape and form of Jill Johnston's anger. It rolls out, as she allows it to and seems to enjoy allowing it to, across the lecture room, where men and women are sitting on the floor listening to her speak and engaging her in conversation. Her body language is aggressive, and her voice is harsh: she points at the young man, threatens him in one of his most vulnerable (but also simultaneously erogenous and, for so many anti-violence radical feminists, *dangerous*) body parts. So precisely aimed, pointing her finger at him, her anger is set off by the young man's putative hostility, which she characterizes as a kind of diffuse "vibe" and as a "hostile element."[5] Her anger is powerful, taking its authority from a gendered affective form that coincides with the sexual politics she has been called to the University of Toronto to lecture on.

"You better get the fuck out of here, or I'm going to kick you right in the balls ... " Still, *Jill Johnston: October 1975*

The shape of lesbian anger. Still, *Jill Johnston: October 1975*

Later in the film, she tells an audience member: "I was just playing commando, trying to move everybody around."

Feeling – in its social, shared forms, affect – is the fuel that drives our political engagements, as Lauren Berlant and so many others have shown.[6] But emotions are felt and apprehended only through their historically possible legibilities. Here, I want to deploy what I think is one of the most profound insights that Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* affords us: that thinking with affect allows us, as readers and critics, to listen to political formations – to the situation we are in – before we can name what is going on: an emergent formation, in Raymond Williams' words; capacity, in Deleuze's terms; potentia, in Spinoza's. *Something is happening*.

What was going on, we can now say in retrospect, in the fall of 1975 in a room in Toronto with a bunch of men, women, feminists, lesbians, gay men, and lesbian feminists getting together to talk about what they would probably then call sex but that we today would call gender was an exploratory conversation about what must have then felt like a shaky political formation: lesbian feminism, or perhaps just feminism, or maybe both. The difference is still being worked out in their discussions. As the film shows us, it's a conversation that was then stuck in the mire of pressing and unanswered questions such as, What does it mean to be or become a woman? How can we be different kinds of women together? What does lesbianism have to do with being a woman? What do men have, and what do men get (own or apprehend) that we don't?

Johnston's answers to those questions align with much of the big-R radical feminist thinking of that moment: an anthropological ahistoricism that locates femaleness in relation to a mythical, collective, matriarchal tribal formation, in which self-realization – something yet to be gained by women – is achieved through identification with what men have: individuality. Johnston is very interested in psychoanalytic archetypes, in the drama of the child's growth away from her parents and specifically from the patriarchally dominated mother. As Johnston says in the film:

> I prefer to use the word "daughter" as new type of woman, somebody that has not, a woman that hasn't been born yet or that needs to be born into a sense of self apart from the imprisonment of the mother-world. It's hard to dissociate use of the word from the real biological mother, the role, and Mother quote-unquote in the archetypal sense of the word. THE mother. And I describe the natural biological mother, the mother who delivered me, and she wasn't my natural mother; she was therefore more in a position to give second birth to me and in that sense she gave birth to me and to the world. She wasn't holding on.

▼▼▼

From the perspective of feminist and queer theory in 2018, more than forty years later, Johnston's ideas might sound pedantic and dated. And, as transgender history and women of colour feminism tells us, some of the answers that emerged in that moment –

PREVIOUS

55
Killjoy's Kastle's entrance, Los Angeles.

56
The "Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers stage, Los Angeles.

57
Killjoy's Kastle's exit, Toronto.

58
The Hallway of Warning Signs, Los Angeles.


R.I.P.
Blood Sisters
not eternal
LESBIAN SEPARATIST DIANIC PAGANISM
here lies
GENDER BINARY
you were too small for this world
FURIES
COLLECTIVE
DARE
DYKES AGAINST RACISM EVERYWHERE
L.T.T.R.
Gaia's Garden
THE FIGHT IS FOREVER
Lesbians Against The Right
Gone but not forgotten
QUEER NATION
WOMEN 4 WOMEN
HERE LIES
TAKEN 2 SOON
The Lesbian Avengers
look young
stay fat
PRETTY PORKY and PISSED OFF
LESBIAN ART PROJECT
f's liberation
ZAP ACTION brigade

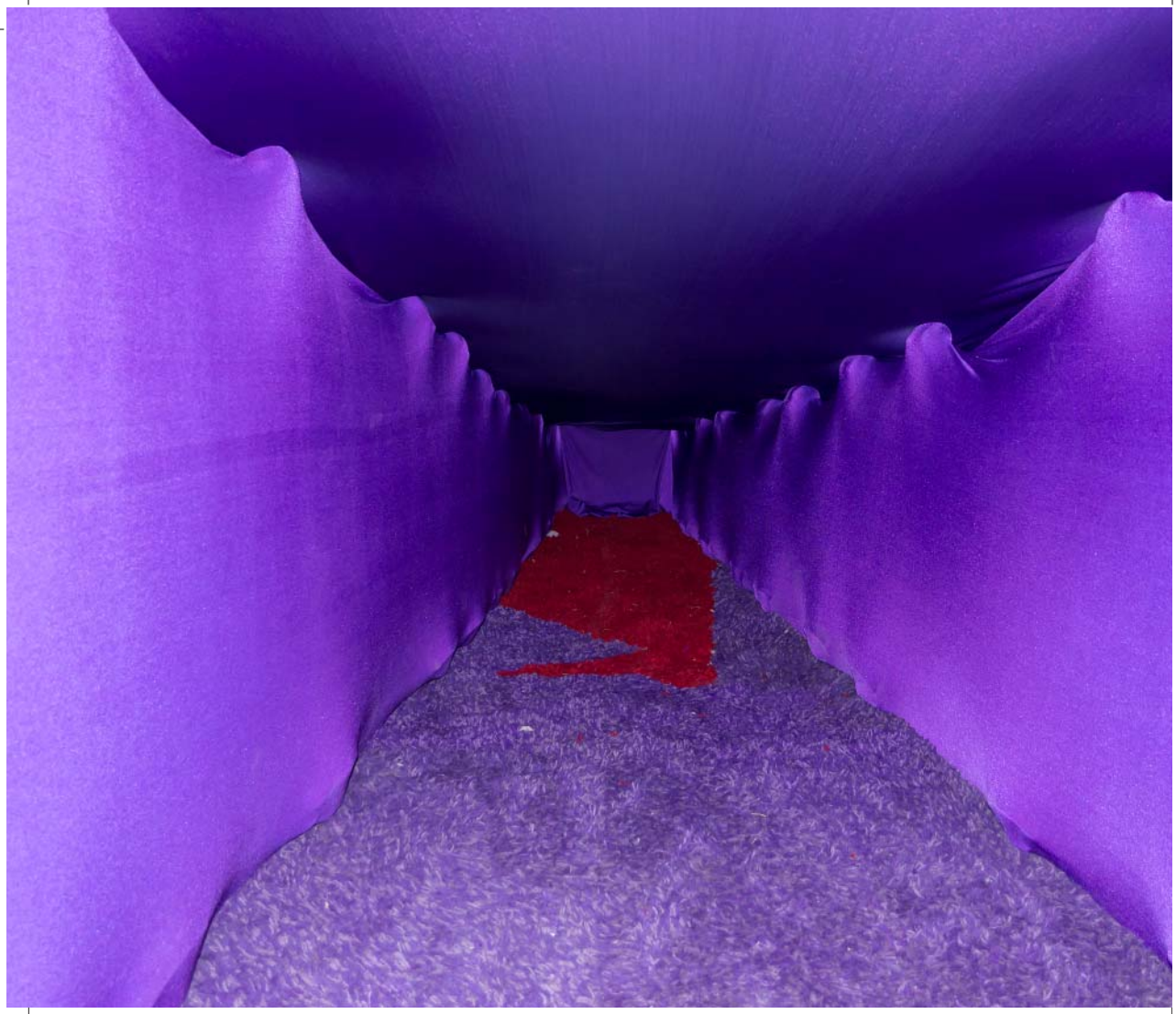
FACING

59
The Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas.

60
The Giant Bearded Clam.

61
Da Carpet Muncha's chewing den.

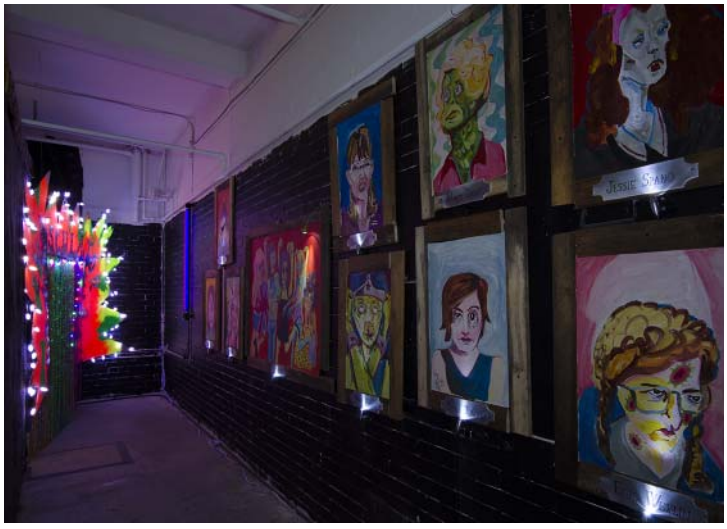
62
The Paranormal Consciousness Raisers' shiny cubby.



63
The Tunnel of Two Adult Women in Love.

64
Apple-bobbing detail from the Big Trubs Earth Mother's birthing scene.

FACING
65
The Big Trubs Earth Mother's creation myth birthing scene.



66
The Polyamourous Vampiric Grannies' play party, replete with giant crocheted cobwebs and an animatronic feline support companion.

67
Straw Feminist Hall of Shame leading to the Marvelous Emasculator.

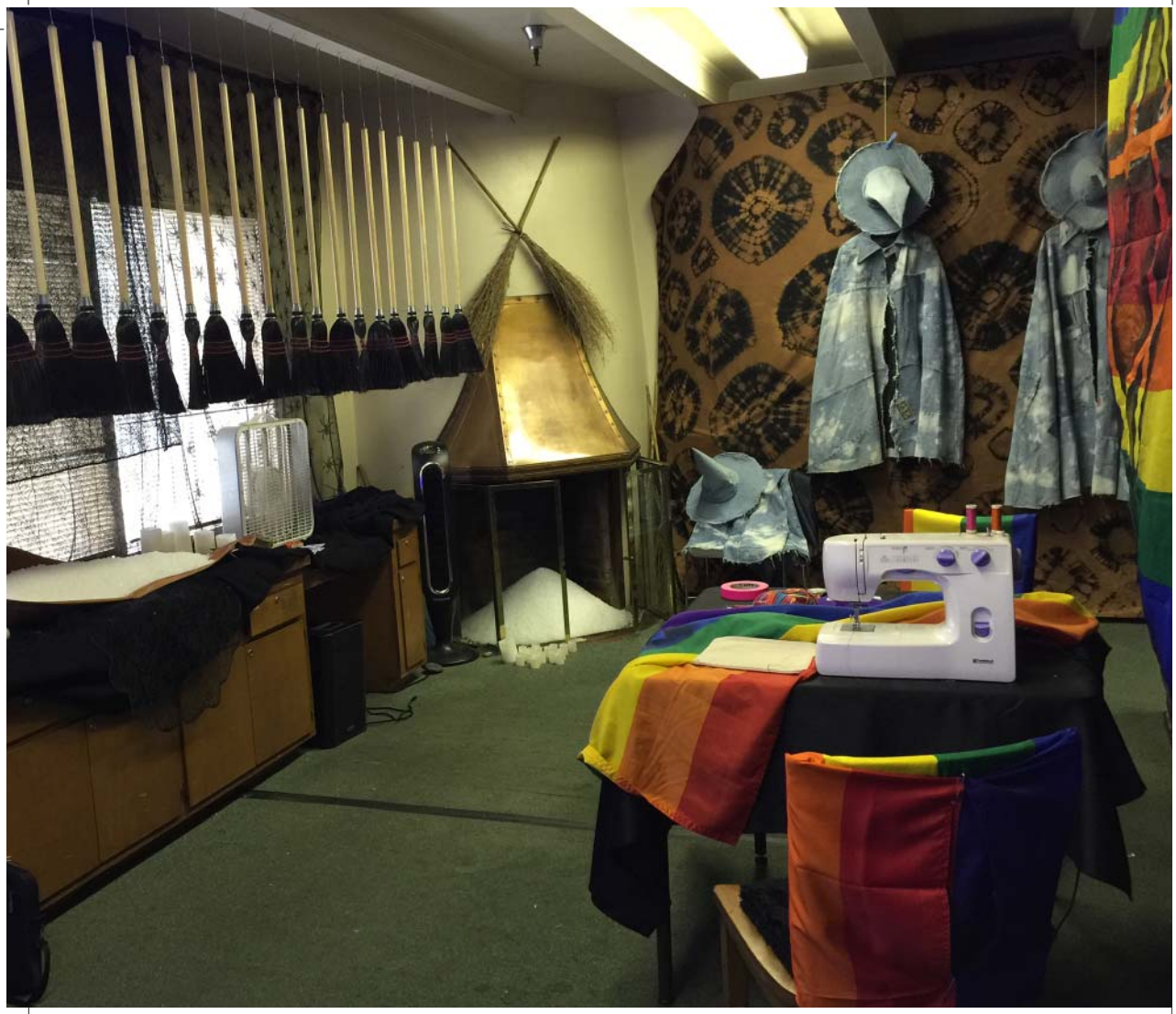
68
Papier-mâché books and hand-drawn wallpaper in the Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party.

69
The Riot Ghoul cauldron and pot stirrer.

70
Inside the Marvelous Emasculator with metres and metres of tie-dyed wonder.

71
The Crumbling Pillars of Society.

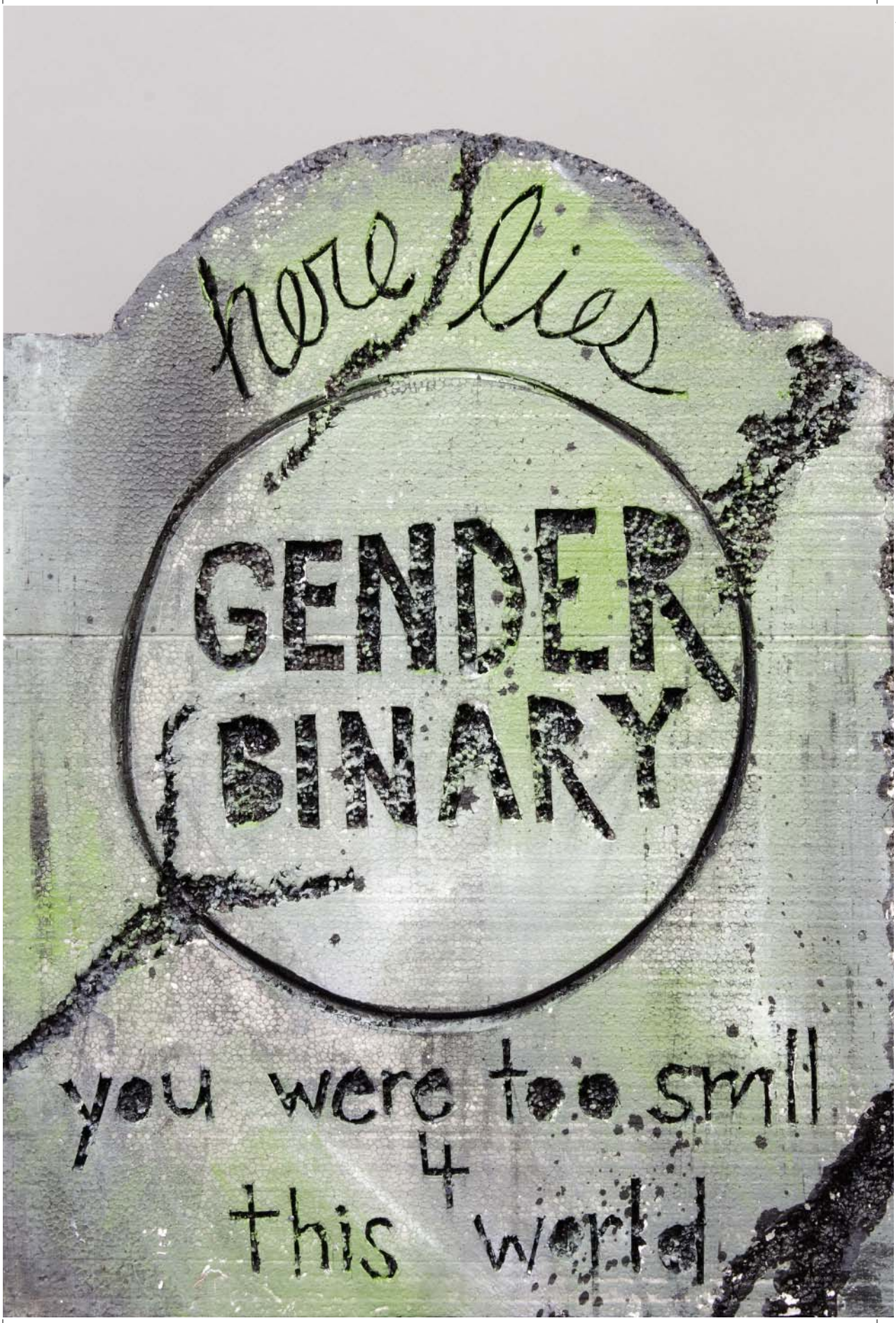
72
The kastle's Real Life Feminist Killjoy chilly climate populated by Lesbian Knowledge Stools, as seen through the "This Venus is a Pagina" gateway and from the outside (left).



73
The Stitch Witches crafty atmosphere.

74
The Stitch Witches tools of engagement.

FACING
75
“Here Lies Gender Binary” gravestone from the Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas.


here lies
GENDER
BINARY
you were too small
4
this world


RUG MUNCHERS:
Magical Lesbian Pube Cookie Game
$25
Tie Dye Sheet Sets *YOU BUY, I DYE
$150
Queer Studies/Feminist Library Book
$400 Each
Dead Lesbian Feminist Organization
Gravestones $200-400$
KillJoy's Kastle Kake $150
"Because I'm a Ghoul" patch ($10)
Bull Dyke Brittle $10
Sasquatch Clitoris $50
BALL BUSTA EARRING
$30
Queer Cobwebs $15
t-shirts 20$
Lesbian Knowledge
Stool set
nest of 5 $750
Lesbian Purses
"Canvas Bag"
$15
QUEER STUDIES/
Feminist Studies Wallpaper
$150/roll
Ball BUSTA
necklace
50$
Bob Bits $25
Painted Signs $400-700

FACING

76
Kastle for sale in Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppe.

77
Lesbian purses or "canvas bags" for sale.

78
One last chance for a momento from Killjoy's basic necessities.

FOLLOWING

79
Killjoy's Kastle rests in wait in her rural storage locker mausoleum.


BLACK
FABRIC
RUG MUNC
Magical Lesbian Pube Cook
$25
don't
slip
on
the
PUSSY
juice

there are only men and only women and out of that only patriarchy – were limited, hurtful, and exercised an exclusionary violence that has left and continues to leave deep scars in the effects of feminism's own limited and violent disciplinary formations: it's worth noting, after all, that at the same time that Johnston built her own international reputation as a lesbian feminist, the Combahee River Collective was meeting and working in Boston and penning their foundational political statement. And certainly, if you have seen the video of Sylvia Rivera being condemned by Jean O'Leary in 1973,[7] or if you have read Germaine Greer's outrageously violent and offensive public attacks on trans women from 2016,[8] you are only beginning to get the span of radical feminist abusiveness to trans peoples, particularly trans women. Appositely, we are also only beginning to get at the suppressed stories of alliances between these seemingly natural enemies.[9]

Thus, Jill Johnston's 1975 ball-busting performance of a lesbian-feminist, man-hating politic – a politics that she herself is in the process of disavowing – can't really be treated as isolated from a movement history that had terrible, life-altering consequences for those excluded from its foundational schema. But I do want to make a plea here for a return to thinking about this period of nascent second-wave politics with something other than pure dismissal or defensiveness or even nostalgia. And picking up Berlant's queer-temporal and affect-theory–centred engagement with Marxist formalism in *Cruel Optimism,* I want to suggest that one way to shift the "war" model of feminist conversation might be to learn to just sit and listen to the affective un-forms of politics-in-emergence.

Contradictory ("the mother that gave birth to me wasn't my natural mother") and vague (angry at "generalizations"), Johnston's performance makes sense as an expression of incipient political feeling, one without a sufficient logic to ground it. It is bound to the deep solipsism of liberal individual feeling ("there's a vibe: I feel it and you don't feel it"), but it acts as a communal interpellation, against which or with which the listeners in the audience are necessarily trapped into responding. (One woman in the audience calls out, exasperated, "Oh come on!!" It is unclear who is she talking to: the whole room, maybe, or perhaps just Johnston.) I'm reminded here of Giorgio Agamben's throwaway phrase in *Means without End,* when he says, "In the cinema, a society that has lost its gestures tries at once to reclaim what it has lost and to record that loss."[10] I'm reminded, too, of José Muñoz and Juana María Rodríguez's foundational work in

appropriating the power of queer movement as ephemeral and yet world-making remainders of queer life.[11] As I write this in 2018, I don't agree with much that Johnston has to say politically, but I see her rage on a continuum with many of the gestures and movements in that film – of women dancing alone and together, touching each other, kissing, smoking, sitting on the floor, hanging out, talking – and in every way I find those moments to be deeply beautiful and also historically and aesthetically important as both memories and a proleptic choreography of a world in emergence in that particular moment. I admire the sound and image of Johnston's anger as an artifact of a time when lesbian presence – ugly, monstrous, furious, righteous – had a new currency or traction in the world by the simple fact that it had never been made visible in that way before. I also understand Johnston's outrageous theatricality as a gesture that is deluded in understanding itself to have not already been recuperated by power, to have been enabled by her whiteness, her celebrity, and the very basic exclusionary violence of the terms within which feminism understood itself at the time (just recall Jean O'Leary saying with contempt: "That *man,* Sylvia Rivera").

Is it possible to hold all of those things at the same time? Which is to say, is it possible to find a relation to feminist history without deploying the murderous Oedipal (Electra?) drama against the past that Johnston herself advocates and while still holding previous thought formations fully responsible for their failures? Do we always have to slaughter our mothers? And, at another level, can feminist thinking and feminist movement learn to get out of the political way or engage differently when it is time to learn from emergent or long-suppressed or traumatized ideas and formations?[12]

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The question of the unmanageable relations between feminist and queer pasts and presents lingered with me when I was volunteering as a Real-Life Feminist Killjoy professor at Allyson Mitchell and Deidre Logue's *Killjoy's Kastle* event in Los Angeles. For days leading up to the performance and after, a debate had raged on the Facebook event page about the Ball Bustas room, a room in the installation that some non-trans and trans people had found, and still find, transmysogynist and violent. Accusations flew; flame wars started and sputtered out; people were "called out" (such wistful performativity in that phrase!) or just flat-out called names.

Killjoy's Kastle walks participants through a series of rooms meant to represent both the past and the present state of lesbian feminism in its academic and cultural formations. It includes a room full of hanging tampon/boxing bags labelled "Racism" and "Colonialism" and so forth that you are meant, as an intersectional feminist, to punch your way through; doorways that look like the vagina dentata or some other ambiguously hairy hole; a labia/library full of gender studies classic texts in which actors hold a Riot Ghoul dance party; a Daddy Pen or prison holding cell for imprisoned trans people and sex workers; a crypt for dead lesbian organizations and ideas, including the transphobic Michigan Womyn's Music Festival; and so on. Each of these rooms demonstrates the signature maximalist aesthetic of artist Allyson Mitchell and her partner and collaborator, Deidre Logue: a combination of DIY craftiness, Dadaist object orientation, and high-allegorical feminist performance.

In the Ball Bustas' room, the room that has attracted the most controversy, two performers smash plaster castings of truck nuts into smithereens. Truck nuts are testicle-shaped objects that are meant to be attached to the back bumpers of large vehicles supposedly to indicate – well, who knows what they are supposed to indicate.[13] In any case, while the actors smash the plaster truck nuts into smithereens, the Demented Women's Studies Professor, who is guiding visitors through the kastle recites:

> Here we find … the Ball Bustas hard at work. They can hardly keep up with the demand for their ritualistic ball smashing. These sweethearts got tired of the old adage "ball-busting dyke" and decided to just go for it full time. The balls, naturally, are symbolic of one of multiple interwoven oppressions emerging from the rule of white patriarchy – looks like they really are just a symbol, though, judging from that pile of rubble.

The performance of ball busting is meant to take up the old accusation towards emasculating women, especially lesbians – and in classic queer fashion it recuperates an anti-lesbian insult towards empowerment, defanging it of its injurious power. As with much of the kastle, the performance is nostalgic of and for second-wave feminism while also seeking to complicate the gender essentialisms of that period both by embedding race into the performance (the balls are white and symbolic of white patriarchy) and by distancing the plaster testicles from the real thing ("they really are just a symbol").

That distancing, it need not be said, did not work, and it certainly did not translate into nostalgia. In a string of impassioned arguments, commenters on the Facebook event page testified that the ball-busting room "triggered" them, that it felt hateful and violent towards trans women who possess testicles, that the threatened violence towards male genitalia was and is a kind of violence towards trans women's embodiment. The accusation, in short, was that by romanticizing second-wave gender essentialism towards male genitalia, the underlying logic of the performance structurally excluded trans women.

Was transphobia the logic of the ball-busting performance? Certainly, we can recognize the exclusion of people on the basis of their genitalia and not their gender identifications as a hallmark of various iterations of second-wave feminism, from its maternalist expressions to the deep symbolic metaphoricity of the biologically female body that underlies radical feminism and lesbian separatism. And without a doubt there's no point in arguing with anyone else's experience of a particular art installation: if it was traumatic for them, it simply was so. Yet there is also a problematic logic at the heart of the demand that this part of the performance be shut down as well. And what seemed unutterable in the Facebook conversations was this: that many of the critiques of *Killjoy's Kastle* are deeply forgetful of the work that so many of those big-R radical and lesbian cultural feminists did to lay down the foundations for the present trans, feminist, and queer moment that, in turn, launched the initial criticism of the ball-busting performance.

Which is to say: What is the desire that lies beneath the criticism and the request for a nontriggering performance? More specifically, what kinds of ethical relations to problematic queer, lesbian, and feminist histories are possible when the desire for inclusion into queer, lesbian, and feminist history is so pressing, so injured, and so hurt? When trans women are dying at unprecedented rates, is the suppression of the injurious feminist and queer past the only way forward? Isn't the trigger accusation a request to be shielded from what is, nonetheless, there?

I ask these questions as someone who yelled at and protested white, radical feminists, including my own women's studies professors, as someone who marched with the first trans march at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (and then never went back for a bunch of reasons that had to do with the whiteness and dumb gender essentialism of the place). We really owe those women a lot. And, at the same time, it would have been so much better if that generation had moved out of the way faster, if they had listened

harder, if they had dealt with their racism, their homophobia, their deep failures of imagination around sex, around gender, around femininity, around class. All of those sentiments are true, yet somehow, in relation to the accusations of transmisogyny that floated around *Killjoy's Kastle,* not to mention the gleeful celebration of the final closing of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, it seems impossible to say those two things at once. The feminist and queer pasts were terrible and inexcusable but they also lie beneath the feminist and queer possibilities for the future.

More questions: Are the critiques of the imperfect politics that emerged from the radical feminists' essentialist and biocentric definitions of woman themselves fuelled by a certain kind of misogyny as well as a desire for maternalist care? Is the consequence of that misogyny yet another erasure of the history, present, and future of lesbianism from the horizon of queer politics? Is representation here to heal? And, finally, is there another way to go about this?

Perhaps the answer lies in the idea of triggering itself. If trauma is the wounded suturing of the past to the present and a trigger is the affective – that is, the physiological and psychic – re-experience of that trauma, isn't a triggering incident – like *Killjoy's Kastle* – exactly the opportunity to confront the history that is brought forward? Of course, "trigger" is not an uncomplicated word. And, ironically enough, we owe the very concept of triggers to the work that radical feminists did in shaping various anti-violence movements as well as in developing feminist therapy protocols for sexual violence survivors. We could further argue that the very term "trigger" – as traumatic memory locked in the body as well as psyche – sits very comfortably next to the essentialist understandings of body and identity that we now seek to exceed. How, then, are we to think, as queers, as feminists, as trans peoples, with this political moment? Is there a productive way to work with the trigger formation in this historical moment without conceding to all of its problematic underpinnings?[14]

Another irony. If the person who is being triggered is actually the person who cannot separate the past from the present, they are also the only person who can do the work of resolving that trauma. And this is where I return to this recurrent intergenerational drama that we, as feminists and queers, are engaged in: the trans (and other) activists that are busting up queer and feminist politics these days have something to say – obviously, they know that and don't need me to say it – but they, and thus we, are also in the middle of a political movement in formation. Older, institutionalized, empowered, whatever your

position – you (I) need to step aside and listen and witness. You (I) need to not foreclose those politics because they (sometimes) seem inchoate. Inchoateness is the point: inchoateness is the affective crossroads at which the articulation of political injury and opposition finds itself before it has a chance to be recuperated into the legibility that is power.

I'm trying to make more of that statement than the pedantic gesture it seems, on first writing, to be, but I am trying to direct that statement particularly at feminists and queers who seek to too easily dismiss contemporary cultural expressions of queer, feminist, and trans activism as "snowflake" feelings. What I mean, more clearly, is that the larger concatenation of cross-generational arguments happening in separate queer and feminist spaces in this moment – such as trigger warnings, call-out culture, transgender/TERF/radical-R lesbian ideological battles – signals a larger sense of a politics-in-formation that is remapping queer/trans/feminist/twenty-first-century body politics along newly charged neural, chemical, physiological, and affective lines. Many others have said this before: the question of rapidly shifting somatic formations within our current highly mediated and microbiopolitical moment is all over the pages of feminist and queer media theory.

Thus, perhaps what feels, at least to those of us teaching in the academy, like a precious moment of heightened individuation within a monetized education system (sometimes driven – I myself believe – by the tension between a shrinking tenured work force and the student-affairs–cum–associate-dean precariat, whose very economic survival depends on the production of crisis, symptom, and accommodation management) might *also* be productively understood as an emergent collective political formation. And perhaps rather than turning our noses up at this moment, at the language of triggers and call-outs, now might be the time to think more deeply with the shape – with the gift, really – of queer and feminist intergenerational anger as it returns to harass us again, in accusations of triggering and historical trauma.

I realize I'm collapsing a number of movements into one another here – disability politics, trans politics, academic institutional politics, emergent activist rhetorics – in such a way as to occlude each of their particular trajectories, as indeed, I am collapsing many forms and histories of early radical feminism. But I'm also making an argument here for thinking generously along two different historical lines: more generously towards the past and more deeply in the now.

Thus, without dating myself too radically, I also want to say something to the coming generation about the past: I want to tell you what I miss about radical lesbian feminism, the white *and* the nonwhite versions. I want you to know that despite having fought cultural feminism – having hated its racism, its femmephobia, its profound allergy to women of colour, our ways of being in the world – and having hated radical feminism's failure to theorize and enjoy aesthetics and having chafed against its doctrinaire limitations, that I nonetheless miss the utopian, counter-identificatory spirit of cultural lesbian feminism very much, and I recognize that the energy of that movement gave birth to me and many women like me, which is to say it made the space for me to be both involved in it and to protest it.

Whatever lesbian and cultural feminism missed, it had a kind of energy that believed that revolution was possible. Separatism, with all of its limitations, inspired people to go out and build stuff – bookstores and "womyn's land" and bars and women's centres and rape crisis centres and shelters and, you know, a lot that is now gone. It failed, or it didn't survive, or it persists in fortunate and unfortunate ways, in ways that should be grievable. One of those fortunate ways might be in the similarities between lesbian-feminist anger then and queer-feminist anger now.

To forget that imperfect work and those imperfect politics *is* a form of misogyny that needs to be considered alongside transmisogyny as a real and ongoing formation. As work by Elizabeth Freeman and Juana María Rodríguez shows us, the lesbian is always the drag on the future; the lesbian always escapes representation; the lesbian, especially the femme, is always the woman who is left behind. Does the coming generation have to keep doing that too? Do we have to keep unciting lesbians and lesbian feminism from the daily work and theorizing of queer life? Similarly, do we have to continue foreclosing the politics that are yet to come? What if Jean O'Leary had welcomed Sylvia Rivera onto the stage and handed her the mike? What if the National Organization of Women hadn't excluded lesbian politics from their agenda? What if the Human Rights Campaign actually took up racism and poverty as key problems for queer survival? They didn't, and so far they haven't. But they still could.

In the Ball Bustas room of *Killjoy's Kastle,* I can hear in my head the ball-busting dykes of my childhood and my teens and twenties, the old-school women who got the shit kicked out of them by cops, who were raped and abused and fired, and who drank and loved and fought like fuck to have the right to really love other women in the ways that they wanted to, the ones who

showed up to listen to Jill Johnston, to puzzle their way towards collective political theory. For some trans peoples, "ball busting" is a negation of their embodiment and gender complexity, and it directly attacks their right to live in female bodies that continue to have penises and testicles, for instance. Now that I've had my eyes opened by that conversation, that's what ball busting will be for me too. But for me, remembering ball busting is also a way to remember how much those feminists and dykes suffered and created and how much I exist because of them. Those structures of feeling need to exist next to each other because they are historically linked, the failed utopias of the one moulding the inchoateness of the other.

"I went through a political period." Still, *Jill Johnston: October 1975*

When we dream of a totalizing politics, and when we dream of spaces that might manifest those totalized politics as whole and healing formations, we will always be disappointed. But somewhere inside the utopian imaginings of wounded political formations and the righteous and inchoate fury that emerges from their encounter with the dystopia we actually live in – a dystopia often formed by the utopian thinkers that came before – is a politic we really need to hear. As painful as it is, I want to be sure to remember that it is also quite beautiful and that there are strategies to be borrowed from those pasts even despite and because of the people who want to keep those pasts from us.

NOTES

A previous version of this chapter was printed on the website *Bully Bloggers* on February 20, 2016. See "Ball Busters and the Recurring Trauma of Intergenerational Queer/Feminist Life," https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2016/02/20/ball-busters-and-the-recurring-trauma-of-intergenerational-queerfeminist-life/. Reprinted with permission. The author would like to thank Greta LaFleur for reading earlier versions of this essay.

1 For folks who want to follow the internet comments trail, here are a few places where you can read up on the issues. On the *Paris Is Burning* anniversary uproar, see Tavia Nyong'o, "After the Ball," *Bully Bloggers,* July 8, 2015, https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2015/07/08/after-the-ball/. For letters and statements surrounding the decision by the Midwives Alliance to include language addressing transgender pregnancy in their policies and the resultant back and forth between feminist midwives wanting to retain "woman-centred" language and trans activists, see "Open Letter to MANA – Sign-On," *Woman-Centered Midwifery,* August 20, 2015, https://womancenteredmidwifery.wordpress.com/take-action, and Justine Clegg, "Overview of the MANA Core Competencies Revisions," *Midwives Alliance of North America,* https://mana.org/blog/Overview-MANA-Core-Competencies-Revisions. For multiple years of Facebook arguments and public statements regarding the Ball Busta room in *Killjoy's Kastle,* see "Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House," *Facebook,* accessed November 19, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/events/166258290234212/permalink/172523529607688; Allyson Mitchell, "Killjoy Kastle Response," *Scribd,* https://www.scribd.com/document/178201155/Killjoy-Kastle-Response, which is also reproduced in this volume; and "Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House," *WeHo.org,* accessed November 19, 2017, http://www.weho.org/residents/projects-by-year/2015-projects/killjoy-s-kastle.

2 Kay Armatage and Lydia Wazana, dirs., *Jill Johnson: October 1975* (Toronto: CFMDC, 1977). The film can be purchased through the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, http://www.cfmdc.org/film/661. At the time still a very small child, I'm not in the film at all – a fact I still can't forgive.

3 Some of that theatricality has been captured by New York City theatre company the Wooster Group, who recently re-enacted Johnston's famous debate with Norman Mailer in a performance called *The Town Hall Affair.* The debate was documented on film. See Chris Hegedus and D.A. Pennebaker, dirs., *Bloody Town Hall* (New York: Pennebaker Hegedus Films, 1979).

4 Sara Warner, "A Gay Old Time: *Jill Johnston: October 1975,*" in *Affect/Performance/Canada: New Essays in Canadian Theatre,* ed. Erin Hurley (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2014).

5 Here's my mom on the context of the conflict: "Jill … gave her lecture at U of T which was also filmed. The guy that she yelled at was there to be obnoxious, his friend is the guy leaning on the wall smirking. They came in off the street and of course Jill didn't need much to take them on (if you remember the Norman Mailer affair)." Lydia Wazana, email discussion with the author, December 10, 2015.

6 See Lauren Gail Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011) and *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

7 See Jean O'Leary's speech at Ally Misandry, "Lesbian Radfem Rails against Men (Drag Queens) Who Impersonate and Mock Women," YouTube, https://youtu.be/7KxCWHfq0zQ. See Sylvia Rivera's response at Luz Violeta, "Silvia Rivera: Y'all Better Quiet Down (1973)," YouTube, https://youtu.be/9QiigzZCEtQ.

8 Heather Saul, "Germaine Greer Defends 'Grossly Offensive' Comments about Transgender Women: 'Just Because You Lop Off Your D**k Doesn't Make You a ******* Woman,'" *The Independent,* October 26, 2015.

9 Chris Abeni, "New History Project Unearths Radical Feminism's Trans-affirming Roots," *The Advocate,* February 3, 2016.

10 Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), vii.

11 See José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity, Sexual Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 78–81; and Juana María Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 2.

12 The question of the relationships between feminist, queer, and lesbian pasts has been explored by many theorists, including Wendy Brown, Joan Scott, Robyn Weigman, Heather Love, and Elizabeth Freeman. See Wendy Brown, "The Impossibility of Women's Studies," in *Women's Studies on the Edge,* ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 17—38; Joan W. Scott, "Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 27, 2 (2001): 284–304; Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); and Elizabeth Freeman, "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations," *New Literary History* 31, 4 (2000): 727–44.

13 Seriously, though, what *are* truck nuts supposed to express? Obviously, unabashed ("unfixed") virility – vehicular testosterone – but also, perhaps, the reproductive possibilities of the vehicle? Does that mean that *gas* is *like* testosterone or vice versa? Does the driver of the car, if an owner of testicles, thereby feel fused to the car, as though they were their own testicles reaching through the undercarriage of the truck? Does that mean they leave their testicles behind and on the car when they stop for coffee or something to eat or to sleep? Or do they take them in for the night?

14 7 Humanities Professors, "Trigger Warnings Are Flawed: Seven Humanities Professors Offer 10 Reasons That 'Trigger Warnings' Are Counterproductive," *Inside Higher Ed,* May 29, 2014, https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2014/05/29/essay-faculty-members-about-why-they-will-not-use-trigger-warnings.

R.I.P. Little Frida's

CHRIS E. VARGAS

As the final stop of the *Killjoy* tour, us Real-Life Feminist Killjoys had a limited amount of time to get a tour group to go deep about their experience. We'd just be hitting our processing stride when another group would arrive, and we'd start all over again. The two nights I was a feminist killjoy, I was with other processers the majority of whom were queer people of colour: Karen Tongson, Erin O'Brien, and the token white person, Greta Lafleur, who thankfully brought a jug of whiskey. We got looser and looser as the night wore on, which helped to grease the processing wheels.

One of the nights in the killjoys' room, we got into a serious discussion with a group of older white lesbians about the room of tombstones that honoured both lost lesbian spaces and outdated ideas like "the gender binary" and "essentialism." One of the tombstones referenced a café in West Hollywood that I had frequented as a late high-school, pre-drinking-age, queer adult: Little Frida's cafe. It was one of the only all-ages spots and one of only a few queer women spaces to hang out at when my ethnically and gender-diverse group of friends and I ventured out of the San Fernando Valley into "Boys Town." It also felt right that the space was named for the notoriously bisexual Mexican painter Frida

Kahlo, whose prints no doubt hung on my teenage bedroom wall. I remember discovering an awesome band there, Lava Diva, whose frontperson, Dawn, ended up being a guest speaker at my high school's gay "Project 10" group meeting. She recognized me in front of everyone, and I thought I was so fucking cool.

It was the loss of lesbian spaces that these women most wanted to process in regard to this interestingly complicated space of mourning. It was a tough conversation, one of the more somber ones we had. I've learned to keep quiet and bow out of conversations like this because, as a transmasculine person who "passes" most of the time but who has deeply ambivalent feelings about men in general, I don't know how to navigate such territory. Things can turn real transphobic real fast. At the same time, in my experience, a newer queer feminism that celebrates a history of lesbian culture but is also transinclusive is alive and well in the communities I inhabit.

As one of the women walked out, she whispered to me, "It's good you kept quiet." I was shocked. I asked, "Excuse me?" But she just kept walking and repeated, "It's good you stayed out of this conversation." I was deeply hurt.

As an effeminate masculine person of colour, I felt deeply hurt by this woman's dismissal of me and my experience. I was also dumbfounded. Did she read me as trans? Was it a transphobic statement and she was blaming me for displacing lesbian culture? Or was I illegible as trans, being read as a cisgender gay man invading women's space? Regardless, I was clearly a person of colour, and she a white lesbian. Did she really feel it was okay to silence a POC as a white woman? This felt like a surprising extension of all my past alienating experiences of venturing into West Hollywood.

My last night on duty, I asked to switch roles. I was surprised to discover my own limit for lesbian processing. Allyson reassigned me to the role of Heteronormativity Security Guard, a greeter role. I was supposed to rudely summon

groups of people who were in purgatory watching Bitch (of Bitch & Animal) perform to come and join up with a haggard women's studies professor, who would guide them through the haunted house.

I couldn't get it up to be rude by that point, lest my intentions vis-à-vis my identity get misread.

7
Home Sick: Horror, Gothic Storytelling, and the Queers Who Haunt Houses

S. TRIMBLE

When I was a kid, my family got tangled up in evangelical Christianity. At Christmas and Easter, our church went into the community to share the Good News. But on Halloween, we turned inward. Church leaders warned us about the spiritual costs of flirting with the demonic, so the children of the church were herded into bowling parties and given loot bags full of candy. What remains most vivid to me about these substitute Halloween nights, though, is something I never saw with my own eyes, something I heard about one of the dads in the church. Let's call him Dennis. Instead of going bowling, Dennis camped out in a lawn chair at the end of his driveway and guarded his house against the approach of costumed children – warding trick-or-treaters away with a hockey stick. From his point of view, I guess, he was defending his property against any evil spirits that might have been mingling with the revellers; keeping his house in order. But every time I thought about Dennis on Halloween night, I saw him from the perspective of the kid in the street: a shadowy figure without costume or pumpkin, a spot of dead seriousness in an otherwise playful evening. He might as well have been wearing a hockey mask to go with that stick.

Dennis wouldn't love this, but he's my point of entry for thinking about *Killjoy's Kastle,* Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's queer reimagining of the Christian hell house tradition. Hell houses came onto the American evangelical scene in the 1970s. Usually operating in the lead up to Halloween, they escort their patrons through depictions of the horrifying afterlives of sinners, often finishing with a representation of the heaven achieved by those who stick to the path of righteousness. Dennis didn't craft

a hell house to remind his neighbours of the wages of sin, but he understood his family and his Christian self as threatened by a society that had become cavalier about demonic forces. So his project, too, involved the instilling of fear. My reaction to his Halloween activities exemplifies what's most unnerving – and alluring – about cultural expressions shaped by horror and gothic storytelling: a twist in point of view can shuffle the grammar of the whole thing. The taking up of another perspective shifts the emotional register so that terror, horror, and dread start to slide around, looking for new objects; the source of danger becomes difficult to pin down; and feelings that lean towards the whimsical and fanciful might even have room to play. Suddenly, we could have a whole new story. So I imagine how Dennis might have taken narrative shape in the minds of the kids passing by. *An angry barring of the path. A frowning man. A stick-arm man* … The stuff of nightmares.

As a queer child, I had what Sara Ahmed might call a "slantwise" perspective on what Dennis was up to on Halloween night.[1] I was "out of line" with the church's world view, living a queer orientation that "allow[s] other objects to come into view."[2] And I wasn't keen on being straightened out. Realizing that my ways of knowing the world estranged me from the congregation, I became interested in what it meant to inhabit the role of the stranger. To me, this is what *Killjoy's Kastle* is all about. The sinners on display in evangelical hell houses typically include abortion-seekers, homosexuals, and people who commit suicide. In other words, these installations build nightmares in which many of us – and our loved ones – feature as characters. *Killjoy's Kastle* claims this nightmare space and (pun intended) inverts it. It's a full, fraught, roomy reimagining of both the costs and the possibilities of being labelled a monster. The deranged women's studies professor, the militant lesbian separatist, the graveyard that archives dead feminist collectives – all are in play in a space that makes room for longing and sorrow alongside fear, horror, and rage. My own path to the kastle is strewn with literary haunted houses, with stories in which, as in Mitchell and Logue's installation, the past mushrooms open to spook the present. Such disturbances tend to register as threatening-promising, with the balance between these poles depending, I'd say, on your point of view.

The fun house–style mirroring of *Killjoy's Kastle* – its critical distortion of the hell house – springs in part from the political slipperiness of the haunted house as a gothic figure. The gothic is, after all, a notoriously fickle genre. As literary critics from

Leslie Fiedler to Toni Morrison have shown, the shiftiness of the gothic derives from the emotional impasse at the heart of its storytelling – its encoding, specifically, of white Anglo-American ambivalence about political and social upheaval. Fiedler locates the origins of this ambivalence in the French Revolution and the Terror, in the paranoia enfolded in the bourgeoisie's dream of freedom. Modern European Man found himself caught between hunger for change and anxiety about its far-reaching effects, especially as unpredictable revolutionary imaginings rippled out from the colonies. The French grappled with the implications of the Haitian Revolution: as C.L.R. James has argued, the Black Jacobins were dreaming of liberty and equality in ways that the French bourgeoisie could hardly fathom.[3] And British colonists in the Americas, too, sought to master the meaning of freedom. In the New World, Morrison argues, an enslaved population seemingly "offered itself up as surrogate selves for meditation on problems of human freedom, its lure and its elusiveness."[4] In this context, the "bad" feelings associated with the break from the Old World – terror, guilt, grasping greed – could be split off from the modern European self and projected onto peoples scripted as subhuman.[5] So early American gothic developed along fundamentally conservative lines. Until, that is, Morrison came along and offered another perspective on what haunts the New World.

My understanding of haunted houses is indebted to Morrison's recalibration of the Anglo-American gothic tradition as an archive of the processes that make race, gender, and property. Morrison's haunted house is right there in the opening lines of *Beloved* (1987): "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom."[6] The haunting at 124 Bluestone Road derives from an act of infanticide, from a once enslaved mother made desperate by the arrival of her former master, from the property rights enshrined in the Fugitive Slave Act, the atrocities of transatlantic slavery, the traumas of the Middle Passage. It's a cascade of pasts that finds expression in "two tiny hand prints" in a cake and "soda crackers crumbled and strewn in a line next to the doorsill."[7] What haunts this house is nothing less than the nation-building project itself – and the racialized property relations that underwrite it. Inspired by Morrison, I see weird literary houses as sites where familial stories unspool into the long histories of empire, racial capital, and patriarchal power that shape a property and its people. They're spaces where, as Avery Gordon puts it, "there are guileless ghosts and malevolent ghosts living in tight quarters" – and where, as a result, meaning slips and spirals.[8]

The politics of such stories are difficult to pin down. The haunted house is not to be trusted.

What I offer in the following pages, then, does nothing to stabilize the political vision of *Killjoy's Kastle,* a project that's been celebrated, critiqued, and tweaked across its three incarnations in Toronto (2013), London (2014), and Los Angeles (2015). I'd like to hold on to this sense of the kastle as a kaleidoscope of experiences and interpretations. A hall of mirrors. In keeping with this vision, I offer a set of haunted house stories that reflect and refract one another, reading each for the insights they offer about the projections, disavowals, and anxieties that animate white kinship structures. Each story belongs to the white Anglo-American gothic tradition that I see *Killjoy's Kastle* as, queerly, inheriting – not only because of its relationship to the American hell house but also because of its emphasis on the figure of the lesbian feminist. The kastle's conjuring and remixing of dated stereotypes propel the installation into a risky engagement with dominant narratives of second-wave feminism as white-centric and transphobic (see also Love in this volume). To be clear, I see the kastle as contributing to contemporary feminist revisions of this story of the second wave. As Victoria Hesford argues, this narrative cohered around the emergence of the lesbian feminist as a monster-in-the-making, a "screen memory that works to contain and displace our knowledge" of the era.[9] Encrypted in but, to paraphrase Hesford, also "whited out" by this monstrous figure is a proliferation of second-wave origin stories – an unstable cross-hatching of feminisms, black militancy, Indigenous survivance, and Third World revolt.[10]

The haunted house is the spatial complement of the lesbian feminist, a figure that's always inhabited – possessed, perhaps – by more than just one story. From Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) to Sarah Waters' revisiting of these classics in *The Little Stranger* (2009), I explore the haunted house as a repository of the hidden costs of white family stories: the bad feelings of those who are cast out – or walled in – by limited logics of belonging. Listening to these feelings attunes us to the unhomeliness of the home, to the thresholds at which, as Freud observes in "The Uncanny," the private warps into the secret; love merges with labour; property meets possession.[11] But Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962) ultimately shows us that bad feelings are just the beginning; that hauntings also house – even embrace – those of us cast as "troublemakers, dissenters, [and] killers of joy."[12] Because some of us, to twist Jackson's title, have always lived in the kastle.

THESIS 1: WHAT HAUNTS THE HOUSE IS OFTEN WRITTEN ON THE BODIES OF THE WOMEN IT HOUSES

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) is about a property and a bloodline gone bad. Visiting at the request of his ailing childhood friend, Roderick Usher, Poe's unnamed narrator, arrives within view of the house and feels something akin to the "bitter" comedown of an opium-eater.[13] Wondering if a new perspective might ameliorate his sudden sickness of spirit, the narrator peers at the building's reflection in the "black and lurid tarn" at its base.[14] But the inverted image is even more ghastly than the first impression. The house is unwell, riven from roof to foundation by a "barely perceptible fissure."[15] And the twins cloistered within aren't faring much better: Roderick is deeply agitated and agoraphobic, and Madeline suffers from "a gradual wasting away of the person" that her doctors can't explain.[16] By tale's end, Roderick accidentally entombs his still-living sister in a vault beneath the house, her reappearance frightens him to death, and the house splits in two and tumbles into the tarn.

Like the house converging with its image in the lake, cause and effect slide together in this haunting. Is the house haunting the family, or are the Ushers themselves the source of the disturbance? Our narrator explains that the local peasantry use "House of Usher" to refer to both the family and the estate. So if the "excessive antiquity" of the house explains its decay, then what are we to make of the narrator's description of the Ushers as a "very ancient family" characterized by a branchless family tree?[17] Both the house and the family line have stagnated, and Roderick is convinced that the former is the cause of the latter. But I wonder if Madeline, if she was allowed to speak at all in this story, might offer another perspective. Underwriting the passing of the property "from sire to son" is a society structured by what Eve Sedgwick calls an "exchange-of-women framework."[18] So Roderick's agoraphobia means that the mechanisms of exchange have short-circuited: there's no wife to breathe new life into the house, and the lady, Madeline, is languishing, the object of a forever-pending transaction. There's a reason that incest is a gothic convention. It's the underbelly of a patriarchal order that sees women as part of the property, a part that, if guarded too closely, kept too near, erodes the estate from within. Whether or not the relationship between the Usher twins is sexual – they do share "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature" – Poe's plot hinges on Roderick's loving-jealous handling of his sister's body.[19]

Madeline's premature burial sets up the story's finale, in which her violent revolt against her status as object triggers the fall of the House of Usher. Having been diagnosed with "a settled apathy" and frequent spells "of a partially cataleptical character," Madeline veers so close to objecthood that her brother mistakes her for dead.[20] And because Roderick is worried about the remoteness of the family plot and suspicious of the "eager inquiries" of her doctors, he temporarily entombs her in a vault beneath the house.[21] When Madeline finally makes her gruesome reappearance – just in time to die (again) and scare her brother to death – there's "evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame."[22] It turns out that Roderick listened for days to the "bitter struggle" of his sister unburying herself – and said nothing. Constrained by a withering family tree, deteriorating under paternalistic medical care, and abandoned by a brother who refuses to hear her distress, Madeline bears the accumulated costs of the patriarchal order embodied in the House of Usher. Confined first to the house, then to her bed, then to a coffin, she finally wakes up. And in bucking against her status as object, Madeline brings down the house.

THESIS 2: SOMETIMES WHAT HAUNTS THE HOUSE ARE THE QUEER FUTURES IT CAN'T ADMIT

Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) is about children who know things they shouldn't. A young governess is sent to a country house in Essex by a man who wants not to be troubled by the details of his niece and nephew's care. In hindsight, she writes, those first days with the children were like "that hush in which something gathers or crouches."[23] Crouching in the hush at Bly are the shades of the master's dead valet, Peter Quint, and the children's last governess, Miss Jessel. The current governess at first determines that her job is to keep Miles and Flora ignorant of the hauntings, to serve as "a screen" between the children and the spectral intruders.[24] But she soon concludes that the children know and, what's more, that they don't want her *to know* that they know. Throughout the rest of the story, the governess and the children dance in ever-tightening circles around forbidden topics of discussion – old, unmentioned attachments, the question of why Miles has been kicked out of school – until the governess, "full to the brim" with things unsaid, breaks the silence.[25] The result is that Flora professes such fear of her that the little girl is taken away from the house, and Miles, left alone with the governess, dies in her arms.

Whether the ghosts are real or our protagonist is mad, what Ellis Hanson describes as "knowing children" are the primary cause of the governess's unsettlement.[26] She's bothered by the presence of ghosts at Bly, to be sure, but more worrisome is that Miles and Flora know about them, too – and that they disguise their knowingness behind a performance of innocence in which the governess sees, as she puts it, "a queerness."[27] Queer theorists argue that attributions of queerness to children signal their perceived deviation from a "normal" developmental trajectory in which innocence gradually gives way to (appropriate) knowledge.[28] So the governess's problem is that the children's exposure to forbidden knowledge is multilayered. It's not just that they know there are ghosts but also that Miles, at least, knew of the scandalous cross-class relationship between the employees when they lived at Bly. And in connection with knowing of this affair, Miles seems to have picked up explicitly sexual knowledge, the sharing of which is behind his mysterious dismissal from school. In short, well before they showed up as ghosts, Quint and Miss Jessel were interfering with the children, which means that what's haunting Bly is more than the "infamous" former employees themselves.[29]

Knowledge of sexual and class-based transgressions opens Miles and Flora to the possibility of what Kathryn Bond Stockton calls "growing sideways."[30] Like the "slantwise" position theorized by Ahmed, sideways growth opens onto a dizzying array of possible futures. It speaks to what happens when we reach for unexpected objects, begin extending ourselves in ways that veer "to the side of cultural ideals."[31] Abandoned to the care of employees by an unwilling guardian, Miles and Flora became emotionally entangled in the class structure that undergirds the estate. Even before the new governess arrives at Bly, then, transgressions of the British class system have undermined her fantasy that the children are "princes of the blood, for whom everything, to be right, would have to be fenced about and ordered and arranged."[32] This fencing, ordering, arranging work is meant to ensure that the children grow towards appropriate futures. But strange alliances formed at Bly before the story began. So what haunts the house are the lingering effects of the children's cross-class attachments – longing, curiosity, savvy – and the futures that flash into view when young ladies and gentlemen "forget their station" in life.[33] The story ends with the chilling image of the governess embracing Miles's corpse, but Flora's future is wide open. And the little girl, the governess observes at one point, has been "converted … into a figure portentous."[34]

INTERLUDE: ON FENCING, ORDERING, AND ARRANGING

Poe's tale suggests that what haunts the house are the gendered property relations that animate it. And in James's story, the disturbance arises from the class structure that props up the estate – an infiltration expedited by Britain's imperial manoeuverings during the Victorian era. That is, before Miles and Flora can be left in the countryside with their uncle's employees, they first have to lose their father, a military man, and their grandparents, who died in India. Together, "Usher" and *Turn* begin to illuminate the sedimented layers of power and dispossession that make white familial wealth. Silvia Federici tells this story in *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), an account of the European transition from feudalism to capitalism. The features of this transition, Federici argues, are the management of women's bodies and labour, the enclosing of land as property, and the race-making logics that ordered Christianizing missions in both the Old World and the new. The fencing, ordering, arranging operations that James's governess evokes have been unfolding for centuries, powered by, among other things, exchanges "between the ideology of witchcraft and the racist ideology that developed on the soil of the Conquest and the slave trade."[35] What haunts fine old houses and the white families they house are breakdowns in fencing, ordering, and arranging – a fissure in the facade, an eye at the keyhole …

THESIS 3: WHAT THE I WON'T SEE IS GOING TO COST … YOU

Sarah Waters' *The Little Stranger* (2009) is about an unreliable narrator and the woman he harasses to death. Rewriting "Usher" as a story of postwar Britain, Waters gives us Roderick and Caroline Ayres, who live with their mother at Hundreds Hall, a once elegant eighteenth-century estate in Warwickshire. Like his namesake in Poe's story, Roderick suffers from "a touch of nervous trouble."[36] But unlike the emaciated Madeline Usher, Caroline Ayres is substantial, repeatedly described as "over-tall for a woman," wide-hipped, and "thickish."[37] The person who describes her this way is our narrator, Dr. Faraday, whose mother once worked as a nursery maid at Hundreds. As a grown man, Faraday becomes emotionally invested in the family and the worn-out house that awed him as a boy. As Roderick buckles under the pressure of keeping the estate afloat, strange things begin to happen: a beloved dog turns vicious; childish scrawls appear on the walls. When a complete collapse sends Roderick to an institution for the mentally ill, Faraday becomes a fixture at Hundreds, and his friendship with Caroline turns into awkward

then aggressive courting. The haunting persists. Mrs. Ayres eventually hangs herself, Caroline plummets to her death from a second-floor landing, and Faraday returns to the empty house time and again, wondering what drove her over the edge.

Like *Turn, Stranger* explores the disturbances that arise from a class structure in flux, though this time offering a more explicitly gendered take on the cross-class relationship. It's the patriarchal backbone of the British class system that allows the upwardly mobile Faraday to (seemingly) resolve his ambivalence about the changing national landscape. Horrified-fascinated by the opening of the Hundreds' land to development – an actual unfencing – Faraday splits his feelings. The estate's decay becomes the object of his horror and Caroline the object of his fascination. In one of the creepier bits of writing in Waters' novel, the identity of the "little stranger" haunting Hundreds comes into focus as Faraday lies in bed thinking of his reluctant fiancée: "My mind would go softly across the darkened miles between us, to slip like a poacher through the Hundreds gate and along the overgrown drive; to nudge open the swollen front door, to inch across the chequered marble; and then to go creeping, creeping towards her, up the still and silent stairs."[38] Notice how the sexualized details that layer woman and house – the "overgrown drive," the "swollen front door" – highlight the building's decline. The falling-down house confirms Caroline's availability. And the house is falling down faster than it should because the bad feelings Faraday has for the family are taking on a life of their own. His fantasy of marrying Caroline and claiming Hundreds for himself is haunted by feelings he disavows: resentment, distaste, the "stirring of a dark dislike."[39] Part of him desires the house, the woman, the status, and part of him – a part he can't know, can't see – is tearing it all down.

What's haunting Hundreds is an unseeing I, a man who suppresses his ambivalence and constrains, in the process, the unfamiliar futures rising from the ruined house. Faraday's lack of insight – and all it costs the Ayres women, especially – is exemplified by the "little stranger" hypothesis on which the title turns. It begins with Caroline, who concludes that poltergeists are at work in the house, that something "breaks away" from people who are "unhappy or troubled" and takes on a life of its own.[40] It's a theory of bad feelings and splintered selves that Faraday and one of his colleagues ultimately twist into a sexist account of Caroline's own supposedly frustrated energies. The deflection allows Faraday to wonder if "some queer seed" had been sown at Hundreds by a hysterical Caroline, a misdiagnosis

he sticks with to the bitter end.[41] So when he hears at the inquest into her death that Caroline uttered an accusatory "You!" before her fatal fall, Faraday just can't see it.[42] He can't see himself as the little stranger troubling the already troubled house. He had one thing right, though. A "queer seed" *was* sown at Hundreds: Caroline herself, who was, in her own words, "brought up to lose" the estate to her brother.[43] Always ambivalent about the "lovely monster" into which she was born, Caroline saw possibility in its ruin.[44] She called off the wedding, sold Hundreds Hall, reached for an elsewhere … But the unseeing I couldn't let her go.

THESIS 4: HAUNTINGS AGITATE FOR A LONG HISTORICAL VIEW

Shirley Jackson's last completed novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), is a story about the making of a haunted house and the spooky sisters therein. Let me tell you how it ends. Eighteen-year-old Merricat Blackwood, a murderess, lives in the charred remains of the once fine Blackwood house with her older sister, Constance. The house has been undone by acts of violence. There was a poisoning before the story began – when twelve-year-old Merricat murdered her family by lacing the family sugar bowl with arsenic – and since then there's been a fire, and vandalism after that. Now the Blackwood house is a remnant of what it once was, its stern face overgrown, and the upstairs open to the sky. In the evenings, men from the village leave food prepared by their wives on the front porch: roast chickens, beef stews, still-warm blueberry pies. Sometimes these offerings include little handwritten notes alluding to the vandalism: "'This is for the dishes,' or 'We apologize about the curtains.'"[45]

No one has seen the Blackwood sisters since the fire.

How Jackson arrives at this ending springs from her detailed imagining of patriarchal power as an accumulation of property and labour – a household composed of layers of objects that can be magically repurposed. Merricat, our weird narrator, introduces us to a property built on exchanges of women: "as soon as a new Blackwood wife moved in, a place was found for her belongings, and so our house was built up in layers of Blackwood property weighting it, and keeping it steady against the world."[46] So when greedy cousin Charles arrives with an eye to claiming both Constance and the vacant seat at the head of the Blackwood table, Merricat thwarts him by hiding, wrecking, and redistributing household objects – the "layers" of property that "steady" the house. And when all else fails, she turns to an item belonging to the dowry of "some great-grandmother": chipped pink saucers

rimmed with gold leaves, the remains of a set that Charles is using as ashtrays for his pipe.[47] This is how Merricat starts a fire that the village fire department begrudgingly puts out. And then the villagers begin to throw rocks, hurl furniture, and tear curtains, amplifying the destruction unleashed by Jackson's witchy young protagonist. Merricat's bad feelings about her family – her obscure sense that they have "secret bad hearts" – converge with a local history of class conflict to undo the patriarchal structure into which Charles had been hoping to insert himself.[48] And because the conflagration erupts from Merricat's messing with the domestic scene, I propose that we read her as a poltergeist.

Long before the poltergeist went to work, though, the Blackwood house was haunted by histories of settlement and slavery, the "ghosts in the machine" of white kinship and white wealth.[49] Before there can be class resentment – a property encircled by a fence, a notebook in which Mr. Blackwood keeps track of who owed him what – there must be an accumulation of capital. This brings me to the sugar bowl, a "family heirloom," and the poisoned commodity therein.[50] Attending to what Sara Ahmed might call the sugar's "histories of arrival" exposes its affective underbelly: all the pain and horror – and revolt – sedimented in the long story of the transatlantic slave trade and the cane fields of the New World.[51] The sugar is the concrete detail through which Jackson's fable-like tale unspools into Atlantic history. It conjures a legacy not just of black dispossession but also of marronage and mass poisonings and, in the context of the Haitian Revolution, the setting of "torches to sugar houses and cane fields."[52] To be clear, my claim is not that Merricat, a young, white poisoner and arsonist, inherits a legacy of black revolt. Rather, the sugar and the sugar bowl are sites where the processes described by Federici are entangled: housework and the making of gender, slavery and conquest and the making of race and property. So Merricat's murderous use of the commodity is a portal through which bad feelings that exceed her own erupt into a space meant to secure white familial wealth. As poltergeist, she breaks and rearranges the constituent parts of the property, a derealization that unleashes more than Merricat can foresee. A disordered house. A property unfenced. And there amid the remains yet another haunting begins to take shape.

FINAL THOUGHTS: A HOUSE FIT FOR MISFITS

There's a queer seed haunting the hall, tormenting an unseeing I with a truth it can't bear. A couple of witchy women lurk in a kitchen stocked with apologies. The entryway is colourful but

fanged with names we've been called. There's a graveyard around back that honours some of the fallen. The kastle breathes, stretching and contracting and stretching again to house a "we" in which some of us will feel more at home than others. But that's just the point. This is an unsettled "we" – and it has to be, because we're all differently, unevenly enmeshed in a world that, as Ahmed puts it, "'houses' some bodies more than others."[53] We come to the kastle with different hurts and different hopes. Maybe you're more vulnerable than me. Maybe I'm the "you" that Eve Tuck and C. Ree address in "A Glossary of Haunting" when they begin, ominously, with a declaration of mistrust: "I don't trust you very much. You are not always aware of how you can be dangerous to me, and this makes me dangerous to you."[54] Yes, I am that "you": a white nonbinary queer on (un)settled land. But my I, too, is multiple. So I also hear myself in the "you" they conjure at the end, when they write that "you, like me, have been guided/good-girled away from considering revenge as a strategy of justice."[55] Following Tuck and Ree, I see the kastle as a place where hauntings multiply rather than resolve, a place where "I"s and "you"s bounce off each other in unexpected directions, careening down corridors, rattling locked doors, and slipping into spaces some of us didn't know were there. The "we" that lives in the kastle stretches it from within and tumbles back out into the world.

Poltergeists on the prowl.

NOTES

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6 Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 1.

7 Ibid.

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14 Ibid., 114.

15 Ibid., 116.

16 Ibid., 119.

17 Ibid., 115, 114.

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26 Ellis Hanson, "Knowing Children," in *Curiouser,* ed. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 107–36. For an account of critical debates about the possible madness of the governess, see Shoshana Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation," *Yale French Studies* 55–56 (1977): 94–207.

27 James, "Turn of the Screw," 51.

28 See, for example, Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

29 James, "Turn of the Screw," 43.

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31 Ibid., 13.

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33 Ibid., 47.

34 Ibid., 92.

35 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004), 198.

36 Sarah Waters, *The Little Stranger* (London: Virago Press, 2009), 34.

37 Ibid., 9.

38 Ibid., 325.

39 Ibid., 27.

40 Ibid., 364.

41 Ibid., 382.

42 Ibid., 483.

43 Ibid., 147.

44 Ibid., 69.

45 Shirley Jackson, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 139.

46 Ibid., 1.

47 Ibid., 99.

48 Ibid., 6.

49 Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 194.

50 Jackson, *We Have Always Lived,* 36.

51 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* 38–39.

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53 Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness,* 12.

54 Eve Tuck and C. Ree, "A Glossary of Haunting," in *Handbook of Autoethnography,* ed. Stacey Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013), 640.

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8
The Graveyards of Community Gathering: Archiving Lesbian and Feminist Life in London

CATHERINE GRANT

I went to see *Killjoy's Kastle* at the British Film Institute in London on a quiet afternoon. It was the last day of the installation, and the films played to a mostly empty room. Surrounded by polystyrene gravestones and crocheted cobwebs, I watched film documentation and photos from the installation's initial incarnation in Toronto. The ghoulish Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party, the butch Ball Bustas, the signs warning of "Two Adult Womyn in LOVE": this campy and humorous parade of lesbian-feminist herstory and mythology was immersive and compelling. However, my experience of *Killjoy's Kastle* was very different from those who have visited the installation in its full-blown glory, complete with a cast of performers to guide the hapless souls who enter. On a sunny afternoon, plunged into the darkness of the *Killjoy's Kastle* installation, it was the gravestones that held my attention. The list of organizations inscribed on their painted polystyrene surfaces included many that I recognized, sparking memories and giving a feeling of unease. The gravestones documented lesbian and feminist organizations that were deceased, tracing a map of a mainly UK-based community that included women's centres, film distributors, and club nights (see Figure 1).[1] Many of these organizations and events had begun in the late 1970s or 1980s and petered out in the late 1990s and 2000s because of lack of funding, rent rises, or organizers' burnout. Although I didn't realize it as I sat there, my memories of these organizations formed a nodal point of collective experience. Having come to London in the mid-1990s, my own history was wrapped up with these gravestones, and reading the names led to a recognition of

how many places, organizations, and groups had been lost over the last twenty years.

By tracing this web of defunct groups and gatherings, the curator of the London version of *Killjoy's Kastle,* Nazmia Jamal, continued the haunting that had begun with Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's charting of lesbian feminism's herstories in Toronto.[2] Here, I propose that the gravestones in the installation operate as a form of script to be inhabited by its participants, a script that is activated through our memories and fantasies about the lesbian-feminist herstories being staged. Through my research into *Killjoy's Kastle* and conversations with Jamal, I was

FIGURE 1
Gravestones in the *Killjoy's Kastle* installation at the British Film Institute, London, 2014. Grave makers in London were Nazmia Jamal, Blake Baron Ray, Ros Murray, Ochi Reyes, Arvind Thandi, and Sita Balani. Photos by Nika Zbasnik

set on a path to explore some of the Black British feminist groups included in the London version of *Killjoy's Kastle* and their continuing impact in feminist and queer communities. The difficulty of archiving and commemorating Black British feminist and lesbian organizing is a key narrative within the stories memorialized by the gravestones, and it provides an important UK perspective on the growing literature around queer of colour activism, archiving, and history writing. Borrowing from Bertolt Brecht, I argue that the form of participation that *Killjoy's Kastle* invites is a kind of learning-play, Brecht's term for a play that is undertaken by a group, with the focus being on the analysis and rehearsal of its content rather than a finished performance for an audience.[3]

A SCRIPT / A POEM / AN INVOCATION

> Black Widows / Zamimass / A Women's Place / Peckham Black Women's Centre / The Gateways Club / Quim / Spare Rib / Out Write / Lesbian Strength March / Venus Rising – gone too soon / RIP: Shocking Pink / F.A.F. Feminist Activist Forum / Lesbian Avengers / First Out / Black Fist / Lambeth Women's Project / Glass Bar / Chain Reaction / OWAAD / SCUM 1968 – ∞ / London Lesbian and Gay Centre / Cinema of Women / Silver Moon / Circles Women's Film and Video Distribution / Womyn Space and all the squats we've loved, lived and met in / Sheba Feminist Publishers

Reading the list of gravestones forms a kind of poem. I write their names on the page to try to continue the invocation of the places, spaces, and groups that the gravestones activate. As a wake for a queer past that is still desired and remembered by many of the visitors to BFI Flare (London's annual lesbian and gay film festival), the gravestones were both poignant and pathetic as they called out to the visitors who found themselves among them. One of the London-based collaborators who had worked on the gravestones also described the collective activity of making them as a chance to find out about the organizations being inscribed into the slabs of polystyrene.[4]

Intrigued by this process of creating the gravestones, I arranged to interview Jamal.[5] She explained how working on the gravestones had been collaborative in part but also a rather solitary activity, as she made them in her front room (see Figure 2). The group of grave makers had worked with her on

some of the gravestones, but the time it took to make them far exceeded what could be done together, and Jamal ended up doing many of them on her own. She described the act of carving the polystyrene as melancholic, a working through of her own relationships to the organizations that she had elected to commemorate. The list of organizations included in the graveyard was drawn up from her own experience of London's feminist and lesbian groups and institutions as well through asking friends such as Helen DeWitt at the BFI (who had formerly worked at Circles, a feminist film distributor included in the gravestones) and Louise Carolyn at *Diva* magazine to contribute.[6] Also included in the list are names of organizations she hadn't heard of but was intrigued by, names taken from the backs of books such as *Making Black Waves: Lesbians Talk*.[7] Here, Jamal drew upon the now mostly defunct "Resources" section featured in many feminist publications before the internet. The gravestones provide a mainly London-specific account filtered through Jamal's contact with lesbian, feminist, and Black organizations.

Jamal and her collaborators as the "grave makers" produced a space of reflection and analysis on the organizations commemorated, both for the producers and, in the subsequent installation, for the viewers to discuss and bring to mind. As a curator and activist rather than an artist, Jamal's formation of the list of gravestones and their creation by her and a small group of friends is a version of the learning-play, one generated collaboratively through research, personal memory, and calls for information. When I sent her a draft version of this essay, she emailed back with the gravestones I had missed from her list and commented, "They are all carved into my brain. Playing is learning."[8] For Jamal, the installation at the BFI produced a space similar to the final Processing Room in Mitchell and Logue's original version, a space of discussion and conversation that used the material on show as a starting point for the viewers to reflect on their own relationship to a network of lesbian and feminist communities that had faded into obscurity.

Jamal's involvement with *Killjoy's Kastle* points to the evolution of the installation as initially conceived by Mitchell and Logue, and it produced an iteration of the artwork that continued its participatory logic. The process of drawing up a list and making the gravestones was not simply a practical piece of outsourcing by Mitchell and Logue. Instead, it was another part of the intense process of collaboration that marked all versions of *Killjoy's Kastle,* which involved populations of performers working on the immersive installations (see Helena Reckitt's essay in this

FIGURE 2
The London grave makers in Nazmia Jamal's front room, 2014. *Top:* Ros Murray and Sita Balani. *Middle:* Nazmia Jamal. *Bottom:* Ochi Reyes. Photos by Blake Baron Ray (middle) and Nazmia Jamal (top and bottom)

collection).[9] Jamal's friendship with Mitchell led to the installation occurring at the BFI, and rather than a straightforward screening, they worked together with Logue to create a new environment that took over the foyer of the building.

THEATRE FOR LEARNING

The process of collaboration is also central to Brecht's concept of the *Lehrstück* or learning-play.[10] He gives this concise summary of the learning-play's aims: "The learning-play is essentially dynamic; its task is to show the world as it changes (and also how it may be changed)."[11] To do this, he imagined a form of play that foregrounds the process of rehearsal and all of its attendant discussion, repetition, and improvisation.[12] In a description that fits closely with the group of collaborators that Mitchell and Logue drew on for *Killjoy's Kastle,* he explains that "we organized small collectives of specialists in various fields to 'make' the plays; among these specialists were historians and sociologists as well as playwrights, actors and other people of the theatre."[13] He proposes that with the learning-play, "The theatre becomes a place for philosophers, and for such philosophers as not only wish to explain the world but wish to change it."[14]

The development of *Killjoy's Kastle* also had a profound collaborative element, which led to a change of authorship from sole to coauthored project. Since the BFI installation in 2014, Mitchell's partner, Logue, has been credited as cocreator rather than producer, which had been her initial credit on the project. When I asked Mitchell about this, she wrote to me:

> At the end of the Toronto installation [2013] we realized that this project was much more of a collaboration between the two of us than we had ever imagined. We are a couple and live in close proximity in every way so this melding was inevitable but also needed. KJK took over our whole lives, our home, our bank accounts, our time, our psychic space. The labor, conceptualization and execution of KJK is well beyond the ability of one person and it was weird and misleading to continue calling it only my project.[15]

Here, the normal practice of glossing over any help from significant others is turned on its head. Rather than remaining as art world gossip (as in "of course, his girlfriend did all the work"), Mitchell and Logue's collaboration moves into focus.[16] This shift that Mitchell describes is an indication of the intertwining of

domestic and professional lives that is a reality for many artists and the queer communities that *Killjoy's Kastle* honours as well as interrogates. The feminist slogan "The personal is the political" could be extended to read "The personal is the artistic is the professional is the political." This is something Mitchell and Logue went on to explore in their 2016 film, *Hers Is Still a Dank Cave,* as well as in the gallery they run: the FAG Feminist Art Gallery. *Killjoy's Kastle* is a product of these intense modes of doing and being.

ARCHIVAL THERAPY: LAMBETH WOMEN'S PROJECT

The Lambeth Women's Project (LWP) was an organization initially known as the Lambeth Girl's Project, which began in 1979, was housed in Stockwell, London, and closed in 2012. Stockwell Primary School evicted the LWP after an extensive refurbishment that had seemed to represent a new beginning but turned into a fast, ignoble end.[17] As with so many of the organizations charted in the gravestones, LWP ended not because the need for its resources had expired but because funding was pulled.

FIGURE 3
Nazmia Jamal at Lambeth Women's Project during its refurbishment, 2010. Photo by Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski

Jamal had been involved with the Lambeth Women's Project, including the campaign to stop its closure in 2012, as were other grave makers (see Figure 3). Their very recent activism joined a longer history of resistance to closure due to funding cuts and austerity measures biting into key community services. One of the key members of the LWP, Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, described how the project was "a lifeline for women in Lambeth," providing

a physical place for various community groups to meet as well as services for women, including counselling, sexual-health advice, crafts, yoga, art, and music.[18] In a talk about her involvement in the LWP, Ahaiwe Sowinski asserted that, even after its demise, the organization continues to exist in the memories and legacies of those who were part of it (see Figure 4). In an essay cowritten by Yula Burin and Ahaiwe Sowinski titled "Sister to Sister," the demise of the LWP is the starting point for thinking about the importance of archiving Black British feminist history and the process of what Ahaiwe Sowinski calls archival therapy.[19] This process was inspired by Jo Spence and Rosy Martin's practice of phototherapy. They describe how the LWP was "a crucible for black feminist transformations. And now it has gone."[20] The two writers recount their anger at the closure of the LWP, their involvement in feminist organizing in London, and how "there is a need to connect the dots, to find and create our UK black feminist narrative through archives, and to consciously preserve our history."[21]

FIGURE 4
Installation of Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski's pictures of the Lambeth Women's Project for her talk at Raven Row, London, 2017. Photo by Nazmia Jamal

Ahaiwe Sowinski has spent a lot of time archiving the collection of the LWP, which is now in the Lambeth Archives in London (see Figure 5). She has described this activity as a labour of love, hampered only by the lack of resources to process the archive rather than a lack of material.[22] For example, there is extensive video documentation of the activities of the project but no funds to edit and present it. Despite the lack of institutional support, Ahaiwe Sowinski has found ways of opening up the archive through films, presentations, and the activities of X Marks the Spot, a group that describes itself as an "art and archive research collective."[23] At a symposium charting a number of radical-feminist spaces in London, Ahaiwe Sowinski described

her work on the Brixton-based activist Olive Morris and her work as an oral historian, including an ongoing collaboration with the artist Rita Keegan, who set up the Women of Colour Index at the Women's Art Library, recording her memories and work with her archive. For her, being an archivist also means being an activist and being an artist. All these roles are woven into collaborative ventures, including publications such as *Human Endeavour: A Creative Finding Aid for the Women of Colour Index,* published through the Women's Art Library in London and produced as part of X Marks the Spot. After sending me the picture of the LWP sign in the Lambeth Archives, Ahaiwe Sowinski emailed to say how she had had to fight to have it included in the archive because it wasn't deemed archival material, but she imagined it being needed for a future exhibition.[24] Like Jamal, Ahaiwe Sowinski utilizes the space of art to extend her activist archival practice, one that prioritizes the history of Black British feminism.

FIGURE 5
Videos from Lambeth Women's Project at the Lambeth Archives. Photo by Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski

As she put it when describing her archival work: "Our history is still out there, under beds, in cupboards. We've got to think about how to collect it."[25]

For me, the gravestones that Jamal made, and the histories that they speak of, demand that the audience take part in this process of archiving and remembering and reflecting on how history is shaped. This means that we are being asked to take responsibility as historians of our feminist communities, something that Jamal and Ahaiwe Sowinski have put at the heart of their activist archival activities. Elin Diamond frames the role of the historicization from a Brechtian perspective, which can help us see what the installation of the gravestones is doing as part of

Killjoy's Kastle: "When Brecht says that spectators should become historians, he refers both to the spectator's detachment, her 'critical' position, *and* to the fact that she is writing her own history even as she absorbs messages from the stage. Historicization is, then, *a way of seeing,* and the enemy of recuperation and appropriation."[26] The organizations inscribed on the gravestones present the audience with *a way of seeing,* refusing to allow these histories – particularly of Black, British, lesbian-feminist organizing – to become invisible or remain as whispers in the margins of mainstream feminist history.[27]

Burin and Ahaiwe Sowinski's discussion of the LWP archives reminds us of the unfinished business represented by the organizations named on the gravestones and how their existence needs to be continued. As the two writers put it, work on the archive can also be a form of therapy, to understand that what has gone has not been lost: "The experience with LWP left us feeling quite simply robbed, but the process of archiving has helped to support our road to recovery, serving as a kind of 'archival therapy.' Archives have offered us an opportunity to find ways to heal and be empowered through being exposed to a variety of narratives by black women who have paved the way."[28] I would like to take this concept of archival therapy and put it alongside the activation that Brecht's learning-play demands.[29] For me, Jamal's work in choosing the names for the gravestones creates a scene that is ongoing, a script that can be taken up. Similarly, it is not by accident that Burin and Ahaiwe Sowinski's essay was published as part of a special issue celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the *Feminist Review*'s 1984 special issue on Black British feminism, "Many Voices, One Chant: Black Feminist Perspectives." Within this commemorative issue, writers such as Heidi Safia Mirza and Yasmin Gunaratnam reflect on the contemporary revival of Black feminism by a new generation of activists and scholars, exploring "a genealogy of black feminism as 'lifelines.'"[30]

FEMINIST ACTIVIST FORUM

At the end of the BFI installation, Jamal arranged for the gravestones to have a literal afterlife, auctioning them off to raise money for LISG: The Lesbian Immigration Support Group. As I tried to choose from the list of gravestones that I wanted to own, I decided on an organization that I had never heard of: Feminist Activist Forum, or FAF. In the United Kingdom, "to faff about" is slang for procrastination, taking too much time to do something or, as a dictionary definition puts it, to "spend time on ineffectual

activity."[31] The humorous acronym seemed apt for my sense of time as disrupted, stretched, filled with family care and teaching or the tedium of administration at work. I put the gravestone in my office as a hopeful reminder to try to use some of my time for research and writing, to create a space in which the residue of my research is visually present, and as a talking point for visitors and students (see Figure 6). Later, I found out that Jamal had included FAF because its name had become a self-fulfilling prophecy: an organization that began life as the UK Feminist Forum but disbanded before agreement could be made on what action it should take across issues of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Jamal recounted: "I don't think it lasted a year and I included it in the graves as a bit of a joke for those people who remembered how faffy it was … It is an excellent lesson in why

FIGURE 6
Bookshelf with gravestone from *Killjoy's Kastle*, 2014, alongside a spread from Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz's, *Toxic Play in Two Acts*, artist zine, 2013. Photo by Lisa Castagner

people should support existing organizations instead of immediately trying to set up their own!" (see Figure 7).[32] Jamal's comments point to the necessity of having a history that joins together feminist communities rather than having each new grouping inventing spaces and places that have already existed or still do exist. Jamal's involvement in FAF also pointed to the incorporation of her own activist history, as well as research, in compiling the list of organizations to commemorate.[33] This commemoration was also imagined as an activation, recalling Brecht's desire for the learning-play to teach new attitudes to a collective by embodying historical moments critically.[34]

To explore the names on the gravestones in more detail, I bought a second-hand copy of the book Jamal had mentioned: *Making Black Waves: Lesbians Talk*. This slim volume, published in 1993, charts the rise of Black lesbian organizing in the United

FIGURE 7
Notes from a FAF meeting at LWP and FAF flyers. Photos by Nazmia Jamal

Kingdom from the early 1980s onwards. Starting with a lesbian workshop at the 1981 OWAAD (Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent) conference, the book documents "an explosion of events organized by and for Black lesbians."[35]

In reading this book, I was taken through a history of London and the United Kingdom that I had only scant knowledge of: an intense series of groups, organizations, and publishing ventures that had mostly disappeared by the time I moved to London. Funding from the Greater London Council meant that a number of Black feminist and lesbian organizations were able to have relative financial stability during the 1980s, and the book charts the range of activities that were made possible. Even so, its introduction demonstrates that the sense of precarity that I felt while sitting among the gravestones was not a new phenomenon:

> Our lives have occasionally been documented in sections of anthologies, but many of the newsletters and articles we have produced or contributed to have disappeared. The few relevant archives and libraries – the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre, Lesbian Archives and Feminist Library face threats to their future. It is therefore essential that we chronicle our achievements, struggles and debates before they are forgotten and disappear.[36]

From 1993, when the book was published, to 2014, when Jamal and her grave makers carved the gravestones using names from the book, the sense of urgency to keep hold of a history remained alive.[37] In one of the final sections of the book, "Now and Then: A Black Lesbian Chronology," the authors describe how the chronology is drawn from the three archives mentioned in the quote above as well as their own experiences and memories. Many of the groups, newsletters, and centres mentioned are then followed with the phrases "Folded due to loss of funding" or "Folded due to burn-out" or simply "Folded" and the date. Many of them are not part of the dominant narratives about queer and feminist organizations in the United Kingdom.

Jamal described how she chose some organizations, such as Zamimass, because they sounded intriguing. Listed as a working-class lesbian group in the resources section of *Making Black Waves,* the organization's origins are described in a brief sentence in the chronology: "Zamimass (London) set up initially to organize an alternative Xmas celebration, continued as a monthly group."[38] Coming out of discussions at the first Black lesbian conference in the United Kingdom – Zami I – this group began as an alternative Christmas celebration, offering a glimpse into the kinship networks and political organization happening within the Black lesbian community in the 1980s in the United Kingdom.[39] Following the brief history of Zami I, the authors also mention how a series of interviews on "the experience of lesbians from immigrant communities" led to the setting up of the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group, which survived for five years, from 1985 to 1990.[40] Around thirty years later, Jamal auctioned off the gravestones to support the Manchester-based Lesbian Immigration Support Group, set up in 2007. As I read about this earlier organization, I realized how these two groups, separated in time, had been brought together by Jamal's actions in the present and by her activation of a Black lesbian-feminist past. As in the reading across the issues of *Feminist Review* on Black British feminism, the thirty years that separate these two immigration support

groups are not felt as part of a linear progression. Instead, there are moments of intense recognition as well as of difference: powerful ways to learn across and through history, as Brecht aspired to with his model for the learning-play.

THE FEMINIST LIBRARY, LONDON

My final destination to trace the gravestones' afterlife was the Feminist Library, London. I asked the librarian (one of the founders, Gail Chester) if I could see the gravestones from *Killjoy's Kastle*. She looked at me blankly. Then I mentioned Nazmia Jamal's name and that she had donated a selection of the gravestones following the installation at the BFI. She exclaimed, "Oh, the haunted house!" and pointed to three gravestones propped up over a series of pictures and files

FIGURE 8
Gravestones in the Feminist Library, London, 2017, with "The Haunted House" suffragette poster on the right. Photo by Catherine Grant

(see Figure 8). She said they were put there because of a 1907 suffragette poster titled "The Haunted House."[41] The title refers to the Houses of Parliament, and the poster features the outline of a woman looming over them, a spectre calling for women's emancipation. Here, the histories of lesbian feminism activated by *Killjoy's Kastle* meet with a previous moment of feminist haunting and activism.

As the gravestones sit patiently in the Feminist Library, an organization that has been on the brink of extinction itself for a number of years, they are waiting to be activated again, part of the library's idiosyncratic archival flow. Like Ahaiwe Sowinski's insistence on the sign from LWP being held in the Lambeth

Archive, the gravestones are objects that are hard to place in a folder and forget about. They act as visual reminders of what needs to be reclaimed from history, and activist archivists and curators such as Ahaiwe Sowinski and Jamal are continually trying to find new ways of allowing these histories to be active in and for the present.

The Feminist Library is housed in a crumbling, damp local-government building that has been home to a range of community resources for decades but is now being emptied out. The library has fought against eviction for a number of years in the face of large rent increases, and although it has secured new premises, there is a need for huge amounts of help, funding, and resources to make the move. During my visit, Chester told me there are other gravestones in the library, but she couldn't access them at that time. She led me into a room that was full of books, boxes, and posters. The gravestones were nowhere in sight, presumably hidden beneath the piles of boxes waiting to be moved. Like many of the histories captured in the names of the gravestones, there was a sense that the gravestones are lying dormant, not quite lost but barely remembered. As with Ahaiwe Sowinski's careful archiving of the LWP, the gravestones are being kept for their potential in the future, although questions about the security of the places that house them loom large. As for many of the organizations described in *Making Black Waves,* their histories are still in need of reclamation. As I searched through books on Black British feminism, their names are mostly absent.[42] Like Brecht's learning-play, these gravestones are reminders of archival material waiting to be reactivated, to become part of our conversations again.

SCRIPT, ONGOING

This essay is my reply to the invitation to listen to the histories contained within the gravestones as well as to *Killjoy's Kastle* as a whole. In the process of tracing the names from the gravestones, I learned about many places and groups and that the tracking of Black, British, lesbian organizing was one of Jamal's most vital choices. The gravestones activate these histories and underline Jamal's presence and activism as a British South Asian woman who has been deeply involved in Black, feminist, and queer communities. As a curator, educator, and archivist, she champions and orients her work towards people of colour, although she often finds herself presenting to majority white audiences, including me.[43] Sitting among the gravestones in 2014, and continuing now as I write this, I can feel the fierce desire not

to lose the histories of all the communities represented by the gravestones, to make sure their archives stay active and present for us today. What is written here is a small gesture towards keeping these histories alive and taking strength from the gravestones' gathering of powerful feminist communities and their refusal to be silenced, invisible, buried.

NOTES

I would like to thank Nazmia Jamal and Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski for the time they have taken to speak with me about their work. Flora Dunster needs to be thanked sincerely for suggesting I go to see *Killjoy's Kastle* and for providing research assistance in transcribing interviews. Thanks also to Allyson Mitchell and Cait McKinney for their expert advice while writing this chapter. Since the writing of this chapter, an important conversation between Ahaiwe Sowinski and Jamal has been published: "Love & Affection: The Radical Possibilities of Friendship between Women of Colour" in *To Exist Is to Resist: Black Feminisms in Europe,* ed. Akwugo Emejulu and Francesca Sobande (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 129–40.

1 The gravestones in the original version of *Killjoy's Kastle* listed an international selection of lesbian organizations.

2 Jamal collaborated with the following people to make the gravestones: Blake Baron Ray, Ros Murray, Ochi Reyes, Arvind Thandi, and Sita Balani.

3 This essay extends my thoughts on the learning-play as a way of theorizing re-enactment. I give a briefer account of *Killjoy's Kastle* in previous essays. See Catherine Grant, "A Time of One's Own," *Oxford Art Journal* 39, 3 (2016): 357–76, and "Learning and Playing: Re-enacting Feminist Histories," in *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice,* ed. Victoria Horne and Lara Perry (London: IB Tauris, 2017), 260–81.

4 Ochi Reyes, email to the author, March 29, 2014.

5 Comments in this section are taken from an interview with Nazmia Jamal, August 22, 2014. This interview also forms the basis of much of the information about the installation in the rest of the essay, unless noted otherwise.

6 The exception was the inclusion of "SCUM 1968–∞," which was carved by her friend and neighbour Blake Baron Ray, who had also helped Jamal carve up the sheets of polystyrene.

7 Valerie Mason-John and Ann Khambatta, *Making Black Waves: Lesbians Talk* (London: Scarlett Press, 1993). In this essay I use the term "Black" in the political sense, as this is historically resonant with many of the organizations in the gravestones. See the section, "Black: Whose Term Is It Anyway?," in *Making Black Waves* for a discussion of the problems of this term.

8 Nazmia Jamal, email to the author, November 19, 2014.

9 Jamal and Mitchell met and became friends following Jamal's programming of the first retrospective of Mitchell's moving-image work in 2009.

10 "Theatre for Learning" is the title of a posthumously published essay by Brecht: see "Theatre for Learning," in *The Brecht Sourcebook,* ed. Carol Martin and Henry Bial, trans. Edith Anderson (London: Routledge, 2000), 23–30.

11 Bertolt Brecht, "The German Drama: Pre-Hitler," *New York Times,* November 24, 1935, reprinted in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic,* ed. and trans. John Willet (London: Methuen Drama, 1964), 79.

12 See Reiner Steinweg, "Two Chapters from 'Learning Play and Epic Theatre,'" trans. Sruti Bala, *Lehrstück und episches Theater: Brechts Theorie und die theaterpädagogische Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes and Apsel, 2005), 17–21, 23–31.

13 Brecht, "The German Drama," 78.

14 Ibid., 80.

15 Allyson Mitchell, email to the author, March 7, 2016.

16 See Chris Kraus's account of Claes Oldenburg erasing all trace of his collaborations with his former girlfriend Hannah Wilke in Chris Kraus, *I Love Dick* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2016), 195–202.

17 See the blog set up during the campaign to save LWP from eviction, https://savelambethwomensproject.wordpress.com.

18 Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, "Lambeth Women's Project" (presentation at the "Don't Break Down, Break Out" symposium, Raven Row, London, May 20, 2017). Audio recording available at http://www.ravenrow.org/media/67/.

19 Yula Burin and Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, "Sister to Sister: Developing a Black British Feminist Archival Consciousness," *Feminist Review* 108 (2014): 112–19.

20 Ibid., 113.

21 Ibid., 116. This essay is part of a wider interest in bringing Black women's archives to the fore. See also essays in Tanya Zanish-Belcher with Anke Voss, *Perspectives in Women's Archives* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013). Thanks to Allyson Mitchell and Cait McKinney for directing me to this important collection.

22 Ahaiwe Sowinski, "Lambeth Women's Project."

23 X Marks the Spot, *Human Endeavour: A Creative Finding Aid for the Women of Colour Index* (London: Women's Art Library, 2015). The members of X Marks the Spot are Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, Lauren Craig, Mystique Holloway, Zhi Holloway, and Gina Nembhard.

24 She also said that the sign had been made by women, possibly by the Lambeth Women's Woodwork Shop. Email to the author, June 27, 2017.

25 Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski in conversation with Suzy Mackie from See Red Women's Workshop, "Don't Break Down, Break Out" symposium. This is something that Jamal is also very engaged with, having created an archive of her own in the Lesbian Archive, Glasgow Women's Library. This is a way of holding the different identities and activities that Jamal has been involved in, something she discussed as part of the panel "Asian Futures" at the conference "I/Mages of Tomorrow," Goldsmiths, London, June 2, 2017.

26 Elin Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism," in *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1997), 49.

27 In "Sister to Sister," Burin and Ahaiwe Sowinski describe how "a black British perspective continues to be absent from mainstream feminist rhetoric," 115. Their use of the term "mainstream" echoes the discussion of "white, mainstream feminist theory" in Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar's classic essay "Challenging Imperial Feminism," in "Many Voices, One Chant: Black Feminist Perspectives," ed. Valerie Amos, Gail Lewis, Amina Mama, and Pratibha Parmar, special issue, *Feminist Review* 17 (1984): 4. By using the term "mainstream feminism" rather than "white feminism," they indicate that the story is more complicated than simply "white" or "black" feminism. Many of the organizations included in the gravestones barely register within Black feminist writing for various reasons: their lesbian-feminist context, their fleeting nature, their activism, or their Britishness.

28 Burin and Ahaiwe Sowinski, "Sister to Sister," 118.

29 The concept of archival therapy builds on the literature about keeping archives alive, particularly archives about women's lives and Black women's lives in particular. See also Alexis Pauline Gumbs, "Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind," in *Make Your Own*

History: Documenting Feminist and Queer Activism in the 21st Century, ed. Lyz Bly and Kelly Wooten (Los Angeles: Litwin Books, 2012), 59–68, and Zanish-Belcher with Voss, *Perspectives on Women's Archives.* These texts are often written from the perspective of archivists themselves and provide an important addition to more famous texts on archiving in queer and feminist contexts such as Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feeling* or Eichhorn's *The Archival Turn in Feminism.*

30 Heidi Safia Mirza in conversation with Yasmin Gunaratnam, "'The Branch on Which I Sit': Reflections on Black British Feminism," *Feminist Review* 108 (2014): 128. This idea of Black feminism as a lifeline is taken from Sara Ahmed, "Black Feminism as Life-Line," *feministkilljoys,* August 27, 2013, https://feministkilljoys.com/2013/08/27/black-feminism-as-life-line/.

31 *English Oxford Living Dictionary,* s.v. "FAFF," accessed July 17, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/faff.

32 Nazmia Jamal, email to the author, April 7, 2014.

33 Interview with Nazmia Jamal, August 22, 2014.

34 This commemoration or activation also relates to Elizabeth Freeman's well-known concept of temporal drag and the relationship between different moments in feminism. See Freeman, "Deep Lez: Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism," in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 59–94.

35 Mason-John and Khambatta, *Making Black Waves,* 13.

36 Ibid., 9. The Black Gay and Lesbian Centre no longer exists; the Lesbian Archive has now become part of the Glasgow Women's Library, and as is explored here; and the Feminist Library has recently found new premises at the Sojourner Truth Centre in Peckham, London.

37 This sense of urgency is something that can be found throughout the literature on Black feminist and lesbian histories. In the British context, there has not been the explosion of writing and filmmaking charting queer and feminist histories that there has been in the United States, but exceptions include publications such as the *Sisterhood and After* project, which includes oral histories with a range of British feminists, extracts of which can be found at the British Library online. See also Rachel Beth Cohen, "Researching Difference and Diversity within Women's Movements: *Sisterhood and After*," *Women's Studies International Forum* 35 (2012): 138–40. At the time of writing, a documentary called *Rebel Dykes* was in the last stages of production. The film charts the postpunk, anarchist, sex-positive dyke scene in London in the 1980s, including organizations and events documented on the gravestones such as the Lesbian Strength March and the first lesbian fetish night, "Chain Reactions." See Sian Williams and Harri Shanahan, dirs., *Rebel Dykes* (Glasgow: Riot Productions, 2016).

38 Mason-John and Khambatta, *Making Black Waves,* 59.

39 Ibid., 14.

40 Ibid., 14–15, 57.

41 This poster, "The Haunted House, Votes for Women: 20th Century," is by David Wilson and is in the collection of the Museum of London, which describes it as follows: "This poster first appeared as a cartoon in the 'Daily Chronicle' in April 1907. It represents the growth of the campaign for female suffrage by showing the dominant silhouette of a woman haunting the Houses of Parliament." See http://www.museumoflondonprints.com/image/68551/david-wilson-the-haunted-house-votes-for-women-20th-century.

42 Some context can be found in Amos, Lewis, Mama, and Parmar, "Many Voices, One Chant." However, in collections about Black British feminism, the organizations in *Making Black Waves* do not feature, though other Black British feminist organizations such as OWAAD and Southall Black Sisters have been written about more extensively. See, for example, Heidi Safia Mirza, ed., *Black British Feminism* (London: Routledge, 1997).

43 This is something Jamal discussed as part of our interview about her role as curator at the BFI Flare installation.

Leave Britney Alone! and Other Ghostly Feelings

TOBIAS B.D. WIGGINS

The faint glow of a flickering video appears in the distance. Emerging from the terrifying darkness of a long textile labyrinth, visitors cautiously manoeuvre the culminating sections of the installation to their well-earned salvation. They have been guided through the Marvelous Emasculator by the echo of an increasingly familiar tear-ridden cry. At the end of the tunnel, they finally confront viral YouTube star Chris Crocker's blown-up face, made eerie by the projector's bulb. A popular mainstream internet video might seem like a strange thing to encounter in a lesbian-feminist haunted house but, nevertheless, as mascara drips down devastated cheeks, it is Crocker's shrill voice that leads to the only exit, "And how dare anyone out there make fun of Britney ... after all ... she's ... been through!!"

Online content becomes "viral" through impulse and repetition. There is compulsion in this type of digital sharing, a high-speed behaviour that is often coupled with amplified pleasure: "Omg have you seeeeen this video???" Like an infectious virus, a meme is defined by the ease with which it can be passed along from one person to another. But an internet phenomenon is not "catching" because it communicates any real insight or truth. Instead, the sensationalization of digital

material is more often about the arbitrary success of the bizarre. In similar ways, uncanny feelings are easily passed between people, although we often see them as belonging to our private, internal life. Most folks have had the experience of walking into a room and sensing that something extraordinary has happened, even before a single word has been uttered. The late feminist theorist Teresa Brennan, in *The Transmission of Affect* (2004), argued that these feelings "literally get into the individual" and that the fantasy of a private emotional life was one of the last bastions of European imperialism.

My own experience of the end of the lesbian-feminist haunted house drew me to thoughts about the contagious nature of all those who feel queerly (referencing Heather Love, 2009), which is often interpreted as the "wrong" kind of feelings. In 2007, the queer, affective viral load of Crocker's pained shrieks, a too-muchness that seeped quickly into popular culture, was mostly shared in social media with comedic ridicule. The consensus was that his emotional display was humorously odd given that, first, it seemed satirical but was actually genuine and "straight from the heart" and, second, it was excessively effeminate (see "Chris Crocker on Maury!," YouTube). In "Out of Hand: YouTube Amateurs and Professionals" (2009, 73), Nick Salvato argues that creative work is more likely to be considered amateur when it lacks self-control and flies out of hand, for "a body that cries too much, too often, or too extravagantly is not eligible for interpellation as a sincere body." In the context of a lesbian-feminist haunted house, where a great deal of the Toronto queer community gathered, an aspiration to be amateur and to lose control in the face of artistic legitimization was an occurrence already familiar to many.

A body that falls apart, that embellishes and oozes with faulty feelings and grave errors in judgment, is certainly a marginalized body – one that is political, a killjoy, and queer. Perhaps Crocker's presence simply allowed all those

visiting the haunted house to exteriorize their feelings of terror, a projection of an assortment of unwanted haunted thoughts, dredged up from histories of abandoned lesbian-feminist craft and superimposed upon this phantom from pop culture. But further, I think, Crocker's ghostly presence also facilitated a moment of collective mourning, a shared expression of grief or fear, allowing visitors to move forward into the world with space for new political visions. Consensually hegemoni-emasculated, Crocker's tears brought us together through "entrainment": a synchronicity of those who feel wrongly, at least in this moment, together.

Collaborator Credits

Toronto exhibition, at the crotch of College St., Lansdowne Ave., and Dundas St. W., Toronto, Ontario, October 16–30, 2013.
In collaboration with the Art Gallery of York University.

Curator
Emelie Chhangur

Core Artistic Collaborators
Deirdre Logue, Brette Gabel, Hazel Meyer, Amy Lockhart, Lena Suksi, Jesi Jordan, Dustin Wilson, Johnson Ngo, and Emelie Chhangur

Performers
Felice Shays as Valerie Solanas

Andrew Harwood as Madame Zsa Zsa

Lee Airton, the Jolly Goods, Christina Zeidler, and Gretchen Phillips as the "Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers

Mo Angelos, Natalie Kouri-Towe, Dainty Smith, Shawna Dempsey, Moynan King, Carolyn Taylor, and Allyson Mitchell as the Demented Women's Studies Professors

Chelsey Lichtman as the Polyamorous Vampiric Granny

Eli Campanaro and Judy Virago as Da Carpet Muncha

Tracy Tidgwell, Jamie Zarowitz, Weronika Rogula, and Jacq Hixon Vulpe as Two Adult Women in Love

L.J. Roberts as the Labyrs Guillotine Operator

Silky Shoemaker as the Dank Cave Dweller

Ginger Brooks Takahashi, Dana Bishop-Root, Jess Dobkin,
and Trixie & Beever as the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers

Lorri Millan and M-C McPhee as the Ball Bustas

Golboo Amani, Steph Markowitz, Juli(a) Rivera, and Anni Spadafora
as the Gender Studies Professors

Kalale Dalton-Lutale, Coral Short, and Shary Boyle as the Riot Ghouls

Hazel Meyer and Lena Suksi as the Emasculator Fascinator
and the Straw Feminist Eyeballer

Werner Hirsch (aka Henry Wilde) as the Headless Taunter

FASTWÜRMS as the Shaft Witches with Nicole Vogelzang

Rachael Shannon, Jesi Jordan, and Flare Smyth
as the Activist Garbage Monsters

Aleesa Cohene, Karen Frostitution, and Jen Markowitz
as Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppee Keeps

Marcilyn Cianfarani as Calamity Midwife

Kim Katrin Milan, Ann Cvetkovich, Ann Pelligrini, Sarah Schulman, Julia Creet,
Deirdre Logue, and Tracy Tidgwell as the Real-Life Feminist Killjoys

Deirdre Logue, Emelie Chhangur, Philip Monk, Chris Mitchell, Brette
Gabel, Johnson Ngo, Suzanne Carte, Terra Jean Long, Erik Martinson, and
Rachel McRae as the Because I Am a Ghoul Affect Security Guards

Allyson Mitchell as the Craft Monster

***Killjoy's Kastle* gratefully recognizes the following contributions:**

The staff at the AGYU for administrative, organizational,
financial, and emotional support and collaboration

Sound Design
Don Pyle

Makeup and Special Effects
Jackie Venegas

Animatronics
Gram Schmalz

Lighting Design
David Sweeney

Silk Screening
Mary Tremonte

Photographers and Video Documentation
Lisa Kannakko, Cat O'Neil, Suzie Silver, and Alexis Kyle Mitchell

Studio Assistants
Dana Seitler, Terry Xiao, Heidi Nagtegaal, Karen Frostitution, Molly Prime, Jen Markowitz, Aleesa Cohene, Gary Lee Pelletier, Erin Stump, Tamara de Szegheo-Lang, Naomi de Szegheo-Lang, Adriana Disman, Golboo Amani, Karen Pham, Marcilyn Cianfarani, Ela Przybylo, Melissa Wixson, Tracy Cocks, Tom Mitchell, Daphne Mitchell, Chris Mitchell, Hilary Predko, Juli(a) Rivera, Jenna Danchuk, Corwyn Lund, Deanne Lehtinen, Jamie Zarowitz, Christina Zeidler, Alisa Grigorovich, Mary Tremonte, Jess Dobkin, and Marisa Hoicka

Volunteers
Erik Martinson, Rachel McRae, Terra Long, Eli Horwatt, Jacq Hixon Vulpe, Tobias Wiggins, and Amber Christensen

Pop-Up Performances by
Alex Tigchelaar as the Cursevoyant

Fatima as the Sheela na gig

Laurel as the Moss Maiden

Lee Airton, Shannon Snow, Tamara de Szegheo-Lang, Naomi de Szegheo-Lang, Rebecca Wood, Flora Chen, Cris Renna, Lauren Jervis, and Catherine McCormack (as Lesbian Choir)

Community Consultation Think Tank
Johnson Ngo, Emelie Chhangur, Moynan King, Laura Paolini, Amy Lockhart, Carolyn Taylor, Madelyne Beckles, Kalale Dalton-Lutale, Delilah Rosler, Marisa Hoicka, Michèle Pearson Clarke, Jon Davies, Shannon Cochrane, Hazel Meyer, Anni Spadafora, M.C. Macphee, Adrien Whan, Gina Badger, Naomi de Szegheo-Lang, Tamara de Szegheo-Lang, Lena Suksi, Chase Joynt, Orev Reena Katz, and Trixie & Beever

Video Editing
Aleesa Cohene

With generous support by
The Art Gallery of York University, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, the Toronto Arts Council, and the York University Faculty Association

▼▼▼

London, England, exhibition at the British Film Institute, March 20–31, 2014.
By invitation from BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival.

Curator
Nazmia Jamal

Artist Collaborators
Nazmia Jamal, Blake Baron Ray, Ros Murray, Ochi Reyes, Arvind Thandi, Sita Balani, Emilie Arnold, Tara Brown, Louise Carolin, and Helen Dewitt

▾▾▾

Los Angeles, California, installation, Plummer Park, October 16–30, 2015. By invitation from ONE National Lesbian & Gay Archives at USC Libraries.

Curator
David Evans Frantz

Collaborating Artists
Mikki Olson, Machine McLaughlin, Gillian Bell, Amy Von Harrington, Liz Hodgson, Onya Hogan-Finlay, Toro Castaño, Amy Lockhart, Brette Gabel, Dustin Wilson, Emelie Chhangur, FASTWÜRMS, Hazel Meyer, Jesi the Elder, Johnson Ngo, Krista Feld, and Lena Suksi

Production Management
Sarah Westlake

Shipping and Art Management
Leslie Peters

Sound Design
Don Pyle

Sound and Light Installation
Krishan Khalsa

Photographers
Hector Martinez and Nica Ross

Makeup Artists
Erin Dadas, Marlaine Reiner, and Brande Bytheway

Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppee
Otherwild (Rachel Berks)

Performers
Felice Shays as Valerie Solanas

Aleesa Cohene, Alex Hischier, David Evans Frantz, Deirdre Logue, Sarah Westlake, Judith Moman, Colten Taormino-Tognazzini, and Tom Mitchell as the Dead Lesbian Crowd Comptrollers

Carolyn Taylor, Mo Angelos, Dainty Smith, Deirdre Logue, Greta LaFleur, Jessie Womyn-Friend, Moynan King, Nazmia Jamal, Raquel Gutiérrez, Savannah Wood, and Allyson Mitchell as the Demented Women's Studies Professors

Alexandra Juhasz, Amelia Jones, Ann Cvetkovich, Patty Ahn,
Anjali Arondekar, Chris Vargas, Lucy Burns, Erin O'Brien,
Gelare Khoshgozaran, Greta LaFleur, Jack Halberstam,
Jessie Womyn-Friend, Karen Tongson, Kyla Wazana Tompkins,
Mathias Danbolt, Andrea Fontenot, Jane Ward, Martabel Wasserman,
and Molly Larkey as the Real-Life Feminist Killjoys

Amy Von Harrington as the Multifaced Lesbian Internet Troll

Mark Anthony, Jonas Becker, Issac Bloch, Russel Brown, Chris Vargas,
Amanda Ream, Kate Edmonson, Machine McLaughlin, Toro Castaño,
Adele Failes Carpenter, Ellen Krout-Hasegawa, Victoria Mucha,
and Suzanne Wright as the Undead Protest Marshals

Andie Shabbar, Madelyne Beckles, Gillian Bell, Dylan Berkey, Delilah Rossier,
Eroca Nichols, Genevieve Flavelle, Joey Cupcake, Hannah Horovitz,
Kalale Dalton-Lutale, Liz Collins, Macon Reed, Melanie Griffin, Lauren White,
Paige Gratland, and Sam Cohen as the Riot Ghouls

Bitch, Christina Zeidler, Gretchen Phillips, Kathryn Kornloff,
and Phranc as the "Lesbian" Zombie Folksingers

Dana Bishop-Root, Ginger Brooks Takahashi, Jaye Fishel, Madelyne Beckles,
Petra Collins, Jess Dobkin, Liz Hodgson, Onya Hogan-Finlay, Shauna
Steinbach, and Edie Fake as the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers

Lukas Blakk, Amanda Ream, Heron Doe, Sam McWilliams,
and Sophia Poirier as the Ball Bustas

Chase Joynt as the Menstrual Trans Man with Diva Cup

Chelsey Lichtman as the Polyamorous Granny

FASTWÜRMS and Toro Castaño as the Stitch Witches

Greta LaFleur and Jules Gaffney as the Lesbian Vampire Art Dealer

Lex Vaughn and Alex Hischier as the Daddy Pen inmate

Arisce Wanzer as the Sister Daddy Pen inmate

Mikki Olson and Jaye Fishel as the Intersectional Activist

With generous support by
The City of West Hollywood through its Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission.
Additional support was provided by the Andy Warhol Foundation
for the Visual Arts and the ONE Archives.

Photo Credits

For pages ii, vi, and 2
Crypt of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas, details.
Photo by FASTWÜRMS, courtesy of the artist

Plates

RISING FROM THE DEAD: INCEPTION *following page 52*

1 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
2 Photo by Michael Maranda, courtesy of AGYU
3 Photo by Allyson Mitchell, courtesy of the artist
4 Photo by Allyson Mitchell, courtesy of the artist
5 Photo by Deirdre Logue, courtesy of the artist
6 Photo by Deirdre Logue, courtesy of the artist
7 Photo by David Evans Frantz, courtesy of the artist
8 Photo by Allyson Mitchell, courtesy of the artist
9 Photo by Allyson Mitchell, courtesy of the artist
10 Photo by Allyson Mitchell, courtesy of the artist
11 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
12 Photo by Allyson Mitchell, courtesy of the artist
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14 Photo by Allyson Mitchell, courtesy of the artist
15 Photo by Deirdre Logue, courtesy of the artist
16 Photo by Michael Maranda, courtesy of AGYU
17 Photo by Johnson Ngo, courtesy of the artist
18 Photo by Johnson Ngo, courtesy of the artist
19 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
20 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
21 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
22 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
23 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
24 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
25 Photo by Tony Coelho, courtesy of the City of West Hollywood

THE KASTLE: EXECUTION *following page 116*

26 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
27 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
28 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
29 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
30 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
31 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
32 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
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36 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
37 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
38 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
39 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
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41 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
42 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
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46 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
47 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
48 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
49 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
50 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
51 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
52 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
53 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
54 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist

THE CRYPT: ARCHIVING AND REFLECTION *following page 148*

55 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
56 Photo by Hector Martinez, courtesy of the artist
57 Photo by Lisa Kannakko, courtesy of the artist
58 Both photos by FASTWÜRMS, courtesy of the artist
59 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
60 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
61 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
62 Photo by FASTWÜRMS, courtesy of the artist
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66 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
67 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
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69 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
70 Photo by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
71 Photo by FASTWÜRMS, courtesy of the artist

72 Both photos by Cat O'Neil, courtesy of the artist
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79 Photo by Allyson Mitchell, courtesy of the artist

Contributors to This Book

Sara Ahmed is an independent feminist scholar and writer. Her work is concerned with how power is secured and challenged in everyday life and institutional cultures. Her recent book, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use,* is forthcoming from Duke University Press in 2019, and she has started a new empirical research project on complaint. Her most recent books are *Living a Feminist Life*; *Willful Subjects*; *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*; *The Promise of Happiness*; and *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*.

Madelyne Beckles is an artist based in Toronto. She employs pop culture, theoretical texts, and art history in performance, video work, and installations as entry points to explore the/her body, race, and femininity. Other themes explored in her work include domesticity, consumption, intimacy, shame, labour, camp, and the abject, which she attempts to deconstruct through feminist frameworks. She has presented her work in Toronto, Montreal, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York.

Emelie Chhangur is a Toronto-based artist, award-winning curator, and writer known for her process-based participatory curatorial practice and long-term collaborative projects performatively staged in/outside the gallery context. Currently the director/curator at AGYU, Chhangur questions the nature and social function of the contemporary art gallery through a form of embedded criticality that she calls "in-reach."

Ann Cvetkovich is director of the Pauline Jewett Institute for Women's and Gender Studies at Carleton University. She was previously Ellen Clayton Garwood Centennial Professor of English and professor of women's and gender studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism*; *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*; and *Depression: A Public Feeling*.

Kalale Dalton-Lutale is a writer-performer from Toronto. Most recently, she performed her solo show, *Crybaby,* at the Revolution They Wrote theatre festival while working with Geordie Productions on a commissioned play for young adults called *Pinky Swear.* She is studying playwriting at the National Theatre School of Canada.

David Evans Frantz is an associate curator at the Palm Springs Art Museum. From 2011 to 2018, he was the curator at ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries, where he organized numerous artist projects, including the Los Angeles iteration of *Killjoy's Kastle*.

Catherine Grant is a lecturer in the Art and Visual Cultures Departments at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is currently working on the re-enactment of feminist histories in contemporary art. The project began with the essay "Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism." She is the coeditor of the collection *Fandom as Methodology*.

Nazmia Jamal is a teacher and curator who has been involved in queer-feminist organizing for many years. From 2009 to 2014 she worked at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, where she programmed the first solo retrospective of Allyson Mitchell's moving-image work and the UK edition of *Killjoy's Kastle*.

Chase Joynt is a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Chicago. His first book, *You Only Live Twice* (coauthored with Mike Hoolboom), is a 2017 Lambda Literary Award Finalist and was named one of the Best Books of 2016 by *the Globe and Mail* and CBC.

Moynan King is a Toronto-based writer, director, actor, and scholar. As an actor, she has over forty professional theatre and film credits. She recently published an anthology of queer women's performance called *Queer Play* and is a contributing writer on *Baroness von Sketch Show,* where she also sometimes appears as a performer.

Chelsey Lichtman played the Polyamorous Vampiric Granny in both the Toronto and LA runs of *Killjoy's Kastle*. She lives in Toronto and moonlights as a realtor, which is a whole other kind of performance art.

Deirdre Logue has contributed over twenty-five years to working with artist-run organizations dedicated to media arts exhibition and distribution and is currently the development director at Vtape in Toronto, where she also directs the FAG Feminist Art Gallery with her collaborator, Allyson Mitchell. Logue's film, video, and installations focus on the construction of a self-presentational discourse.

Heather Love teaches English and gender studies at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* and of essays on comparative social stigma, compulsory happiness, transgender fiction, spinster aesthetics, reading methods in literary studies, and the history of deviance studies.

Cait McKinney is an assistant professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. Their first book, on lesbian-feminist information histories, is forthcoming from Duke University Press in 2020.

Allyson Mitchell is a maximalist artist working in sculpture, performance, installation, and film. She is based in Toronto, where she is an associate professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at York University and runs FAG Feminist Art Gallery with her partner, Deirdre Logue.

Helena Reckitt is a curator and researcher with a long-standing interest in queer-feminist art, theory, and collectivity. She has curated exhibitions and discursive programs for contemporary art organizations, including the Power Plant, Toronto; the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center; and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. With Simon Sheikh, she is editing the *Bloomsbury Reader in Curatorial Studies.* She is a reader in curating at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Andie Shabbar is a lecturer at the University of Western Ontario in the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research and in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies. Her research interests are in the areas of sexuality, surveillance, affect, and art.

Felice Shays performs on stage and in film. Her one(ish)-woman shows have been raucously received in New York, San Francisco, Boston, and Toronto. Shays is also a sex and BDSM educator who travels the United States and Canada encouraging people to do breathtaking sexual feats.

Ginger Brooks Takahashi received a BA from Oberlin College and attended the Whitney Independent Study Program in 2007. Her collaborative, project-based, socially enraged practice is an extension of feminist spaces and queer inquiry, actively building community and nurturing alternative forms of information distribution. She is cofounder of the queer and feminist journal *LTTR;* the MOBILIVRE BOOKMOBILE project; the touring musical act MEN; and General Sisters, a neighbourhood grocery store. She has presented work at the Jewish Museum, 2016; Tensta Konsthall, 2015; Brooklyn Museum, 2013; Museo Tamayo, 2010; New Museum, 2009; and Serpentine Gallery, 2008.

Kyla Wazana Tompkins is an associate professor of English and gender and women's studies at Pomona College. In 2012, she published *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century,* which won the Lora Romero First Book Prize from the American Studies Association and the Best Book prize from the Association for the Study of Food and Society. She is presently completing her second book, *So Moved: Ferment, Jelly, Intoxication, Rot.*

Karen Tongson is the author of *Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries* and *Why Karen Carpenter Matters*. She is an associate professor of English, gender and sexuality studies, and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California. *Postmillennial Pop,* the award-winning book series she coedits with Henry Jenkins at NYU Press, has published over twenty titles.

S. Trimble is a pop-culture critic who teaches at the University of Toronto's Women and Gender Studies Institute. She is author of *Undead Ends: Stories of Apocalypse*.

Chris E. Vargas is a video maker and interdisciplinary artist originally from Los Angeles, California, and currently based in Bellingham, Washington. His work deploys humour and performance in conjunction with mainstream idioms to explore the complex ways queer and trans people negotiate spaces for themselves within history, institutions, and pop culture.

Tobias B.D. Wiggins is a doctoral candidate at York University, in Toronto. His dissertation research investigates transgender mental health, psychoanalytic theories of perversion, and clinical transphobia. It aims to address the continued psychiatric pathologization of trans people and to broadly support the efficacy of transcompetent mental health care.

Index

Note: The abbreviation *KJK* refers to *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House.* Page numbers with (f) refer to figures.