ON BEING IN THE ARCHIVE

Minor Threats

Mimi Thi Nguyen

In a column published in 2009 for punk magazine *Maximum Rocknroll*, musician and writer Osa Atoe wondered at the seeming disappearance of black and brown punks from only a few years before her own time. She writes of revisiting her collection to read again ten-, fifteen-year-old zines including *Race Riot*, *How to Stage a Coup*, *Slander*, *Quantify*, and *Mala* and how these helped her and other black and brown punks who came later to establish a genealogy and a touchstone: "What all of these early POC [people of color] punk zines did for me was put me in touch with other brown punk kids. I remember meeting this queer Asian girl, Celeste at a BBQ/B-day party because I saw a copy of *Race Riot* sticking out of her bag. Later, we started a Queer People of Color (QPOC) group together made up of about six brown queer kids." Atoe also wonders what happened to us, to the black and brown punk women who created communion where there had been none. "What was the point of putting out zines like *Race Riot* & *How to Stage a Coup*, if not to try to spawn some kind of change in the punk scene? Well here we are! The change (I hope) they wished to see in the world! People of color punks, empowered by the words and deeds of those who came before us, building community with each other, and ready to fuck shit up."[1]

What emerged for me from Atoe's brown study is how these objects describe a cluster of unpredictable encounters with others across times. When I brought together the imperfect, partial histories that made up *Race Riot*—the initial call for contributions (printed as flyers, pasted onto postcards) circulated in 1994, 1995—I could not then have anticipated how a copy of a copy of a copy belonging to a sis-

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ter of an older brother's best friend might find its way into the hands of a young punk, ten or twenty years later (as it does) and create connection through the chance encounter—for Atoe and Celeste, others I have met since and more I do not know (yet). To answer Atoe's question in part, some of us are still punk, others put punk behind them, while our objects continue to corroborate our presence as provocation even now. So it might be that an archive of minor threats (like *Race Riot*, our zines together) is an incitement to grasp more tightly a promise from the past to a future.[2]

But I have concerns, too, about what happens to us and our threats. Those minor objects that once circulated between us are now amassing in library collections and institutional archives, shared and sometimes scanned, reformatted, and uploaded on public and semipublic platforms, while academic studies and popular press anthologies republish images and passages alongside close readings and remembrances—the conditions for encountering our objects are radically changed years later.[3] Once my own zines began to figure in historiographical and archival discourses about punk cultures, especially as radically minor objects that stand in for a critical reckoning with a politics of race and gender (one collection named it a "race riot movement" in retrospect), I wondered what else is changed in the increasingly institutional encounter that narrates a history of minor threats as a productive site for archival accumulation and intellectual inquiry.[4]

This essay considers how radically minor objects that render the past in the present as a wish or a wanting for a *something more* and also a caution about the production of knowledge about those objects into what Roderick Ferguson calls the reorder of things.[5] While I focus on punk in the field of cultural politics (and, to be more specific, punk feminisms, women of color punk feminisms), I follow cues from transnational and postcolonial feminist studies and queer of color critique to take up methodological and epistemological questions about minor objects as entry points for disruption and discipline, especially where power's sphere of control and knowledge's realm of interference together aim to capture the minor object. Here the concept of *minor objects* describes those marginal forms, persons, and worlds that are mobilized in narrative (including archival) constructions to designate moments of crisis. By way of a minor object, exclusion and normativity might be laid bare (though perhaps in no straightforward manner), and the contingent quality of knowledge or other claims fold under scrutiny. Punk as one such minor object saved my life (as the saying goes), because it gave me words and gestures for once inchoate feelings about the cluster of promises (the state and capital are on your side! the ring on your finger is a sign of love and protection!) that constitute what Lauren Berlant calls a cruel optimism.[6] *The good life, fuck that.*

But while it can also describe the limits of a structure or practice and be met with clear violence, a minor object might also be recruited to manage or overcome those limits and their laying bare, especially through acts such as recognition and inclusion, reestablishing normative principles without necessarily being

itself engaged directly.[7] Called on to provide presence (as a constitutive outside) and course correction (toward a more "complete picture"), even as a minor object might be brought to bear on the fractures of empire or "the good life," the negative integration or partial recognition or presence of some minor objects into major histories can be made to resolve the same. What happens to the brats, new bloods, poison girls, androids of Mu, persons unknown, or younger lovers when we are interpellated to fill a void, correct a partial claim, set straight a story?[8] How do the politics surrounding institutional discourses of a minor threat, especially at the crash with race or gender, displace or defuse that threat through its incorporation into a politics, history, or archive? How might the specific difference of the minor object be enlisted to enhance a normative principle, an already known unity? This query then is about minor objects becoming objects of knowledge, especially once marshaled in institutional histories and inquiries to achieve continuity, chronology, and correspondences, and about the consequences for minor objects and those who might wish otherwise for them.

Against fantasies of subjective restoration and historical coherence, against plentitude and a conceivable whole, and against expertise and other organs for legitimacy, I argue our minor objects need not cohere or collude with preconceived principles or political projects in order for us to be with them, and let them manifest what they will—including those dense, bright, marvelous, and impossible meetings with one another but also their evasive maneuvers and truancies.

Black Punk Zine That Never Happened

How do we reckon with the impossibilities of a history of race in punk cultures that is absent and also not, addressed by zines that never happened and some that did? What if the something missing is not to be found, having never been in the first place? These are personal questions about those minor objects I made (*Race Riot*, *Slander*), but also political questions about how our objects bear the burden of demonstrating, and yet also failing, what informs our attachment to them. Reading our zines steeped in romance, anger, and sorrow, Atoe wanted to know what happened to the black and brown punks who labored to create an incomplete archive of us and who then seemed to disappear. "If you found a home in punk because yr a super weird queer kid, if punk is something useful to you, if it's the way you make art and the way you were politicized, how do you just leave? Where do you go?"[9] What she has are her traces of where we had been at one moment—our zines, records, photographs—and then the gap between these minor objects and the promises, or presences, attached to them.

"A zine by & for Black PUNKS, QUEERS, MISFITS, FEMINISTS, ARTISTS & MUSICIANS, WEIRDOS and the people who support us," *Shotgun Seamstress* is a snapshot (or a developing negative) in which Atoe's relationships to the past, present, and future are performed without necessarily being resolved directly,

or even completely. In six and a half issues scattered across the years, Atoe documented sometimes-haphazard traces of black punk presence in interviews, but also minor objects such as photographs, zines, and records. But the hope that something missing might yet be found is so often thwarted, because some events or persons have not been documented or archived (in any way we can access). In the second issue, Atoe describes a black-and-white photograph from *Banned in DC: Photos and Anecdotes from the DC Punk Underground (79–85)* that inspires a longing for a time and place she never knew.[10] In the photograph, "two black dudes [are] standing outside the Wilson Center (punk show space), and one of the guys is holding a sign that says, 'All Ages: PUNK THROWDOWN with Trouble Funk, Government Issue, and Grand Mal.'" Government Issue was an 1980s hardcore band, as Atoe notes, while Trouble Funk was a black go-go band that would appear on several other bills with hardcore bands, including Minor Threat. She continues: "Before seeing that picture, I'd never really imagined a punk show looking like that. I started fantasizing about what it must've been like to be a Black Punk in DC in the 80s instead of now." And she wishes that she could assemble a "black punk zine that never happened," interviewing and recording black punks in that long-gone time and place.[11]

In imagining a black punk zine that never happened, Atoe dreams of more complete documentation that might help this photograph register more clearly. The hope to narrate the stories of persons unknown and recover them as historical subjects is induced and denied at once. The photograph is a particularly rich scene for such desires, in form and content manifesting a presence that is at the same time diminishing from view.[12] Or as Laura U. Marks notes, "The photograph is a sort of umbilical cord between the thing photographed 'then' and our gaze 'now.'"[13] Atoe also wishes to be there herself, to be a conduit for assembling and transmitting this impossible archive. But objects and archives are not enough. We know this because the actual document—the photograph, reproduced in this collection—is unable to represent those persons and events to their fullest. The photograph carries forward evidence of the past, but more, the sense that something has passed—something that may not have then been understood as something to note—and we only now know its loss, once it is too late. We might say, then, that the replicability of the image (in this collection, in her zine) and its finitude as an ephemeral moment together constitute what is collective and personal about this partial presence.

Atoe's "nostalgia" (the name she gives to her queer attachments) is not a conservative impulse but an imaginative one. Even as the acknowledgment that archival recovery might be impossible—and even if we knew the particulars of these black punks, would that be enough to claim to know?—commingles with the recognition that documents and photographs imperfectly represent that past to us, such desire may become itself a historical document of the present and what might yet come into being. With her desire, she animates the photograph and provides a context—not a

historical specificity, which would be not an escape but a further entrenchment in a unity, as I press in a moment—but a context made up of gaps in the record, which document not the past but its imperfect resonance in the present. These feelings, while individual and idiosyncratic, are also about our passage as persons unknown in public (or semipublic) cultures—about those alternate histories and possibilities for cohabitation across times as yet blocked and thwarted by our historical situation.

I grappled with the impossibility of such desire before I had the words I do now. When I began collecting words and images for *Race Riot* as a pissed-off twenty-year-old punk, I imagined this object as a fuck-you and farewell gesture to the scene that I had loved and then felt I had lost. There had to be more of us (I reasoned), and I sought to establish an informal record of our presence and a critique of those practices of absenting us, through neglect or through violence. And yet this compilation was also a record of our longing for a history or a record of it, whether or not one or the other ever existed. It is a desire that permits us to see what we have not been able to see—not just black and brown punks but the political and aesthetic economy that renders black and brown punks unseeable, untraceable—such that the past that disappoints us can be created in the present. Long after this unmethodical process, I preserved the hand-scrawled letters, embellished envelopes (with stamps covered in glue), and other materials I had gathered, because it was important that these messages so full of love and rage still exist somehow and somewhere, as evidence of our passage and our importance. In plastic bins in the guest room closet, I store the letters, the cut-and-pasted flats of completed zines and half-realized ones, the scribbled notes from our communications and encounters as young people growing into adulthood through or around punk. Like Atoe, I wished to claim the fractures of a discontinuous history, the black and brown "PUNKS, QUEERS, MISFITS, FEMINISTS, ARTISTS & MUSICIANS, WEIRDOS"—to acknowledge those who came before us and laid the foundations for our becoming punk, and those who were with us when we went through this (or that) moment together, and those who came after us who wonder where we are now.

Riot in the Archive

Questions of accumulation and accessibility are fraught especially when institutional forms turn toward minor objects as case studies or raw material. In gender and women's studies and queer studies, archivists and scholars have turned to one strain of punk feminisms, the 1990s phenomenon of riot grrrl, to articulate theories about gender and sexuality in minor cultures. Yet what Jacques Derrida called an "archive fever" for minor objects—for instance, as evidence of the importance of preserving and studying such objects to better grasp feminist movements that *did* happen—might actually prevent us from engaging with them.[14] And when and where absences in archives and historiographies are observed, for instance, the absence of women of color in oral histories or their objects in university collections,

how supplemental materials are secured and reordered into an existing continuous history becomes a crisis.

The fractious nature of race in feminisms is one snarl in archives and historiographies that might aim to define unities, episodes, and totalities. Where the object consigned alongside "like" others is the abstract premise and concrete basis for the archive and the construction of history, how likeness and also difference are recognized (or not) and structured does not merely translate a reality but produces one.[15] It is now commonplace to observe that race denotes a crisis in feminist historiographies, and riot grrrl (which has become synonymous at times with something called third-wave feminism) is no exemption. *Crisis* describes that decisive point at which a norm or a principle appears to break down and, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak put so well, the "presumptions of an enterprise are disproved by the enterprise itself," and *crisis* also names the opportune moment for transformative action to recuperate that way of being, or a political project.[16] Elsewhere, I describe this coupling of crisis and recuperation as the irruption of a progressive time and also a course correction that shapes a return. *Theirs was an important intervention during a moment of crisis, and lessons have been learned thusly and thereafter.*[17] Crisis thus calls attention to narrative constructions of history, which then shape the forms or practices that aim to redress partisan or partial presence (such as the "not enough") or contingent claims. That usual forms for crisis resolution include recognition, inclusion, and closeness is no distant observation. In recent years, that these operations are turned toward my minor objects—the zines and columns I wrote and also some notion of me as a punk critic—to absorb them into this narrative construction of absence and presence, crisis and recuperation, is one part of the weirdness that informs this work. (Another part is that my critique of just these operations is just as easily absorbed, but here I go anyway.) In considering a number of such moments (some having to do with me and some not), what makes these incidents so revealing is that acknowledgment of the minor object offers a form for a seeming repair of the fractures within and between feminisms, even as the gesture of inclusion intensifies these historiographical (and necessarily political) cleavages.

If we consider the archive as more than an institution but also a social formation, after Ferguson, it is as a system and structure of enunciability that the archive does not merely express a correspondence or historical consciousness but actively renders one.[18] As Kate Eichhorn observes, "Documents act only insofar as they are put into order and put into proximity with other documents."[19] Through teleology and equivalence as forms that determine relations or components shared between them, each object after the other is recruited as a serial example of principles and types, together cohering a continuous history and cogent body of statements about a person or a world. Of course, any consignment of objects is an ambiguously secured ensemble, bound according to what Michel Foucault calls the "*a priori* of a history that is given, since it is that of things actually said."[20] And so the archive is now

often acknowledged as contingent and partial. Yet these failures are not necessarily considered evidence of the impossibility of complete knowledge but instead are evidence of archival absence, which empiricism can resolve. When a crisis in an archive coalesces around an absent minor object, with which historical consciousness and constitutive presuppositions have failed to reckon, the hope, then, is to discover the something missing and to reorder things in their proper place.

It is easy to find an echoing absence in recent historiographies. For instance, Sini Anderson's 2013 documentary *The Punk Singer*, about Bikini Kill vocalist Kathleen Hanna, includes troubling commentary from pop feminist figure Jennifer Baumgardner, who describes feminist "waves" emerging as women inspired by abolitionist and civil rights movements "turned race consciousness on themselves"—a historiographical sketch that commits epistemic violence in replicating (among other problems) race and gender as distinct categories or structures, rewriting feminisms as already "race conscious" in their origins, while eliding the failures of successive feminisms to reckon with race and coloniality. At the same time, we also easily hear now that riot grrrls (like so-called second-wave feminists) should have tried harder to include women of color. This retrospective stance sometimes registers as embarrassed acknowledgment, expressed in understatements such as "Collaboration hasn't been a strong point for feminists throughout history."[21] Thus one story among many about the demise of riot grrrl (a hydra-headed story) locates race at the heart of the fracture.[22] How race is made visible, then, in riot grrrl or any other feminist historiographies, as absence and as crisis (whether as then contemporaneous or now archival crisis), corroborates what actions and discourses aim to control disturbance.

What to do with the observed absence is an epistemological and methodological quandary. Does one find the something missing, and what does that recuperation mean for crisis? Who is being recuperated, and from what disaster? At the behest of Daniela Capistrano from the POC Zine Project, in 2012 I donated some select materials (copies of my copies—zines, fliers) to the Riot Grrrl Collection in the Fales Library at New York University in order to "diversify" their holdings, in hurried anticipation of the publication of selected documents in a published collection.[23] That is to say, Capistrano narrated an archival absence as a crisis, a decisive historical moment that demanded mediation.[24] That institutional record seemed at the moment to perceive women of color as outsiders or, at best, latecomers to zines and to riot grrrl, but the donation proved troubling for me at the time (I included with my donation a lengthy, tortured statement, which is part of the library's holdings and this essay) and now after. What does it mean to make radically minor objects archivable, accessible, or legible? To what labors is the radically minor object recruited beyond what the mere facts of documentation, preservation, and circulation claim to do, especially in a narrative moment of crisis? What might be rendered missing in the act of "correcting" an absence, including the conditions of

absence and the forms through which its seeming correction—as supplement, for instance—is pursued?

For these reasons I feel ambivalence about the donation. Posited as a solution, presence reverts to the ideal terms of the archive in the first place—as representational fullness and total intelligibility. Empiricism in the familiar form of inclusion thus provides a seemingly nonideological resolution to the fractures of history. Sara Ahmed in her work on institutional initiatives "on being included" observes: "If the movement becomes the action, or even the aim, then moving the document might be what stops us from seeing what documents are not doing. If the success of the document is presumed to reside in how much it is passed around, this success might 'work' by concealing the failure of that document to do anything."[25] Following from such an insight, if that moment Capistrano called me to put together a donation is the point during which the presumptions of the enterprise (to account for riot grrrl as a movement) are disproved by the enterprise itself (because of absences in the record), then inclusion is the movement and passage is the measure for the audit or assessment of an archive, or a historiography—and my intervening donation, then, manages the crisis.

In an otherwise triumphalist *Los Angeles Times* review of Lisa Darms's *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, rock journalist Evelyn McDonnell deals with riot grrrl troubles thusly:

> In her smart, personal introductory essay, Johanna Fateman, erstwhile creator of the zine "Artaud-Mania" and co-founder with Hanna of the band Le Tigre, recalls how "each girl's photocopied missive was a revelation" and also how failure to constructively address issues of race and class privilege mired the movement in recriminations. Critics still deride Riot Grrrl for being too white, as if white girls have no right to express their problems. In fact, this collection reveals that some of the most powerful writing came in zines by girls of color ("Bamboo Girl" and "Gunk").

The paragraph—the only paragraph in the review that deals with difference within riot grrrl—ends with a curt nod: "Queer voices were also integral and in your face."[26]

McDonnell's review straddles both exclusion and inclusion in response to the crises posed by minor threats—recrimination, because some critics (including myself, cited in Fateman's essay) sought to disintegrate feminist solidarity and kill feminist joy, and incorporation, in order to demonstrate that a course correction did occur and a continuous history (one in which riot grrrl did not fail but instead prevailed) can be restored thereafter. McDonnell's apparent irritation, found in the summation of critics' stance (as though we argued, baselessly and cruelly, that "white girls have no right to express their problems") attributes to critics a disproportionate, irrational response to race trouble.[27] Meanwhile, we are to suppose that her

dismissal of the caricatured critique is entirely sensible, as she can easily point to the inclusion of (and herself include) women of color in the story of the riot grrrl movement. It is as such that an archive might not safeguard the minor object but instead secure a system for its enunciability, which can then curtail its critique.[28] The same can be said about queercore, which names another copresent scene with alternate investments and forms but is here reduced in a single sentence as a confrontational presence seamlessly integrated into a genealogy of subversive art making. This assimilation of differences into forms of resemblance (in which distinguishing features are transformed into signs of interiority) might yet negate the minor threat.

Where the problem is defined as an absence that blocks the full accounting of an event or phenomenon, inclusion becomes the empirical form through which commensurability (or justice) is presumably achieved. The history or archive that observes the absence of minor objects—and even acknowledges their critiques—becomes successful in its articulation of failure, and usable as a measure of accountability, without actual transformation of the presumably observable principles that describe a historical continuity or coherence. In this manner the minor object provides some value (whether as color or critique) but no structure to the economies that otherwise inscribe an aesthetic, a movement. She becomes the difference that makes no difference.

In *The Reorder of Things*, Ferguson argues, "If genealogy is a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, now is the time to make genealogy into a form of history that can account for the institutionalization of knowledge, modes of difference, and critical agency." The institutionalization of even a partial history (of riot grrrl, for instance,) promises to minor objects a sense of permanence and the achievement of accessible knowledge, but in doing so sets the terms for those objects' enunciability.[29] Toward this end (in speaking about sexuality in the colonial archive), Anjali Arondekar poses a useful provocation: "The critical challenge is to imagine a practice of archival reading that incites relationships between the seductions of recovery and the occlusions such retrieval mandates. By this I mean to say: What if the recuperative gesture returns us to a space of absence? How then does one restore absence to itself? Put simply, can an empty archive also be full?"[30]

Nobody Gets Me

The institutional archive that presumes that its form at least might actualize Atoe's fantasy of a *black punk zine that never happened* also presumes that such a fantasy is only a wish for closure. But institutionalization can also foreclose and overdetermine the shape of the object, where basic presumptions about the minor threat as a constitutive outside might also structure that object's entry into a politics, history, or archive, and too narrowly prescribe consciousness, continuity, or convergence. *(Sex Pistols, so what?)* It is as such that Rey Chow usefully identifies how a systemic series

of appropriations might enfold a minor object into an established unity, through which "X is often constructed negatively as what defamiliarizes, what departs from conventional expectations, what disrupts the norm, etc.—terms that are invested in inscribing specificity by way of differentiation, deferment, and resistance."[31] Hence the capture of the minor object might find it diminished as a *mere moment* of consciousness in a historical continuity, or coinciding with a *generic principle* for a political project. To put it another way, differentiation, deferment, and resistance are precisely the politics through which a minor object might be made intelligible as crisis *and* correction. Thus the ease with which a heterogeneous minor object is incorporated within a structure of enunciability as a negative idiom, as a functional or instrumental outside, is precisely the danger of capture.

Let us consider seriously the aversion to becoming intelligible, predictable, or otherwise accessible. Such an aversion might be a prophylactic against the easy contempt or even enthusiastic attachment that mark the limits of inclusion and incorporation, which assumes that its minor objects have nothing more to say than what is permissible under a managing principle, and that what words or gestures unfold from such objects are easily subsumed into crisis *or* continuity. I take my cue from a scene from *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Fabulous Stains*.[32] During what appears to be a disastrous first gig with her all-girl punk band at the local bar, the red-and-black-eyed teenaged malcontent Corinne Burns is taunted by a woman in the audience, who dismisses her performance as the idle noise of rebellious adolescence (as if this was nothing at all). Corinne turns her sarcasm upon her hecklers, flaying misogynist fantasies of romantic intimacy and sneering, "Sucker!" Corinne then tosses her trench coat to the side of the stage as the audience gasps. She appears (as though) vulnerable in black underwear, fishnet stockings, and a sheer red blouse, but she defiantly refuses intelligibility, accessibility. Grabbing the microphone, she snarls, "I'm perfect, but nobody in this shithole gets me, because I don't put out."

What is sometimes dismissed as teenaged intractability or punk secrecy ("Nobody gets me") might bear out as a more dense denial. As Ahmed and Sianne Ngai, among others, observe so well, ugly or backward feelings that appear to suspend action or refuse to say might yet yield diagnostics of power under the shadow of capture, or even the promise of achievement.[33] Why not, then, be an obstacle to the disciplinary closure that renders a minor threat as negative integration or supplemental outside in a chain of signification or a brief moment of consciousness in a long history about a culture or a world?[34] Consigned to an outside, sometimes construed as crude material for another's speech while occluded from inhabiting the same order of signification, the minor object might refuse the troubled politics of information retrieval and knowledge production by state and capital.[35] *What we do is secret* is not just an anthem, but an argument about incommensurability.

This is not to foreclose on refusal as an attachment to *"becoming minor,"* which might not lead us to any sort of recognizable, let alone radical, politics at all.[36]

(Punk is littered with jerks.) Nor is this to suggest that there are no costs to absence or exclusion, including "the psychological costs of racism and sexism" for some of the "PUNKS, QUEERS, MISFITS, FEMINISTS, ARTISTS & MUSICIANS, WEIRDOS."[37] It is to insist instead that presence (especially in the often narrow forms through which presence is recognized) is no guarantee. What are the costs of these customary forms for desiring presence and perfectible knowledge? Such an alteration in our emphases disputes the principles that inclusion, intelligibility, intimacy, and sympathetic identification are necessary social goods. Instead, we might allow their denial to tell us something about what the minor object refuses: when established as a predictable condition or generic principle (to borrow from Chow, when X is radically different or X resists), the minor object loses its specificity to instead be appropriated into an existing unity.

What does this leave us? This essay has tried to say some things about minor objects: that they might be nonnormative and even threatening without having a unified or prescriptive politics, that their integration into institutional forms of history and archive as negative definition describes a form of capture, and that we do not have to discipline objects or signs to perceive what is being lost in conventional fantasies of progress or perfectibility. Punk long ago disappointed my teenaged hopes for an obviously revolutionary politic, being a placeholder for institutionally improper craving but also immersed in the errors of all manner of dumbfuckery. But in its doing so, I learned something else: not to believe in those forms of political life—such as consensus, clarity, or closeness—as obligatory measures (or commands) for fashioning politics or life otherwise. *Nobody gets me* might actually bleed into an onto-epistemological critique of usable knowledge about minor objects, unsettling the question of *how to be political* without a necessary orientation toward expertise, efficiency, or ends.

How, then, do we make disturbance present and perceptible, without requiring clarity or coherence from our statements, or transformation or consensus in our actions, as measures for calculation and appraisal? Under what circumstances might queer attachments, epistemic absences, and deliberate obscurities, or the thorny passage into an archive (including no doubt some of the gestures I make here), be marshaled within the order of a continuous history, through a complicity between critical articulation and political utility? Can we yet be destroyers of the status quo? What would it mean for a politics of knowledge and as yet obscure possibility to say to each other, from one minor threat to another, *You are perfect. Don't let anyone in this shithole get you. You don't have to put out.*

Notes

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1. Osa Atoe, *Maximum Rocknroll* (self-published), no. 313 (2009): n.p.
2. For further elaborations on queer and postcolonial temporalities, see Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); and Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
3. In 2011 Brager and Sailor, zinesters and librarians, published the first issue of *Archiving the Underground*, a zine exploring the tensions that accompany "the academic project of archiving and 'academicizing' the subcultural practices in which we [zinesters] participate." Brager and Sailor may consider this essay my belated response to their questions. Jenna Brager and Jami Sailor, *Archiving the Underground* (self-published), no. 1 (2011): 3.
4. The collection is Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, eds., *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (New York: Verso Books, 2012), 256. I made my first zine in 1991 as a junior in high school. I've been publishing zines irregularly but continuously since. The zines and other punk writings that are most archived and discussed were produced between 1992 and 2005.
5. Roderick Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). The passages citing Barbara Christian are particularly relevant (ibid., 35).
6. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
7. These dangers are familiar to me, having considered the refugee as a supplemental figure of liberal empire. Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
8. This list of characters includes the names of a number of punk bands and songs featuring women and people of color.
9. Osa Atoe, *Maximum Rocknroll*, no. 313 (2009): n.p.
10. Cynthia Connolly, Leslie Clague, and Sharon Cheslow, comps., Cynthia Connolly et al., eds., *Banned in DC: Photos and Anecdotes from the DC Punk Underground (79–85)* (Washington, DC: Sun Dog Propaganda, 1988).
11. Osa Atoe, "Black Punk Zine that Never Happened," *Shotgun Seamstress*, no. 2, (2007), n.p.
12. While I could cite many, I will only name two: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981); and Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
13. Laura U. Marks, "Loving a Disappearing Image," *Cinémas* 8, nos. 1–2 (1997): 98.
14. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
15. My apologies to archivists and librarians who might wish for more precision here.
16. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 138–39. See also Janet Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).
17. Mimi Thi Nguyen, "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 22, nos. 2–3 (2012): 173–96.
18. Ferguson, *Reorder of Things*, 19.

19. "Interview with Kate Eichhorn, Author of *The Archival Turn in Feminism*," by Hope Leman, Critical Margins, January 1, 2014, criticalmargins.com/2014/01/01/interview-kate-eichhorn-author-archival-turn-feminism.
20. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 127.
21. Leigh Kolb, "'The Punk Singer' and a Room of Her—and Our—Own," Bitch Flicks, December 2, 2013, www.btchflcks.com/2013/12/the-punk-singer-and-a-room-of-her-and-our-own.html. *The Punk Singer*, documentary, directed by Sini Anderson (2013, New York City).
22. See, for instance, Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010). The politics of race and riot grrrl historiography is discussed in Nguyen, "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival."
23. As an exception to the narrative construction of race as a crisis, the Barnard College Zine Library actively builds its collection around race as a primary story, soliciting donations and making purchases of zines by queers and women of color (trans-inclusive). Eichhorn discusses Barnard zine librarian Jenna Freedman's activism in Eichhorn, "Interview."
24. Of course, that some perceive no absence at all is another sort of problem.
25. Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 97.
26. Evelyn McDonnell, "'The Riot Grrrl Collection' Spreads Girl Germs of the '90s Movement," review of *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, by Lisa Darms, ed., *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 2013, www.latimes.com/features/books/jacketcopy/la-ca-jc-riot-grrrl-collection20130609,0,6674338.story.
27. As Sianne Ngai notes, to do so lays the burden on the racialized subject to produce a commensurable, measured response to racism. Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 188.
28. Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 129.
29. On black holes and historiography, see Evelynn Hammonds, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 6, nos. 2–3 (1994): 127–45. Inspired by Hammonds, see Elizabeth Stinson, "Means of Detection: A Critical Archiving of Black Feminism and Punk Performance," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 22, nos. 2–3 (2012): 275–311. Roderick Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 226.
30. Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 1.
31. Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 60–61.
32. *Ladies and Gentlemen, The Fabulous Stains*, directed by Lou Adler (1982, Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures).
33. Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*.
34. Sarah Roberts observes that this essay's concerns about "anachronistic inclusion, knowledge-sharing and institutionalization of culture and knowledge" resonate with a field of research and practice from library information sciences known as "traditional cultural expression." She elaborates: "This has to do with scholars, practitioners and community members [such as indigenous peoples] pushing back on the constant impetus and demand from memory institutions for inclusion and the making public of various types of cultural materials and

knowledge. . . . This is especially good to think about in an era in which it has become a widely accepted radical principle to want to have and make available all information at all times." Sarah Roberts, personal correspondence with the author, January 6, 2014.

35. This refusal is also often dismissed as anti-intellectual. However, some punks observe that academic study of punk lacks rigorous review, because its historians and theorists are largely unaffiliated with the academy. Anna Vo, "Introduction," *Fix My Head* (self-published), no. 4 (2013): n.p.; Zack Furness, "Introduction: Attempted Education and Righteous Accusations," in *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower*, ed. Zach Furness (New York: Minor Compositions, 2012), 5–24; Golnar Nikpour, *Fix My Head* (self-published), no. 4 (2013): n.p. Of the archival impulse, Tobi Vail observes: "For instance now everyone calls that whole time period of punk feminism 'riot grrl' and it has a much broader definition than it did back then. There is a market for 'riot grrl' history, so we have to be suspicious of that economic factor but we shouldn't let this stop us from documenting our own scenes." Tobi Vail, "In the Beginning There Was Rhythm!" *Jigsaw* (blog), September 28, 2010, jigsawunderground.blogspot.com/2010/09/in-beginning-there-was-rhythm.html.
36. See Daniel Traber, "L.A.'s 'White Minority': Punk and the Contradictions of Self-Marginalization," *Cultural Critique* 48, no. 1 (2001): 30–64.
37. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 206.