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## **Playing With Time: Gay Intergenerational Performance Work and the Productive Possibilities of Queer Temporalities**

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*This article examines the tendencies of LGBT intergenerational theater projects. By engaging with ideas of queer time, temporal drag, and the pervasive heteronormative imagery of heritability and inheritance, this article explores the possibility that LGBT intergenerational projects may generate some of the problems they aim to challenge. Through the lens of queer time, the article describes the normativity generated in LGBT intergenerational theater projects as a form of restrictive interpellation. The article explores the temporal complexities at play in such theater productions as *The Front Room*, a specific LGBT intergenerational theater project performed in the United Kingdom in 2011. The article concludes by noting some ways in which intergenerational theater projects might seek to work through the embodiment of the historical quotidian as a mode of resistance to normativity's recirculation.*

**KEYWORDS** *chrononormativity, history, intergenerational theater, interpellation, performance, queer temporalities, queer time, quotidian, temporal drag*

LGBT intergenerational projects often seek to bridge a gap, to bring a harmony to generational differences, and to have a sense that we are all in this together (Bohan, Russell, & Montgomery, 2003; ILCUK, 2011a;<sup>1</sup> Morrison

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Thomson, 2009). When thinking about LGBT communities coming together in theater-based intergenerational projects, there are particular qualities that emerge in the process and output of the work in the form of the performance. LGBT intergenerational work is seen as important because there are fewer chances for LGBT generations to mix, especially because LGBT culture is often described as both youth and commercially oriented, which may resist an easy flow of communication between generations (see Halferty, 2006; Paulick, 2008). Such commercialism is noted as one reason for the lack of intergenerational mixing (ILCUK, 2011a, p. 12). Also present in the field is a sense of urgency brought about by a perceived generational gap related to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s—a generational gap that apparently prevents the positive experience of passing on culture through generations (Bohan et al., 2003). This temporal gap is often sought to be bridged or closed by intergenerational work through the sharing of interpersonal narratives and by putting aside respective prejudices around age (Morrison Thomson, 2009).<sup>2</sup>

Through the use of queer thinking focused on time and temporalities, the aim of this discussion is, in part, to examine how time and temporalities function in intergenerational performance work. Also this article explores how time or temporalities structure intergenerational work physically and metaphorically in a way that encourages LGBT legibility within a restrictive grid of possibilities that have at their base an agenda shot with the economic circulation of productivity and wealth accumulation (Halberstam, 2011, pp. 2–10). The discussion starts by exploring concepts formed in work on queer temporalities that can be used to draw a focus to the manner in which intergenerational work functions to support particular social structures that value effective production through heteronormative-producing ideas, images, and temporal metaphors including succession, inheritance, and production over generations. Following such a discussion, this article seeks to engage these themes and metaphors when looking at the tendencies of LGBT intergenerational projects by referring to an intergenerational theater performance project that culminated in a production titled *The Front Room*. *The Front Room* was a project run in 2011 as part of a 4-year program of works with the LGBT community, funded by the UK National Lottery, directed by Ben Buratta with Outbox LGB Theatre, a theater company based at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London. This project saw younger LGBT people sharing stories with older LGBT people through interviews and brokered sessions with a diverse range of individuals and community groups.<sup>3</sup> The project used a method of practice whereby the younger people, along with a creative team of theater professionals, generated a performance from raw interview material, research, and discussions about the politics of gayness, age, gay history, and the politics of contemporary gay life. The company formed fictional characters and stories that were hybrids of interview material, research, and rehearsal improvisations.<sup>4</sup> The performances played in London and toured to Birmingham in the UK. The project serves this

discussion by exemplifying how normativity around time and temporality might be generated, yet in the process of the discussion of *The Front Room*, there is also an exploration of how the project presented resistances to normativity and exposed the potential for other creative and productive possibilities for intergenerational performance projects.

## QUEER TIME

In recent queer thinking, notions of temporality have become increasingly important. Partly, the work on queer time has explored the sense that time is organized in a way that it structures normativity, so to be out of temporal alignment in some sense is to be illegible by the terms of the normative. This thought sees the human as bound to time in order to properly be, as Elizabeth Freeman noted:

I mean that naked flesh is bound to socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation: binding is what turns mere existence into a form of mastery in a process that I'll refer to as *chromonormativity* or the use of time to reorganise individual human bodies towards maximum production. (Freeman, 2010, p. 3)

Chrononormativity operates at the level of the state and the personal, where its effects render a sense of temporal inevitability. Judith Halberstam uses

the concept of queer time to make clear how respectability, and notions of the normal on which it depends, may be upheld by middle-class logic of reproductive temporality. And so, in Western cultures, we chart the emergence of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation; and we create longevity as the most desirable future, applaud the pursuit of long life (under any circumstances), and pathologize modes of living that show little or no respect for longevity. (Halberstam, 2005, p. 4)

Chrononormativity in these terms is the process of rendering societal expectations so that they appear natural and inevitable. Yet chrononormativity is a construction that, like all cultural constructions, functions as a site of power that favors certain modes of being over others. Queer work on temporality, on the one hand, is a queer articulation of time that seeks to expose the temporal power play in legibility. On the other hand, the work is manifest as lived experiments with ways of life, forms of identity, cultural activities, and modes of existence that upset the smooth flow of reproductive straight time.

Queer responses and resistances to chrononormativity have been varied. Halberstam described in her work on queer subculture a strategy of extending adolescence as queer resistance, a rejection or refusal to properly grow up;

she explored “the stretched-out adolescences of queer culture makers that disrupt conventional accounts of subculture, youth culture, adulthood and maturity” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 151). Others, such as Lee Edelman, have seen the queer as outside reproductive futurity refusing the future. Edelman has noted the queer as representing no future (Edelman, 2005). Edelman’s influential vision of queer asks us to consider what is it not to be for the child, for the future, for productivity, and in so doing illuminates how temporalities are brought into relief by queer subjects (see Bond Stockton, 2009 in relation to children and queer temporalities, described as growing sideways rather than growing up). José Esteban Muñoz in relation to time has explored queer utopia as futurity, as horizon, as a nonproscriptive site of “a world not quite here, a horizon of possibility, not a fixed schema” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 97). Some analyses rethink time out of its linearity and explore other forms of time—for example, “coincidental time” (Boellstorff, 2007, p. 240). Others work on the “refusal of linear historicism” in order to “think further about multiple temporalities in the present” (Dinshaw et al., 2007, p. 178) and labor to “project a theory of time into other geopolitical histories of racialized sexuality” (Ferguson in Dinshaw et al., 2007, p. 180). Queer work on temporalities also directly addresses a “homonormative timeline” to show how “we create our own temporal normativity outside the heteronormative family” (Hoang in Dinshaw et al., 2007, p. 184). Key to all these people, and others, is the concept that time contains power structures that form mechanisms on which subjects come to be and have agency in the world. Normative time, as Halberstam described it,<sup>5</sup>

form[s] the base of nearly every definition of the human in almost all of our modes of understanding, from the professions of psychoanalysis and medicine, to socioeconomic and demographic studies on which every sort of state policy is based, to our understandings of the affective and the aesthetic. (Halberstam, 2005, p. 152)

Time becomes so important to legibility that it sits at the root of humanness and citizenship to the extent that to be legible is to be correctly in time. Thinkers and theorists in this area not only seek to see how temporality has generated normativity around legibility but also labor to make a queer vision of time to rethink and reorder its functions as an agent of normativity.

Elizabeth Freeman’s concept of temporal drag (2000, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2011) is one such idea that re-envision concepts of time and reconnects historical identities committed to identitarian positions with queer post-identity. Temporal drag, developed from a number of intellectual antecedents (see Freeman, 2010, pp. 9–10) observes that the past might be accessed through a multitemporal hybrid present. Freeman and others envision the current moment as already plural temporally (hence, multi-temporal). For queer time, queerness as resistance, and queer normative

discussions, Freeman has emphasized the pull of the past on the present with specific reference to the lesbian feminist's pull on the radicalism of queer:

I'd like to call this "temporal drag" with all the associations that the word "drag" has with retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past on the present. This kind of drag, an under discussed corollary to the queenier kind celebrated in an early 1990s queer studies influenced by deconstruction, suggests a bind for lesbians committed to feminism: the gravitational pull that "lesbian" and even more so "lesbian feminist" sometimes seems to exert on "queer" (Freeman, 2010, p. 63)

Temporal drag is an idea that connects the usually separate queer "not here yet" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1) version of queerness to foreclosed identities, or identities invested in identity politics—identities with which queer theory pursued a radical break. Freeman noted a backward pull in queer because some key elements of queer's past are apparent in ways not normally considered. She writes:

Might some bodies, by registering on their very surface the co-presence of several historically contingent events, social movements and/or collective pleasures, complicate or displace the centrality of *gender*-transitive drag to queer performativity? Might they articulate instead a kind of *temporal* transitivity that does not leave feminism, femininity, or other so-called anachronisms behind? (Freeman, 2010, p. 63)

Rather than the more expected sustained queer focus on gender fluidity, temporal drag offers a way of connecting "queer performativity to disavowed political histories" (p. 65), which helps think through how queer might effect change, articulate agency, and re-site itself though temporal shift. Through multitemporality, temporal drag affords the opportunity to question other generational metaphors and reminds intergenerational project makers that "it may be crucial to complicate the idea of horizontal political generations succeeding one another with temporal drag" (Freeman, 2000, p. 729). Succession, whereby one generational movement replaces another (often thought better, more advanced, modern) is questioned by Freeman's temporal drag because succession figures productive futurism as laid in "straight time" (Boellstorff, 2007, p. 234). This drag looks to the past not as passed but as part of a current temporality, and it offers apparatuses by which intergenerational performance efforts might be examined to explore what temporal considerations are (re)produced in the work.

## THE TENDENCIES OF LGBT INTERGENERATIONAL WORK

There is a primary focus in LGBT intergenerational work on what is missing. The apparent lack of mixing intergenerationally is axiomatically presented as an index of dysfunction in the LGBT community because commingling does not take place. When there are moments where there is an attempt to focus on what is shared between the generations in LGBT work (as described in the International Longevity Centre–UK’s (ILC-UK) toolkit for setting up, delivering, and evaluating intergenerational projects), these commonalities note a primary victimhood and are drawn in a particular way. The report notes:

Higher risk of mental ill-health ... Greater likelihood of having a lifestyle which poses risks to health ... Experiences of marginalisation ... Greater reliance on non-familial sources for social support ... [which] may not necessarily be sympathetic to their sexual or gender orientation ... Poor responses from service providers.<sup>6</sup> (ILC-UK, 2011b, p. 7)

Understandably, the ILC-UK may be making a political point here about the needs of LGBT people and in some sense the report can serve to put pressure on policy makers. However, because the toolkit states first the damage in the community as the primary extant generational connective tissue, there is likely an effect on projects made with victimhood as a first term. Starting with assumptions about a wounded community that suffers these abuses could create a very different project than if some positive commonalities emerge early on in the toolkit. The report addresses intergenerational work positively later on, but it does not do this with the force of earlier comments on victimhood. It notes that projects can provide room for “common experiences” to be spoken of, can “provide role models” and challenge “negative generational perceptions,” and can overcome a “relatively high degree of loneliness.” Projects can also, the report notes, address participants’ “common needs as service users” and provide a space where “older people can interact with younger people” as well as with “different identities across the LGBT spectrum.” They are a place where “younger LGBT people” can “learn about LGBT history directly from older people,” which goes some way to “strengthening the visibility of the LGBT community” beyond the projects. All of these aspects are taken in the toolkit as an *a priori* good (ILC-UK, 2011b, pp. 9–10).

The persistent image of the victim evoked in the materials works as an undermining factor. Marshall (2010) has noted that the victim rhetoric has an effect, he is speaking directly about youth but his idea can be mapped over older people. He notes:

The victim trope persists as a powerful frame for queer youth experience, both in homophobic and anti-homophobic representations. Researches in queer studies have argued that an effect of the reliance on the victim trope



has been to actively undermine or de-emphasise queer youth agency by universalising understandings of the queer youth as a subject who needs to be saved by external (often institutional and adult) agents. (Marshall, 2010, p. 65)

Victim troping works against intergenerational projects because it focuses on, at least as an early term, the victim. Some commentators warn that these tendencies have the effect of “participating in telling them [younger participants] that their lives will necessarily be painful and pointless” (Bohan et al., 2003, p. 12). This victimhood could be extended to the community as a whole when the implication is made that there is an exacerbated generational gap that serves as an index of the community’s communicative dysfunction. This approach can be damaging because it subtly posits that proper relations between older and younger people are based on kinship models that are cunningly connected to the terms of the heteronormative familial.

Intergenerational work can offer an opportunity to challenge the assumptions about generationality manifest in the victim trope. Not only might projects such as *The Front Room* offer a means by which this normativity is exposed and examined, but also other ways of forming relationships across generational lines can be explored. There can be a pressure in LGBT intergenerational projects for the older generation to pass on their experiences of history. Generational modeling creates a weight of the past that the older participants seem to have to carry because they were there (as the ILC-UK implies, as noted above). This makes several assumptions about the relative power of the older participants and their individual lives as well as their access to historical moments. Likewise it does not emphasize the present for, or the agency of, the older participants. For the younger participants there is a sense of the *wait* of history, in that they must carry the torch for which the elders have fought, that the older participants are “prone to consider adolescents as “the future” disregarding their presence and their impact on the present” (Bohan et al., 2003, p. 19). The younger participants are likewise not really able to emphasize the here and now of their agency. (This is a similar temporal impulse as the recent “It Gets Better” phenomenon [[www.itgetsbetter.org](http://www.itgetsbetter.org)].)

The bequeathing of cultural knowledge, often seen as a positive aspect of intergenerational projects, has a particular resonance in LGBT work. There is a perceived gap in young people’s knowledge about gay history that the older participants are sometimes tasked with filling. In some LGBT intergenerational work, particularly in *The Front Room*, the everyday, quotidian, exchange has just as great, if not greater, impact on the participants as the passing on of accepted gay histories. A story about an older person’s experience of walking in a street might be as profound to the group as learning about the (contested) history of the gay movement. Of course, the latter is important; however, it is the resonance of the historical quotidian that may be



most fully felt and understood by the younger participants in the explication of the everyday of the past. Morrison Thomson noted that “re-membering, stitching the pieces of memory together for a particular audience in a particular time and place” functions as a potential to connect the participants across temporalities (2009, p. 119). This historical everydayness in performance projects is accessed via the body in rehearsals, and the effect of the understanding of the ordinary in the past has the potential to appear in a non-normative, non-bequeathed sense.

Even with the potential of using queer temporalities as a tool in the work to generate a sense of the historical quotidian, it is worth noting that this generational inheritance can be fraught with complexity for a number of reasons, not least of all that such baton-passing can be viewed and experienced as a form of restrictive interpellation.<sup>7</sup> The temporal issue here is that the legibility gained by the interpellation is itself part of a power play that is historically specific and within which different strategies for survival exist.

Clashing strategies for survival that are present in parts of the exchange of LGBT intergenerational work have been related to generational clusters. That is, there is a tendency to consider that older LGBT people learned to survive in a hostile society by passing—by playing the game of invisibility. The younger people are sometimes thought of as seeing passing and invisibility as opposed to their strategy for survival, which revolves around visibility and presence in a (less directly) hostile community. Passing and invisibility are characterized in this way as a kind of homophobia. As Fox noted:

For the younger generation of gay men, passing is tantamount to complicity in marginalizing strategies. The concept of *survival* then has radically different meanings for older and younger generations . . . For older homosexual males, survival meant/means being able to pass as straight; the younger generations of gay men, however, equate survival with queer *visibility*. Often this visibility manifests itself in communicative acts that many older gay men . . . see as irresponsible. (Fox, 2007, p. 51)

Although Fox was writing here about a specific group of gay men in a specific location, the clashing strategies can be extrapolated onto LGBT intergenerational work, and they manifest themselves in a tension. This tension springs from the attitude that passing on historical material intergenerationally is almost always a positive function. Thus interpellation somehow is set up to stall in ways that can be seen as productive, but that might also be seen as a challenge brought about by the “impoverished pattern of communication between LGBT youth and LGBT adults” (Bohan et al., 2003, p. 35) and their “short-circuited intergenerational communication” (p. 19). Although not seeking to diminish the paucity of this communication where it does or does not exist, the suggestion here is that behavior that might be viewed in intergenerational projects as a result of the lack of communication across generations

could also be present in part because of the normalizing impulse of LGBT intergenerational work to pass on histories and strategies for survival, which may manifest a resistance to the interpellative dynamics of these exchanges.

As a result of this inheritance-ridden structure, there are assumptions made about the historical roles of the participants. Fox noted an older member of his research group in his study who mixed with younger people. This participant did not pass and had not used that as a strategy for survival. This participant stands as a reminder that there is diversity in the groups; there are social complexities in the LGBT community that may not be reflected in the structures from which intergenerational work may proceed. In *The Front Room*, there were as many passers in the younger group as there were in the older group. Likewise there were as many individuals who wore their LGBT-ness on their sleeve in both groups. Indeed, there were some members of the older group who were significantly more radical and politically inclined than in the younger group.

The tendency for looking at a simplified version of the community could be related to temporal norms that present the subject as legible. Fox noted the “polysemous reality of the gay and lesbian social order” (2007, p. 35), a reality that holds many plural meanings at once, which is not something that forms part of the way that intergenerational work is generally thought. This is not to say that makers only think and interact with the community as if it held a single shared experience, or in a stilted way—rather, there is often sensitivity in intergenerational work of the diversity of the individuals in the group and a genuinely warm and positive attitude to intergenerational exchange and the changes it can potentially render in the community. However, it is the prevailing articulated description of the community and its dysfunction within the modality of age that is pervasive to the point that it can be seen to generate the reality it describes, in a similar way that normativity produces naturalness. For instance, a study of age cohort differences found:

evidence that individual psychological and sexual behaviour milestones (e.g. awareness of attraction to males, having an orgasm with another male) are slowly moving toward earlier chronological ages. (Drasin et al., 2008, p. 382)

This moving toward earlier ages is not reflected in the age that the men have sex with other men, but rather that the youngest cohort (aged 16–21 years) is

likely to self-identify as gay before engaging in same-sex sexual behaviour, while the older two cohorts were more likely to engage in same-sex sexual behaviour before identifying as gay.<sup>8</sup> (Dube, 2000, in Drasin et al., 2008, p. 385)

The description here is of cohort effects; effects that can be extrapolated across a class of person—in this case, the classification is age related. These effects are related to normative temporalities; Drasin et al. noted that Dube’s 2000 study “suggests that younger males are reaching important psychosocial milestones at an earlier age” (Drasin et al., 2008, p. 385). Milestones suggest stages that in themselves are temporally bound within limits that produce a view of an individual out of that timeline as developmentally retarded or accelerated. Discussions about generational difference, although serving a particular political call to support gay youth who are coming out at earlier ages, reproduce the problem of temporally generated normative legibility.

LGBT intergenerational work that functions through legibility also have this tendency toward homonormativity, a term used by Duggan (2003) to describe a turn in LGBT communities, politics, and behaviors toward the neoliberal that finds its home in the personalization of gay politics, rights-based arguments, and the personal. The tendency of homonormativity is to play the “place at the table” or the “like us-ness” card in representations. In this context it is important to note that theater works seeking to tell a community’s stories across generations can turn to “heteronormative narratives of community” (Greer, 2012, p. 67). Through normative tendencies, according to this point of view, works that might be seen as queer intergenerational performance risk being subsumed into mobile homonormative narratives of identitarian, liberationist celebration. This potentiality excludes the non-homonormative—individuals who do not support powerful positions in the normative—perhaps because they lack a stake in the status quo. The end of homonormativity is the sustenance of individuals who have a claim on the normative and the sedation of potential radicalism. Some have noted that queer is now in some ways in an “after queer” moment, when “queer has to some extent been reassimilated into mainstream discourses; sedimented as a subjectivity . . . and taken up as a new ‘catch-all’ name for LGBTQI subjects” (Youdell, 2010, p. 89).<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that although theorists and researchers might have a nuanced sense of the differences between *queer* and *gay*, these nuances are not always shared with the facilitators, artists, and participants, and the terms themselves can be allied, aligned, maligned, and used interchangeably or not at all.<sup>10</sup> The potential for recuperation is also present in performance interventions, as Goltz and Zingshiem noted:

The possibilities of performance to move audience/participants into challenging resistant, and self-reflexive spaces is wrought with complications, notably, the complex ways that discourses of power quickly recuperate and normalise acts of resistance. (Goltz & Zingsheim, 2010, p. 291)

The potential radicalism that queerness and thought based in queer temporalities could bring to LGBT intergenerational performance projects can

itself be normalized by the process, where that process seeks to celebrate through performance such homonormative visions of a community.

### THE FRONT ROOM, INTERGENERATIONALITY AND QUEER TIME

*The Front Room* was set in and around a room where many temporalities played out, often simultaneously. The set resembled a room that was temporally shared by a gay youth and his disapproving mother in the 1940s, a married lesbian in the 1950s, a gay couple in the pre-Stonewall 1960s, a radical Gay Liberation Front (GLF) squat in the 1970s, and a normalized gay couple in the 1980s. Each time period corresponded with a scene, not in chronological order, generated from the stories of the older participants. Interspersed with the scenes set in the room were theatrical moments when the cast came together across the time zones and clips of recorded testimony were played.

The project started with a series of brokered discussions and workshops that stimulated conversation across generational lines. The dialogue formed the basis of some of the stories that were included in the final performance. The early exchanges were used to set up further recorded discussions by the younger participants. Key elements of the recorded material were played during the production to both emphasize the testimonial nature of the material and to make clear that the scripted scenes were interpretations of the collected material. The stories ranged from accounts of one of the older participants being sent to an institution for aversion therapy by his mother when he was a young person to narratives about how people found sex and close relations in a culture where homosexuality for males was legislated against and there were powerful social prohibitions for lesbians to live openly. Importantly for this kind of intergenerational project, which was related to sexuality, discussions about and sensitive representations of sex and sexual activity formed a core part of the process. The performance represented a number of historical identities without stripping those identities of their sexual elements.<sup>11</sup>

The production was dense with temporal considerations. It is not only in the narrative of the production where many temporal zones simultaneously occurred—other temporalities were at play at the time of the process: the backward and forward looking in discussions with participants, devising time, rehearsal time, and the time for the production to play and tour. There was also time for the participants to consider their own relationship to aging as part of the experience, an often ignored dimension in projects (see Bringle & Kremer, 1993). Participants were offered time during the process to dwell on aging, its representation, and its obvious diverse presence, or not, in their own lives and in the gay community more generally.

These densities made a number of points about temporalities and their representation. Particularly striking was how the younger people in the project were disinclined at the beginning of the process to make the show about AIDS, thinking in some way that those productions had been done.<sup>12</sup> Yet, as the project developed, this “not about AIDS” position changed, and the production included, as a representation of the crisis, a recurring image of a character from the 1980s getting ready to go to many funerals. This change in position was, in some part, because of a conversation with an older person who noted, quite off the cuff, that he stopped going to funerals; he had funeral fatigue. The character represented these difficult times by preparing himself for a funeral by simply knotting a black necktie without speech, in a single spotlight. This image was intermittently repeated throughout the production; at every iteration the character became more fatigued. In a particularly affecting moment, which is the last time the audience see him, he appears to give up, seeming too exhausted to knot his tie, when a figure from the past arrives and does it for him.

Keeping in mind the problematic tendencies as described by Talburt et al. (Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 11) to assume moments of transformation, where the participants are changed in a profound way by a project, it is still possible to claim that the difficulties of the past (the AIDS crisis, coming out, passing) contributed to an understanding of the present for the younger participants. The repeated image of the knotting of a tie standing in for the AIDS crisis served as a form of temporal drag. Moments such as the image of the knotting did not happen in chronological narrative order—rather, the image interrupted the smooth flow of time. The character returning to a spot-lit area to tie his tie became a drag in a number of ways: a dragging of the narrative back from the present to a crucial moment of trauma; a drag forward/backward in the timescale of the narrative to a future/past challenge; a drag because initially the repetition of the image was not revealed as representing the crisis in a way that was easily graspable as a demonstration of a passing on of history.

The AIDS crisis as represented in *The Front Room* did not occupy large amounts of stage space or time, but it fundamentally upset the narrative line so that the form of the production did not resemble the more usual causal narratives of normative theater making and presentation modes. In the production, the crisis was unresolved, open-ended, and affectually present in a way that emphasized the inaccessibility of the past to the present younger participants—yet, paradoxically, it is porously present through the body and embodiment in performance.<sup>13</sup> The everyday moments when the production returned to the simple knotting of a tie were its most effective, and its disruptive effect on the smoothness of the representation of time reflected the gnawing unknowing of a historical moment to the present while also temporally dragging the cast and the audience’s attention backward to a key moment in gay UK/U.S. history in a way that made it present.

The notion of drag in its more usual sense also had an impact on the development process and production of the project. It is clear that the younger people had another sense of drag and its ubiquitous presence in LGBTQ performance culture—that of drag performance. Through the project there were moments of realization when the cast demonstrated an understanding of the qualitatively different sense of the radical nature of some historical drag. The contribution of radical drag to the GLF formed part of the development of the project, and the production represented both radical and traditional forms of drag to show the temporal interdependency of the performance forms. And, as an extension of temporality, drag was both dragged up by the performers and also dragged back to a historical moment when identity politics was an important antecedent of the queer post-identity turn to come. For the performer playing a drag queen from the past, there is a level of complexity in terms of queer temporality: dragging in several directions at once, while also bringing about an out-of-time moment when the current queer rejection of the past is shown that it cannot not be complete and yet, equally, a wholehearted embrace of identity politics as in the past could not be made.

As a moment of temporal complexity in the performance, the exchange below happens in a scene based on the setting out of a jumble sale to raise funds for the GLF. Phyllis, played by a male participant, is a drag character who is a bit older than many of the people in the GLF; she enters:

PHYLLIS It looks like a proper little WI<sup>14</sup> meeting, that's what. We should've waited till after the Festival so we can get Mary Whitehouse and Dame Cliff Richard<sup>15</sup> down to run the bloody cake stall.

MICK Any wonder we can't get no bodies through the door with faceache over there, mincin around.<sup>16</sup>

PHYLLIS They hoof their lallies across the street so's they don't have to step in our shadows, you really think they're going to come in here and spend their hard-earned on a load of dirty schmutter? Mountain—Mohammad.

TONY That's a wonderful attitude, brother.

PHYLLIS If you'd only listen to my suggestions. . .

TONY That's not suggesting. That's a bitch and a moan.

[. . .]

SIMON It might be time to give it up.

*Some of the others start packing up.*

PHYLLIS Absolutely right. We live and then we learn. We learn not to listen to Tony because all his ideas come from “The Hetero-Homo’s Guide to Apologetic Protest.”

*SIMON laughs.*

TONY Who’s apologising?

(Grey, 2011, p. 25)

Temporal complexity, via the representation of a fictional quotidian exchange, encourages an exploration of against-type characterization as it is the older character who is speaking more radically. This sense of the radical belonging to the older generation is something that was present in the project. There was a palpable sense that the older participants were more able and comfortable in their radicalism than the younger participants, a trend not always reflected in the writings about LGBT intergenerational work (see Fox, 2007). Rather, anecdotally, it seemed that the outward presentation of social class served as an indicator for potential radicalism (at least in the older participant group). There was a sense in the older group that the higher up the social scale the participant was (how they presented themselves, the performance of their class) was related to their stories of being part of the radical movements of the time.<sup>17</sup> Whereas the older participants apparently lower down the socioeconomic scale placed emphasis on everyday gains—particularly one older participant who noted seeing two men in a supermarket holding hands as a great step in the positive normalization and acceptance of gay people.

In the GLF jumble sale scene, the tensions of the generations’ approach to protest and a rights-based agenda are played out through Phyllis and her/his attitude toward politics:

*There’s a bit of disappointed quiet as they pack away.*

BOBBY Come on, Madame, give us a song!

PHYLLIS I won’t do it, I’m too upset.

PIP Music, music!

SIMON Get out the costumes.



*They're all goading PHYLLIS now, getting her to sing. She's turning round a bit, secretly pleased.*

PHYLLIS Stop it! No! I'm upset!

MICK Oh, come on now, you old tart, we're going out, aren't we—we're taking it to them, like you always say.

PIP Give us a song!

BOBBY Sing it out and sing it proud!

PHYLLIS I have been ignored for the last time.

PIP Put on some music.

*While this has gone on, TONY had pulled out a Vera Lynn wig.*

BOBBY Sing! Sing! Sing!

*They all join in.*

PHYLLIS Stop it! All right—well. . .

*TONY's music starts. He flips the wig on. PHYLLIS is agog. TONY lip-synchs to Vera Lynn's "We'll Meet Again," everyone eventually joining in as the scene dissolves into fantasy (Grey, 2011, pp. 25–26).*

Tony steals Phyllis's thunder and in the same moment shows the function of drag to protest; Phyllis is present in a silk kimono and wig cap, while Tony does his drag in a way where there is no drag facade or attempt at gender illusionism. The passing of the protest mantle (in this case condensed into the image of a wig) stands in for not only the way that traditions might be passed on and in that process transmuted by youth, but also that the older generation represented by Phyllis is not always in a conservative position in this kind of baton-passing.<sup>18</sup>

Temporally speaking, Phyllis and Tony's exchanges in this moment, and in another where Phyllis was much less out that she/he is in the GLF scene, are being played by a younger participant in (semi) drag; a temporal complex built from a fictional drag character played in the past, constructed from testimony, while speaking in a current queer time. The drag of the past then operates through Phyllis's character in a complex way as there are several drags happening at once: temporal drag, gender drag, the drag of the performer, and the representation of a historical form of drag. This complexity is

compressed in a moment of performance that brings about a frisson in the studio, as the fictional character recalls moments of the past (back) to the older participants (who were present at more than one performance). Phyllis, both temporally apprehensible and historically past, was a character who was persistently present and resistively camp, reflecting the campiness of some of the participants.<sup>19</sup> Freeman has noted, by way of Richard Dyer and Andrew Ross, that campness has a multitemporal aspect (Freeman, 2000, p. 732), and this temporal orientation was borne out in the character of Phyllis in *The Front Room* through her ability to both represent a person, a tradition, and a history in temporal arrhythmia.

Yet, even with this temporal complexity, there is still a tacit assertion in the work that time is linear, which leaves it open to heritability as a driving image. Consequently, the manifestation of generations passing on cultural material creates a specific arrangement of interpellation, one where there is a pressure applied from the older groups to younger groups to impress that they be what the older group could not be when they were younger. A direct pressure for this to happen was not openly witnessed in the Outbox project (indeed, it is worth noting that the pressure might not always flow in the older to younger direction), but it is not difficult to see interpellation happening at least in the way that the project presented a narrative of how historical moments led to the current gay community.

Temporal drag is useful to describe a reorientation of the way that *a priori* positives are brought about in LGBT intergenerational work, and it can also help avoid coercive generational metaphors that may result in restrictive interpellations. Most powerfully though, for this discussion, is that Freeman's ideas enable a way of thinking and experiencing a radical queer moment that cannot deny the pull of the past. Freeman's concepts enable a way of bringing identity politics into queer without the foreclosure of identity that it might have entailed in the past (hence queer's rejection of it). The younger participants' urge not to represent the AIDS crisis in any way, to it becoming key to the temporally disrupted flow of narrative as central to the experience of the production is testament to drag rather than bridge building. This turnaround in some senses reflects the image of the turn of the body in hailing; there is a drawing in of the younger people to an acknowledgment of their history as manifest in the narrative of recent times. Interpellation figured in this way is not wholly negative because it bestows an agency on those hailed who choose to turn around and respond. However, of course, agency comes at a price; in this case, the price is legibility within a chrononarrative that values economy and productivity, that, as Freeman noted, "reorganize[s] human bodies towards maximum productivity" (2010, p. 3), and accepting this form of identity itself instigates border controls in that "collective identities play a role in policing identity boundaries" (Cooper, 2013, p. 133).

Using temporal drag as a model, present fluid identity manifest in radical queerness can sit well with the vision of past identities as fixed in a

way that enables agency. In the project the generations were not easily politically separable; rather, the claiming of the radical and the more fixed identity positions might be thought of as a uniting factor across age as there is likely to be both positions present in both cohorts—there are queers old and young, as well as gays old and young. The perceived generational gap bridged in LGBT intergenerational work might itself be the result of (or at least made manifest by) an interpellation-resistive attitude by the younger people. Interpellative efforts articulated as connection across generations might be an index of the process of queer's recuperation in action. A strong desire for a relation across the generations as figured through heritability may result in a stubbing out of the radical potential of the exchange.<sup>20</sup> Sensitivity to the normalizing agencies of chronology and chronopolitics might offer a resistive quality to this recuperative effort through interpellation. As such, sustaining a focus in LGBT intergenerational work upon engaging the extant connections within the cohorts so that efforts need not be focused only on bridging may offer up a queer time to explore, exploit, resist, and forge other creative possibilities.

*The Front Room* project shows that the exchange of low-ranking, historically everyday knowledge among the participants led to the most profound representations in the performance. The local histories of the AIDS crisis, finding sex, and embodying important historical moments of the past as a mode of understanding and exchange formed one possible mode of intergenerational knowing. Those moments did not rely on a structure of exchange built from a position of a dysfunctional community, but from a position that the historical understanding of the past can be brought about as quotidian knowledge through the process of embodiment and representation. Theater is a profoundly queer place that is always playing with time in complex ways and so is very well suited to forging creative paths within communities where there are a range of ages, experiences, identity positions, and possibilities because it is a creative form that can bring to life stories in ways that encourage understanding in the fiber of the individual and community body.<sup>21</sup>

## NOTES

1. International Longevity Centre—UK.
2. From this point on, references to intergenerational work should be considered to have a specific focus on theater-based intergenerational projects, unless otherwise specified.
3. The participants were self-selecting and represented a broad range of the community. The younger group were all young adults, ranging in age from 18–25, and the older group had a much larger age range, stretching from people in their late 50s to the eldest participant of 85 years old.
4. The research undertaken was formed of a number of data-gathering exercises, in the shape of informal interviews with a self-selecting number of the participants, participation observation in the project working as an assistant on the directing team, and through observing the performance and speaking informally with the audience afterward. My role on the project was also at points to run workshops

about gay history and identity with the younger participants and to talk to the older participants about queer theater history.

5. Others working in these areas, who share the idea of an interest in chronopolitics and the relations of power to temporalities, are theorists working at the boundaries of performance art, photography, and fine art. For instance, Lorenz (2012) has used transtemporality in the development of “freak theory,” and Rebecca Schneider has been working with Freeman’s terms for a number of years, most notably in a keynote in Berlin in 2009 and in her volume *Performance Remains* (2011) in relation to reenactment and reenactment art. Also working with temporalities and drag in performance art are Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz (2011).

6. The ILC-UK is “an independent, non-partisan think tank dedicated to addressing issues of longevity, ageing and population change” (<http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/>). The toolkit from the ILC-UK is particularly focused on older generations in the UK. Given that it shares the same geographical and temporal location as *The Front Room*, it has some influence on how the discussion of elders circulates in UK society, culture, and legislation.

7. One other notable reason that this inheritance can be difficult was focused on the location of the project and its connection to a local political scene in relation to sexuality. *The Front Room* was a project that sat very clearly in the geography of the UK—some of the stories shared among the participants made not only the temporal placement but also the geographical location of the events important. It was very important to the development of the project that there was space to explore varying descriptions of the rise of gay politics and rights. It is notable among the participants that there was very little understanding of the different narratives for the UK development of gay politics as distinct from those pervasive Stonewall narratives popular among the younger participants as the beginning of modern UK gay politics. It appeared important to the older participants that there was some connection with UK gay histories (such as the Wolfenden committee that met from 1954–1957, the report that led to the decriminalization of male homosexuality in 1967 in England and Wales for consenting males over the age of 21 in private—there was never any laws criminalizing lesbian acts).

8. The article, which surveys studies as part of its discussion of gay male development, does not note cohort differences in gay women. However, in the introduction of the article there is mention of lesbian and gay youth and developmental milestones, after which lesbians are not mentioned. Although, there has been work on LGBT youth and milestones (for example, see Maguen, Floyd, Bakeman, & Armistead, 2002), there is an interpretive and discursive swing here from gay men to lesbians in the study.

9. The authors of the “after queer” special edition of *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* are at pains to point out that this does not mean that queer is done and we are in an moment after—rather that there are tendencies in the community and in politics after the emergence of queer. So the prefix *after* is temporal as much as an analysis of the uses of queerness after its radical split with gay and queer’s recuperation since that point.

10. When in early conversation with the younger participants of *The Front Room*, it became clear that for the majority of the younger participants *queer* was seen as a negative word.

11. The creative team were keen that these kinds of discussions were held as part of the process—and the team considered them carefully. Given that drama, at its heart, is about the personal, this kind of exchange was important. Indeed, the discussions and representations around sex formed a positive bridging in that there was some sense that all the participants held a common understanding of same-sex desire even if, as individuals, each responded to that personal desire internally and externally in positive or negative ways.

12. Interestingly, these attitudes to the representation of AIDS in performance and its decline as a political issue reflect an essay written in 2000 by David Román.

13. Freeman referred to this sense of unknowingness as “the past-ness of the past” (Freeman, 2000, p. 728).

14. Women’s Institute—in this context characterized as conservative.

15. This is a reference to two people known at the time for their conservative Christian beliefs who with others in the early 1970s were associated with the Nationwide Festival of Light in the UK, which was a group campaigning for the cleaning up of the depiction of sex and violence in mass media. The group had large rallies in London at the time the GLF were active in the UK—this is when the scene is set.

16. Mick is a lesbian character that can be seen to represent the lesbian feminist position and, as such, asserts a productive drag on the present according to Freeman’s terms. Also, Mick stands for the difficulty the GLF had with its female members (see Weeks, 1977) who were engaged in both the radical

politics of the GLF as well as feminism and were in the process of discovering the problematic repetition of normativity in both endeavors at this time.

17. Freeman explores class in relation to temporalities and queer and hazards that queer also names a kind of class relation that is different from “the standard Marxist definition of a relationship between people who own the means of production and people whose biggest asset is their labour power” (Freeman, 2011, p. 19). An extended discussion of class sits outside the purview of this article; however, it is important to note that class relations will play an important role in the dynamics of intergenerational work, LGBTQ cultures, and the potential to be politically radical in the past and in the present.

18. Of course, this kind of pleasant exchange could be represented because the GLF were idealists and experimented with ways of living and ways of being (see Weeks, 1977, 2007; Walter, 1980).

19. It is pertinent to note, though, that campness is not always thought of as resistive as a performance strategy and can in some cases be the opposite of resistive. See Whitney (2006) for a discussion of the relation of camp to the marketplace, for instance.

20. However, for balance, there are studies that counsel against intergenerational mixing, especially when the younger people are mixing with older conservative non-LGBT people, for the sake of the younger person’s mental health. See LaSala (2000) for a description of when not to mix.

21. For a discussion of how theater is profoundly queer and relates very clearly to queer discussions around temporalities, see Farrier (2013).

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