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**QUEER POLITICS OF MEMORY:  
UNDISCIPLINED SEXUALITIES AS GLIMPSES  
AND FRAGMENTS IN FINNISH AND ESTONIAN  
PASTS**

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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*Unet. Sukupuoli. Kuolema.  
Mikä on yksityisintä  
se on  
kaikille yhteistä.*

*(Leena Krohn 1977, 51)*

*To live in the present is indeed to inhabit simultaneously a multitude  
of historical worlds.*

*(David Halperin 2002, 21)*

## Abstract

This study analyses the construction of queer and undisciplined sexualities in Finnish and Estonian personal and cultural memories from the 1990s to the present. The study makes a theoretical contribution to the understanding of queer as historical and localised concept by focusing on geographical areas regarded as the semiperiphery, that is, Finland and Estonia, and combining the discussion on queer historical research with the elaborations on cultural memory. The methodological contribution of the study address the Finnish and Estonian research traditions that have combined oral history methodologies with the study of memories in written form and links these with discussions on sources in queer historical research.

In the spirit of Joan Scott and Laura Doan, the study adopts the concept queer as a category of historical analysis and enquires how memories can be analysed by using queer as a methodological tool. Furthermore, the study searches for queerness where ostensibly it does not exist, in the margins of queer. By adopting Michel Foucault's concept of genealogy, the study addresses the connection between the past and present in both historical research and cultural memory studies and discusses how the intertwined cultural understandings of the past and individual accounts of one's own sexuality produce the current understandings of sexuality.

The concepts of *glimpse* and *fragment* are developed in the study to analyse how the queer and undisciplined sexualities are constructed in the present understandings of the pasts. Glimpse refers to memories of desires and identifications or cultural references of queerness that the narrators have used to understand their own desires and, on the other hand, to the recollections of others in the narrations by seemingly non-queer narrators. Fragment refers to all types of documents and material that have been preserved of the past. The fragments can even be fabricated as queer pasts are imagined in the arts. The study develops a three-layered understanding of time in memories and analyses *Time Remembered*, *Time of Remembering* and *Time of Researching* in these glimpses and fragments of queer pasts.

The dissertation consists of three published research articles, two yet unpublished article manuscripts and a comprehensive introductory and summarising section. The individual research articles in the study focus on archives, life stories, collections of them and public discussion on queer past in the arts and media. As a collection, these five articles offer a versatile perspective on how memories are produced and utilised both by those who identify as queer and those who use "others" to construct their own suitable heterosexuality. Moreover, the articles analyse how present understandings of queer are projected onto the past.

This study demonstrates how the personal and cultural memories are intertwined and produce one another in the queer politics of memory. On the

one hand, some glimpses and fragments of queer pasts can be understood in terms of the available queer labels, identifications and identifiable practices. On the other, only through these glimpses and fragments of personal queer memories it is possible to understand the type of queer possibilities there are and have been. Thus, the focus on glimpses and fragments in addition to the proud movements and individuals helps to broaden and historicise the concept of queer. In the conclusion, this study reaches beyond queer pasts to address queer in the present as a politics of memory as well as the possibilities offered by perceiving the past as glimpse-like and fragmented in historical research in general.

**Keywords:** queer; oral history; cultural memory; history; politics of memory; Estonia; Finland

# Tiivistelmä (Abstract in Finnish)

## **Kuriton muistin politiikka: Queer-seksuaalisuus suomalaisten ja virolaisten menneisyyksien välähdyksissä ja fragmenteissa**

Väitöstutkimus käsittelee kurittoman, eli queerin, seksuaalisuuden rakentumista suomalaisten ja virolaisten henkilökohtaisissa ja kulttuurisissa muistoissa 1990-luvulta nykypäivään. Tutkimuksen teoreettiset tulokset keskittyvät queer-käsitteen historiallistamiseen ja paikantamiseen Suomen ja Viron, puoliperifeerisellä alueella, ja queer-historian tutkimuksen sekä kulttuurisen muistin tutkimuksen yhtymäkohtien etsimiseen. Tutkimuksen metodologiset tulokset yhdistävät muistitietotutkimuksen suomalaisia ja virolaisia kirjoitetun muistamisen tutkimuksen traditioita queer-historialliseen keskusteluun tutkimuksen lähteistä ja niiden merkityksestä tutkimukselle.

Tutkimus käyttää queer-käsitettä historiallisen analyysin kategoriana yhdistämällä Joan Scottin ja Laura Doanin teoretisointia ja kysyy, miten muistoja tutkittaessa voidaan hyödyntää queerin käsitettä teoreettisena työkaluna. Tutkimus etsii queer-kokemuksia myös sellaisista lähteistä, jotka eivät ensisilmäykseltä vaikuta lainkaan kuvaavan kuritonta seksuaalisuutta ja pyrkii näin tavoittamaan queerin marginaaleja. Michel Foucault'n genealogian käsitettä hyödyntäen tutkimus käsittelee nykyisyyden ja menneisyyden suhdetta historiallisessa tutkimuksessa sekä kulttuurisen muistin tutkimuksessa. Tutkimus analysoi, miten kulttuuriset käsitykset menneisyydestä sekä henkilökohtaiset seksuaalisia kokemuksia ja tunteita koskevat muistot kietoutuvat yhteen ja tuottavat seksuaalisuutta koskevia käsityksiä.

Tutkimuksessa kehitetyt välähdyksen (*glimpse*) ja fragmentin (*fragment*) käsitteet auttavat ymmärtämään, miten menneisyyttä hyödynnetään nykyisten kurittomien seksuaalisuuksien rakentumisessa. Välähdyksen käsite kattaa yhtäältä identifikaatioihin, haluihin ja kulttuurisiin queer-seksuaalisuutta koskeviin käsityksiin liittyviä muistoja, joita muistitietolähteiden kertojat käyttävät oman seksuaalisuutensa ymmärtämiseen. Toisaalta käsite kattaa välähdykset kurittomista seksuaalisuuksista sellaisten kertojien muistoissa, jotka ovat ainakin näennäisesti eläneet seksuaalisuutta rajaavien normien mukaisesti. Fragmentin käsite viittaa dokumentteihin ja materiaaliin jäämistöihin, joita on säilynyt nykyisyyteen queer-menneisyydestä. Toisaalta fragmentteja voidaan tuottaa nykyajassa, kun queer-menneisyyttä kuvitellaan taiteen piirissä. Tutkimus kehittää kolmikerroksista ajan ymmärtämisen tapaa ja analysoi välähdyksiä ja fragmentteja muistellun ajan (*Time Remembered*), muistelemisen ajan (*Time of Remembering*) ja tutkimuksen ajan (*Time of Researching*) näkökulmista.

Väitöstutkimus koostuu kolmesta julkaistusta tutkimusartikkelista, kahdesta vielä julkaisemattomasta artikkelikäsittelevästä sekä laajasta johdanto- ja yhteenvedon osiosta. Tutkimusartikkelit käsittelevät arkistoja, elämäntarinoita, elämäntarinakokoelmia sekä julkista keskustelua queer-menneisyydestä taiteessa ja mediassa. Yhdessä nämä viisi artikkelia valottavat moninaisia näkökulmia muistojen tuottamiseen ja käyttämiseen niin queer-seksuaalisuuteen identifioidun ihmisen kuin myös niiden osalta, jotka käyttävät queereja ”toisia” oman soveliaan heteroseksuaalisuutensa tuottamiseen. Samalla artikkelit analysoivat, miten nykyisiä queeria koskevia käsityksiä heijastetaan menneisyyteen.

Väitöstutkimus osoittaa, miten henkilökohtaiset ja kulttuuriset muistot ovat yhteenkietoutuneita ja tuottavat toisiaan. Yhtäältä queer-menneisyyden välähdykset ja fragmentit ovat ymmärrettäviä ainoastaan nykyisten nimitysten, identifikaatioiden ja kulttuurisesti tunnistettavien queer-käytäntöjen avulla. Toisaalta vain näiden menneisyyden välähdysten ja fragmenttien avulla on mahdollista ymmärtää, millaisia queer-elämän mahdollisuuksia voi olla nykyisyydessä ja on voinut olla menneisyydessä. Tätä yhdistelmää tutkimus kutsuu queer-muistin politiikaksi. Tutkimus väittää, että menneisyyden välähdysten ja fragmenttien tutkimus identiteettiylpeiden liikkeiden ja yksilöiden historioiden kirjoittamisen ohella monipuolistaa ja historiallistaa queerin käsitettä. Loppupäätelmissä tutkimus kurottaa queer-menneisyyksiä laajemmalle ja tarkastelee queer-menneisyyden käyttämistä nykyisessä muistin politiikassa sekä arvioi välähdyksen ja fragmentin käsitteiden käyttökelpoisuutta historian tutkimuksessa yleisesti.

**Asiasanat:** queer; muistitieto; kulttuurinen muisti; historia; muistin politiikka; Viro; Suomi

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Helsinki, last day of August 2018

Riikka Taavetti

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## List of original publications

This thesis is based on the following publications:

I Taavetti, Riikka. 2016. "A Marshall in Love: Remembering and Forgetting Queer Pasts in the Finnish Archives." *Archival Science* 16 (3): 289–307. DOI 10.1007/s10502-015-9251-7.

II Taavetti, Riikka. 2016. "Reflecting the Queer Me: Memories of Finnish Queer Youth from the 1950s Onwards." *Lambda Nordica* (3-4): 81–107.

III Taavetti, Riikka. 2017. "A woman should not be so cheap': The Prostitute as a Constructed Other in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories." *European Journal of Life Writing* 6, 197–217. DOI 10.5463/ejlw.6.199

IV Taavetti, Riikka. "Discovered Queer Desires: Rereading Same-Sex Sexuality from Finnish and Estonian Life Stories of the 1990s." Passed peer review in the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*.

V Taavetti, Riikka. "Queering Victimhood: Soviet Legacies and Queer Pasts in and around Jaanus Samma's 'Not Suitable for Work. A Chairman's Tale'" To be included in Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, Sofia Laine, Päivi Salmesvuori, Ulla Savolainen, and Riikka Taavetti (eds.) *Difficult Memories: Transnational Dialogues with the Past and the Future*.

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

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# 1 Introduction

In 2010, a Finnish woman born in 1960 wrote the following in her life story submitted for a writing competition on youth:

*When Siiri was 21 years old, the television showed the first serious discussion on homosexuality. The viewers could call the programme. Nuclear weapons and peace were central concerns of the time. One auntie commented that homosexuals are more dangerous than nuclear weapons. Then Siiri cried. During her short life, she had heard and read that she was criminal (until 1971), sick (until 1981), a sinner (no time limit), but now she was worse than nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup>*

*(Cited in Taavetti 2014a, 105.)*

This short caption, this glimpse into the past, is from a story that led me to the topic of my dissertation, the queer politics of memory. Although Siiri's life story is not included in the material discussed in this study, this short quote illustrates beautifully my main findings. Firstly, this excerpt reveals the importance of tiny fragments of queer knowledge in situations where discussion on topics such as homosexuality was rare, as in this example in Finland of the early 1980s. Secondly, the passage reflects how the outdated and negative glimpses, such as the label of criminality, have echoed long after they were officially rejected. Thirdly, the quotation illustrates how multiple temporalities layer in memories.

This study discusses the construction of queer and undisciplined sexualities in Finnish and Estonian memories. These memories, both personal and cultural, mainly describe the time from the Second World War onwards, but occasionally they reach further back in time. These memories have been produced in collections of life writings, in establishing archives and in art that utilises archival sources from 1992 to 2016. I trace how the glimpses and fragments of queer pasts are produced in the present and how these memories are mediated and utilised. Furthermore, I analyse how these present constructions of queer are projected onto the past.

My research occurs at the intersection of queer history, political history, oral history, cultural memory studies, and archival science. The journals and an edited volume that contain the original publications included in this dissertation mirror these fields and disciplines. However, the primary

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<sup>1</sup> "Kun Siiri oli 21-vuotias oli televisiossa ensimmäinen asiallinen keskusteluohjelma homoseksuaalisuudesta. Katsojat saivat soittaa ohjelmaan. Tuolloin ydinaseet ja rauha olivat keskeisiä huolenaiheita. Eräs täti ilmoittikin, että homoseksuaalit olivat vaarallisempia kuin ydinaseet. Silloin Siiri itki. Hän oli nuoren elämänsä aikana saanut kuulla ja lukea olevansa rikollinen (ennen vuotta 1971), sairas (vuoteen 1981), syntinen (ei aikarajoitusta), mutta nyt hän oli vielä pahempi kuin ydinaseet."

academic context of my study is political history. I consider my topic of sexuality to be a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon that both occurs on bodies and shapes them. My study focuses not on the past sexualities per se, but on how they are constructed in present memories. These individual memories are shaped by cultural and political conditions, and personal and cultural memories are deeply intertwined and construct one another. My study discusses the past as a present construction and affiliates with the branch of political history that is interested in the politics of memory, politics of history and in the public uses of the past.

As the topic of my study is sexuality in memories, queer is therefore the theoretical tool I use to analyse it. As an academic concept, queer defies precise definitions, and this undefinable nature can even be perceived as its essential element. Firstly, queer as a concept is utilised as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intergender (LGBTI)<sup>2</sup>, as an approach that in historical research contributes to the visibility of those who have been relegated to the margins of gender and sexuality. Laura Doan (2013) has referred to this approach as *queerness-as-being*. Secondly, I utilise queer as a theoretical approach to sexuality that questions the historical persistence of stable identifications and searches instead for other means of conceptualising sexuality in the past. Doan offers *queerness-as-method* as another means to understand queer history, taking the knowledge of modern sexuality under critical analysis and utilising the insistence of not knowing as a tool of critical history (Doan 2013, 87-89). I envision these approaches, with their internal tension, to be coexisting and mutually constructive in all queer historical research. While I have developed a version of *queerness-as-method* in my approach to the memories in my study, I also adopt queer as an umbrella term. The term queer is one that makes the past marginal, non-normative, or undisciplined sexualities intelligible for my approach from the present and from the viewpoint of the queer theorisation of memories.

My study addresses memories in Finland and Estonia that occur in settings that are in many aspects far from the geographical cores of queer theory. In her study on the translation of queer to the Finnish context, Joanna Mizielińska (2006, 94) states that apart from the Anglo-American hegemonic context, what is often studied next in queer studies is Asia and South America: “We have the First world and the Third. Does this make Eastern and Central Europe the Second? And what about such small countries as Finland: where do they fit in, if at all?” (On these limitations in queer studies, see also Stella 2015, 1.) I suggest that one possible answer to this question posed by Mizielińska is that both Estonia and Finland may be analysed in terms of the

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<sup>2</sup> I deliberately use different variations of this acronym in my study. I do this, firstly, to mirror those listings that the archives, publications or organisations I refer to use. And secondly, I want to oppose the idea that there would be one, comprehensive listing. Instead, my intention is to promote the idea that a writer needs to consider which “letters” they are actually addressing and refrain from merely adding letters that do not pertain directly to their topic.



concept of semiperiphery. According to Marina Blagojević (2009, 33-34), the semiperiphery position combines both the need to catch up with the core as well as the urge to maintain a distance from the core in order to preserve individuality and personal characteristics. Within this semiperiphery, my approach is transnational, which works well as a vantage point to overcome the prioritisation of “big countries” (Saunier 2013, 118).

I suggest the concept of semiperiphery as a means to challenge the categories used to divide the world into peripheries and cores, or the “West” and the “rest”. As Joanna Mizielińska and Robert Kulpa (2011, 19) argue regarding the theorisation of queer in Central and Eastern Europe, the polarisation between the “centre/metropolis/West” on the one hand and “periphery” on the other, calls for destabilisation and problematisation. Although this dichotomy has been criticised and deconstructed, it nonetheless seems to haunt the discussion on queer localities (see Stella 2015, 146-153). The concept of semiperiphery refers to those places that are different but not sufficiently different to be the “other” (Koobak 2013b, 32), but they are seen as sufficiently close to be guided and educated (Kulpa 2011, 49-50). As Blagojević (2009, 34-35, 48-49) observes, the concept of semiperiphery is unstable and in constant process of transformation, and thus, it helps to question the easily stabilising and essentialising categories of “core” and “periphery”.

The connections between people who have been deemed marginal due to their sexuality or gender have always been transnational (on the European transnational LGBT movement history, see Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; also Rupp 2014 in the same volume). Those perceived as queer have crossed borders or looked elsewhere to find perspectives for a brighter future, and the conceptualisations of queerness have circulated transnationally (on transnational themes in lesbian life stories, for example, see Kaskisaari 1995, 89). Furthermore, homosexuality has been perceived in many countries as foreign or as originating from somewhere else (on Finland, see Juvonen 2002, 103). This is also a reason that my study is situated in the transnational space of and between Finland and Estonia. This is not a comparative analysis because the materials I utilise are not strictly comparable. But most importantly, the process of comparison between two nation-states easily creates these nations as internally coherent entities in a manner that I do not consider to be productive for my analysis.

Methodological nationalism has been a common feature in both historical research (Saunier 2013, 2, 118) and in cultural memory studies (De Cesari and Rigney 2014). In my study, I suggest adopting a transnational understanding of queer memory as a means to overcome it and to widen the research perspective. While Pierre-Yves Saunier (2013, 2) emphasizes that studying history within one country is a worthy endeavour, he further clarifies that, “history in transnational perspective” (Saunier 2013, 4) also adds to the understanding of national histories. In cultural memory studies, transnational and transcultural perspectives have increasingly gained ground in the 2000s

and 2010s (Inglis 2015; Erll 2011b). As Susannah Radstone (2011, 117-118) points out, transnational perspectives on cultural memory emphasize the locatedness of the travelling memories and question the universality of the theoretical approaches that are adopted.

The semiperiphery locations of Finland and Estonia in my study serve as places to analyse queer memory as a transnational phenomenon. Following Francesca Stella (2015, 133), my attempt is to “theorise ‘from the periphery’”. For Stella, postsocialism is a “critical standpoint” (Stella 2015, 133), and she also suggests using this concept to analyse “Western” societies. My work further complicates the divisions between West and East and questions the limits of postsocialism as a geographical notion as I combine an analysis of what is often perceived as postsocialist (Estonia) and what usually is not (Finland). To clarify, I do not examine the transnational travelling of memories per se, but I conceive of the transnational viewpoint as a position that “recognizes the significance of national frameworks alongside the potential of cultural production both to reinforce and to transcend them” (De Cesari and Rigney 2014, 15). Thus, my study addresses the construction of the national with the help of and in contrast to transnational queer memories.

## 1.1 Positionings and asymmetries

The research articles included in this study discuss my position on the specific material and research process in question. I address my participation in the production of the life story collections and archives that I consult in detail in section 3. In this sub-section, I situate myself regarding my research process as a whole. Although the debates I participate in are transnational, certain national differences exist between the positions constructed in my research. In addition, my analysis of undisciplined sexualities and use of queer as a conceptual tool has made me contemplate my own position regarding the theories I adopt and the academic stance I take.

I am aware that a link does not necessarily exist between the research topic and the researcher’s personal experiences. Even so, during my own studies, I had become accustomed to the understanding that often those who are interested in researching the normativities of sexuality and gender are those who have experienced their limitations. When I began my work on the research project titled the Well-being of LGBTIQ Youth (*Hyvinvoiva sateenkaarinuori*) in 2014, I assumed that my research topic would construct me as a queer person (on these considerations, see Lehtonen and Taavetti 2018; Taavetti and Lehtonen 2018, forthcoming). In effect, my own assumption that I would be interpreted as queer through my research topic may be perceived as my positioning myself in an older generation of researchers as a sort of academic “temporal drag”, to utilise Elizabeth Freeman’s (2000; 2010) concept. For this imagined generation, an activist-

oriented approach was more often assumed, as was the researcher's direct involvement in the research topic.

Although I have sometimes felt my position as a queer researcher to be uncomfortable, I have never encountered difficulties with either my topic or my own position. In this respect, I do understand that my experience is considerably different from those who have worked in the field before (for example, see Juvonen 2002; Sorainen 2011; Boyd 2015; Howard 2001, xviii), as well as of those who currently work under far less queer-tolerant academic and political conditions (for example, see Healey 2017, 151-155, 174-175). Thus, I have not needed to hide my topic to gain the necessary access to my materials, I have not particularly needed to fight for the acceptability of my topic within my disciplines, and my own queerness – or the lack of it – has never been a topic of discussion in academia. Furthermore, academically, I have grown up with queer theory. My own understandings of gender and sexuality have been profoundly shaped by queer theory, and especially by the early work of Judith Butler, to the extent that I find it difficult to intuitively think of gender and sexuality in any other manner. So queer thinking has become a part of my academic identity, and I am not alone in this. Butler, and especially her *Gender Trouble* (1999, first published in 1990), has been extremely influential in Finnish gender studies (Liljeström 2015). Even as Lee Edelman (2004, 17) maintains that “queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one”, queer has become a part of academic (and non-academic) identities, my own included.

My work is an article-based dissertation in English within the discipline of political history that has traditionally prioritised (long) monograph dissertations in Finnish. My choice of form and language for the publications also affects the audience I aim to address with my study. As a dissertation, my work is directed to an international scholarly audience, not primarily to Finnish readers interested in historical research or the past. I have based these decisions on the language and format of my work being rather theoretical and methodological in nature, and on the transnational nature of my topic. Furthermore, I have written on the themes of my study in Finnish (Taavetti 2014a; 2014b; 2015a; 2018, forthcoming). The article format adopted for this study breaks the long narrative arches often found to be characteristic of historical research, and it directs the focus to limited and pre-selected materials. While both of these features could be perceived as limitations, I also consider them to be essential aspects of my work. The main concepts of my study, queer and memory, both emphasize the role of the past as constructed and mediated in the present. My analysis constructs the concept of queer from minor and marginal glimpses or fragments, and this marginality requires a nuanced and detailed analysis of the materials I consult. One benefit of the article format adopted here is that it has allowed me to shift my focus during the research process, and I make these shifts as well as the development of my own thinking visible in this introductory and summarising section.

For reasons that may concern the long-standing and still relevant importance of the nation-state in historical research, historians tend to be considered partial primarily on the basis of their nationality. In other words, the division in whether one studies one's "own" history or that of "others" often continues to be made on a national basis, even though the questions that are addressed transgress national borders or are transnational by nature. The position of historical disciplines as important nation-builders has encouraged me to sometimes ask myself who am I to address Estonian pasts and to be wary of the possibility that I might be exploiting the legacies of others. I have reflected on how to be both critical and respectful and how to negotiate emotional attachments as well as my own particular historical position as a Finnish researcher studying Estonia.

I also acknowledge that I cannot escape that my understanding of Estonia is also shaped by the national history of Finnish nationalism and the experiences of tourism, and at the same time, by the national shame of not wanting to recognise some of this history as also defining myself. Sara Ahmed (2014) has analysed how the feelings of national shame imply moral advancement, of being better than those who perpetrated the shameful deeds. As Ahmed observes, national shame is used to construct a national unity, the "us" who can be ashamed. The capability of being ashamed of a national unity and its problematic history is a sign of the privilege that my own Finnishness tends not to be questioned. In other words, I can express that I am ashamed without anyone necessarily calling me out as being non-Finnish. In effect, my white skin, my native language of Finnish, and my long Finnish ancestry generally protect me from that questioning. Furthermore, when I am in Estonia, my invisible whiteness (cf. Dyer 1997) and, thanks to the linguistic proximity of Estonian to Finnish, my ability to sporadically sound Estonian, all contribute to my ability to be an invisible foreigner. This invisibility, however, does not erase the uncomfortable notions of being an outsider and the dangers of exploitation in transnational asymmetries (on whiteness and the semiperiphery, see also Blagojević 2009, 61-62).

This uncomfortable position is also connected to the concept and limits of postsocialism. Joanna Mizielińska and Robert Kulpa (2011, 20-21) note that the definitions used for Eastern Europe – post-communist, postsocialist, post-Soviet, post-authoritarian, or transitional – are intertwined with geographical, political and historical connotations. Furthermore, Mizielińska and Kulpa place their discussion on Central and Eastern Europe in the context of postcolonial analysis. Regarding particularly Baltic history, Epp Annus (2016) states that the colonial features of Soviet rule are the interpretation of the leading and civilising role of the Russian language and culture, the importation of Soviet-style modernisation (as opposed to capitalist and nationalist modernity) and the erasure of "precolonial" national history (on the concepts of postsocialism and postcolonialism, see also Stella 2015, 146-153).

Inge Melchior (2016, 209) recounts that during her fieldwork on the Estonian remembering of the Second World War, she was positioned in

Estonia as a Westerner in need of explanations as to why “Estonian” memories differ from the “Western European”. While this positioning is presented here as geographical, it is also temporal. As an illustration, Estonian historian Lauri Vahtre (2007, 5-6), who wrote on the absurdity of the Soviet power originally for a Western reader, comments that a contemporary young Estonian reader is also a Western reader. In this case, being a Westerner is not a sign of progressiveness but of naivety. This is because the Soviet era is referred to as something one cannot understand from the outside – neither from the West nor from a post-Soviet temporal position – but only by living through it (see also Hiio 2016, on Estonia, and Mitroiu 2015, 3-4, on the Central and Eastern European experience more generally).

To me, these notions of the limitedness of the “Western” viewpoint are important reminders in the context of the dominant discourse of lag and belatedness applied to Eastern Europe. This perspective on Eastern European belatedness constructs the time there, in ongoing transition, as teleological by placing the current “West” as its future (Mizelińska and Kulpa 2011). It also ignores the socialist era developments as reflecting less progress and being less modern than the “Western” (Woodcock 2011, 64-66; see also the discussion in Kõiv 2017 on Estonia in particular). As Redi Koobak (2013a, 194) argues, the nuanced reading of the “geopolitical locatedness and processes of disidentification” may help prevent prioritising the Western, hegemonic progress narratives. As an ethical positioning, this has been my aim. My position as a Finnish historian who studies Estonia is in itself inseparable from the remembering that serves as the focus of this study, and this position is also an object of my analysis.

## **1.2 National and transnational pasts of same-sex desire in Finland and Estonia**

Michel Foucault famously formulated in his first volume of *History of Sexuality* that in the nineteenth century, “the homosexual” developed as a species and a person with a distinct history (Foucault 1978, 36-39). This notion has become almost an unavoidable reference in works of queer historical research, especially in those addressing homosexuality. Foucault’s formulation is often interpreted as a shift from acts to identity. From this perspective, the previously undifferentiated set of perverse acts of sodomy became differentiated to constitute distinct perversions – one of those being homosexuality – which then became a basis for identity (for this argument and its utilisation in the research of the history of sexuality, see Grassi 2016).

However, Foucault never wrote about identities (Halperin 2002, 43; for another illuminating analysis of the same passage by Foucault, see Champagne 2013). On the contrary, what was actually new in this concept was that “the homosexual” was defined solely in terms of sexual preference, a construction that had not been formulated previously in (Western) history (Halperin 2002,

104-137). Even though the formation of “the homosexual” was essentially pathologising, the “other” of the preferable and desirable heterosexuality, it nevertheless offered new avenues for self-identification and public organisation. As David Halperin (1995, 56-62) discusses based on Foucault’s writings on power and subjectivity, this new formation eventually allowed homosexuality to transform itself from the object of knowledge into a subject of knowing. In other words, Halperin’s interpretation is that the homosexual could become the subject possessing knowledge about itself, not merely an object of scientific gaze that wishes to reveal the innermost secret of queer desire. As Halperin (1995, 61) argues, homosexuality became “a potentially privileged site for the criticism and analysis of cultural discourse”. Foucault himself was also undoubtedly a product of this process because his arguments evolved when discussing with the gay liberation movement of his time (on Foucault and the movements, see also Pulkkinen 1998; Maynard 2016).

The concept of queer in historical research addresses several topics other than same-sex desire and homosexuality, as it can also refer to histories of gender disobedience such as those in the histories of trans. Moreover, queer historical research critically analyses the construction of norms that govern gender and sexuality, or how some forms of sexuality and gender have been deemed as sinful, unhealthy, unsuitable or criminal. However, no other “queer” has surpassed “the homosexual” as a position to speak from and to also interpret history from. This occurred first in the form of gay and lesbian studies and yet homosexuality remains, although often challenged, the core of queer studies.

Due to this prominence of homosexuality in the knowledge production of queer sexuality, in the following, I will offer a sketch of how same-sex desire in Finland and Estonia became problematized as homosexuality, as an object of knowledge, and later, as a position to speak from and claim rights, to be a subject of knowledge. This sub-section therefore offers both a partial historical context for the memories I discuss in my study and also explains how conducting this type of queer historical research has become possible. As the existing research on both Finnish and especially Estonian queer history is rather limited, I am only able to offer an outline. Even though my study analyses remembering, my analysis offer some additional glimpses of Estonian and Finnish pasts. This sub-section is more inclined towards *queerness-as-being*, as Laura Doan (2013) has named it because I explain the history of what could be now referred to as experiences of homosexuality or same-sex desires in the past. At the same time, however, this sub-section discusses the problematisation of same-sex desires, and addresses how they became perceived as queer in a manner that resembles Doan’s *queerness-as-method* (Doan 2013, 31).

It is important to note that particularly for Finland, the key changes in the problematisation of same-sex sexuality have not coincided with major changes in political power, such as national independence. By contrast, Estonia experienced changes in political rule that have had a more direct impact on

control over sexuality. In addition, changes in the legislation of same-sex sexuality do not solely define the position and meaning of homosexuality. As noted in the quotation at the beginning of this introduction, besides homosexual deeds constituting a crime, they have been deemed to be an illness, a sin, and simply something bad and inappropriate. Even so, same-sex desires have not necessarily been a topic of particular interest and control at all times and places (on early modern Finland when the area was a part of Sweden, see Keskiarja 2011, 287-334; on early modern Sweden, see Liliequist 1998; on early modern Russia, see Muravyeva 2013). The research conducted on the agrarian tradition concerning same-sex desires and the bending of gender norms in both Finland and Estonia reveal a lack of interest in these phenomena. Jan Löfström (1999) has discussed in detail how few mentions of what is now perceived as homosexuality are found in the vast Finnish folklore collections. Andreas Kalkun (2010, 19-22) maintains that the same seems to apply to the Estonian agrarian tradition.

Finland explicitly criminalised sexual acts between persons of the same gender in 1889. At that time, Finland was a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire with an autonomous legislation created by the estates and approved by the Czar (on the history of the criminalisation, see Mustola 2007a and Löfström 1998). Contrary to most European countries, Finland also criminalised sexual acts between women.<sup>3</sup> The law that was enacted then remained in effect after Finland became independent in 1917 and was repealed only in 1971. Despite the explicit criminalisation, as Sandra Hagman (2016, 295) has demonstrated, the numbers of convictions on male homosexuality remained exceedingly low until the 1930s (see also Mustola 2007a). According to Hagman (2016), homosexuality became perceived more widely as a societal problem during the interwar years, and the numbers of convictions peaked only after the Second World War when they reached their highest in the 1950s. The number of convictions of female homosexuality remained only a fraction of those of men throughout the era (Sorainen 2006; Sorainen 2005; Sorainen 1998). This late problematisation of homosexuality has been associated with the relatively mild gender polarisation in Finnish society at the time (Löfström 1999) as well as with late modernisation and urbanisation in Finland (Löfström 1998; Mustola 2007a; Hagman 2016).

The area of present-day Estonia was also a part of the Russian Empire until Estonian gained its independence in 1918. Unlike Finland, Estonia was not autonomous and this meant that the Russian law on “sodomy” was applied in the area (Veispak 1991, 105; on the Russian law see Healey 2017, xi-xiii, 155). After independence, the Estonian criminal code did not mention sexual deeds

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<sup>3</sup> Like in Finland, the sexual deeds between women have been criminalised in Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria, Greece, and in some Swiss cantons (Sorainen 2005, 4; on Swedish legislation, see Rydström 2003, 32-37, 304-315 and Edenheim 2005, 251, fn. 13). In addition, between 1950 and 1968, Bulgaria criminalised sex between women, presumably as the only country in socialist Europe, although it seems that no women were sentenced (Roseneil and Stoilova 2011, 170).

between persons of the same gender, and in principle, homosexual sex has never been criminalised in independent Estonia (Mets 2010, 82). As the interwar years were also a period of active contacts between the young nation-states of Finland and Estonia, homosexual men from Helsinki visited Tallinn. The Finnish gay and lesbian magazine *Seta* published an interview in 1988 where a gay man born in the 1910s described Tallinn as “a Mecca” for men from Helsinki in the 1930s. The interviewee depicted Tallinn as more liberal than Helsinki in a number of ways:

*There was alcohol when we had prohibition and in the restaurants the waiters could dance with the clients, which, I suppose, has always been out of the question for us [in Finland]. Tallinn was an international city. German was spoken and other languages, too. The most popular meeting place was Musumä[g]i – Kissing Hill presumably in Finnish.<sup>4</sup>*

(Turunen 1988, 30)

Prohibition in Finland was enforced from 1919 to 1932, and these memories of the narrator are presumably from the late 1930s.<sup>5</sup> At any rate, this example reveals how a Finnish gay narrator remembered interwar Tallinn as a liberated and international city a half a century later during the turbulent time of Soviet glasnost and perestroika. The history of same-sex desires in interwar Tallinn, however, has not yet been studied (on interwar Riga, see Lipša 2016).

During and after the Second World War, the criminal codes of the powers that occupied Estonia, first the Soviets (1940–1941), then Nazi Germany (1941–1944) and again the Soviets (1944–1991), outlawed sex between men. In 1934, the Soviet Union had recriminalized sex between men (Healey 2001, 181-204; Healey 2017, 158-164). Later, in paragraph 118 of the Soviet Estonian criminal code established in 1961, a maximum sentence of two years in prison was imposed for consensual penetrative sex between men (Veispak 1991, 111; on the preparation of the republic criminal codes in the late 1950s and early 1960s, see Rustam 2018). Compared to the criminal codes of other Soviet republics, this penalty was relatively mild. For example, in neighbouring Latvia, the penalty was five years, in the third Baltic Soviet republic, Lithuania, it was three years (Lipša 2017) and in Russia, the penalty was five years (Healey 2017, 170). The number of convictions during the Soviet era on the grounds of “pederasty”, as the crime was called, remain unknown (although for an early overview as well as the difficulties in determining the number of convictions, see Veispak 1991, 111-113; for convictions in all of the Soviet

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<sup>4</sup> “Siellä oli alkoholia kun meillä oli kieltolaki ja ravintoloissa tarjoilijat saivat tanssia asiakkaiden kanssa, mikä meillä ei kai ole koskaan tullut kysymykseen. Tallinna oli kansainvälinen kaupunki. Siellä puhuttiin saksaa ja muitakin kieliä. Suosituin tapaamispaikka oli Musumäki – suomeksi kai Pusumäki.” I wish to thank researcher Kati Mustola pointing this interview to me and even sending me a copy of it.

<sup>5</sup> The beginning of the interview reports that the interviewee has turned seventy “some time ago”, so presumably he was born in 1917 or 1918 (Turunen 1988, 28).



Union, see Healey 2001, 259-263). Research on Latvia reveals that the number of convictions fluctuated following campaigns against sexually transmitted diseases and other factors that directed police attention to men having sex with men (Lipša 2017; see also Healey 2017, 170-174).

The Soviet history of homosexuality and queer is in the process of active discovery and rethinking (for example, see Healey 2001; Healey 2017; Lipša 2017; Valodzin 2016; on this process of rethinking, see also Vērđiņš and Ozoliņš 2016). There are important similarities that arose throughout the vast Soviet Union, such as the criminalisation of male homosexuality but not female homosexuality, even though the different Soviet republics had different legal paragraphs and penalties. The consequences for those convicted were harsh, leading not only to the common violence in prisons and prison camps but also to the loss of status and employment opportunities. Also, same-sex desires were used by the KGB for pressuring, and the experiences and legends of homosexuality in the prison camp system, Gulag, shaped the understanding of same-sex desires in Soviet society (on the Soviet Gulag and homosexuality, see Healey 2017, 27-50; Healey 2001, 229-250; Moss 2015). The official Soviet views on homosexuality perceived it as a crime, particularly for men, and as a medical condition, especially for women (Stella 2015, 30-31, 34<sup>6</sup>), as inherently non-Russian or Soviet (Healey 2008, 177-180) and as a “bourgeois vice” (Stella 2015, 34; see also Veispak 1991, 109-111). Only the latter, the idea of homosexuality as a by-product of capitalism, was a specific Soviet understanding and even that mirrored the connection made in the United States between communism and homosexuality in the “lavender scare” of the 1950s (see, for example, Johnson 2015).

During the Soviet era, even within these general conditions of queer oppression, fragile and invisible networks of homosexuals and others with marginalised sexualities and genders did exist. The general lack of civil rights in Soviet society made more public organising impossible, and contacts abroad were limited (on Soviet Russia and briefly on other Soviet republics, see Healey 2017, 93-106, 170-174; for a Latvian example on contacts with a Danish gay organisation with the help of Danish Communist Party, see Ruduša 2014, 47-48; on late Soviet and perestroika years Russia, see also Stella 2015, 35-36, 62-64). During this era, the Baltic republics were conceived of as the “Soviet west”, and this exceptionalism has likewise been an element of Estonian national self-understanding (for example, see Annuk 2014, 4). During the mature socialist era in Estonia (c. 1965–1985, for the naming see Jõesalu 2017, 17-19), connections to Finland offered Estonians opportunities that were not available in other Soviet republics. Even as Finland and Estonia were divided during the Cold War by an “Iron Curtain with rusty holes”<sup>7</sup>, these holes grew larger over time. While the contacts were exceedingly limited from the war to the mid-

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<sup>6</sup> Stella (2015, 47-49) also observes that the practice of attempting to change homosexual orientation was not necessarily universally accepted within the Soviet medical sphere.

<sup>7</sup> I would like to thank Victorija Čeginskas, PhD, for this formulation.

1960s, they then began to rapidly develop. This was due to an increase in Finnish tourism to Soviet Estonia (Pagel 2015) as well as to an accessibility to Finnish television transmissions that were popularly watched in Northern Estonia, which was enabled by both the linguistic and cultural proximity between these countries (Miil 2015).

In the United States, the Stonewall riots serve as an important turning point in the histories of LGBTI movements – and especially in their cultural memory. In June 1969, a police raid of Stonewall Inn in New York led to the patrons resistance and a riot, and that incident has been viewed as igniting the gay liberation movement (on the utilisation of the Stonewall memory in the gay movement, see Armstrong and Cragge 2006; on the symbolic importance of Stonewall, see also Bravmann 1997, 68-96). The history of homosexual organisations in Finland began only in the late 1960s, and even then it was limited by the criminality of homosexuality (Mustola 2007a, 236-238). Finland decriminalised homosexuality in 1971 as a part of the “third wave” of decriminalisations, which began in the 1960s, during which some state-socialist countries, but not the Soviet Union, also legalised homosexual acts (Hildebrandt 2014; decriminalisation was debated even in the Soviet Union during the late 1950s and the early 1960s – see Rustam 2018). The decriminalisation caused a fracture in the Finnish gay rights organisation, as for some, the decriminalisation was sufficient, but for others, only full equality would suffice. This led to the founding of Seta, modelled after Scandinavian examples of gay liberation organisations, which developed into the largest Finnish LGBTI organisation. (In detail on the history of gay and lesbian organisations in Finland, see Mustola 2007b.)

In Estonia, even as the Soviet officials found it impossible to prevent people from watching Finnish television (Miil 2015), there were few programmes that that mentioned homosexuality. When homosexuality was decriminalised in Finland, a ban was imposed on “exhortation” (*kehotuskielto*). This paragraph made the public encouragement of homosexuality a crime, the claimed rationale being the need to protect the young, as same-sex relationships also had a higher age of consent than heterosexual relationships. While this ban never led to an actual sentence, it did promote self-censorship and especially limited how the Finnish public broadcasting company, *Yle*, could discuss homosexuality. Despite the work by the gay, lesbian and bisexual activists to remove this ban, it remained in effect officially until 1999 (on the effects of the exhortation ban and the activism to remove it, see Mustola 2007a, 235-241).

The silence concerning homosexuality was far greater in Soviet Estonia and this is well illustrated by the following anecdote that circulated in the late 1980s:

*In Soviet schools, a new subject was introduced – sexology. The pupils wait with excitement for the first class. A female teacher of undefined age enters. In an emphasized matter-of-fact tone, she places her belongings on the table and says: “Open your note books and write down: point four.” A great commotion starts in the class: “What point*

*four!... We want to start from the beginning!..” The teacher waits until the class settles and says wearily: “Point one would be the love of a boy and a girl – that you know for yourselves; point two: love between women, which is forbidden in the Soviet Union; point three: love between men, which, too, is forbidden... Now take your notebooks and write: point four, people’s love for the party!”<sup>8</sup>*

*(Mirtem 1990, 49)*

The contrast between the Soviet restrictions and post-Soviet ostensibly unlimited freedom is well illustrated by the difference between the Soviet school described in the text and the change in public discussion on sexuality that was ongoing during the late 1980s and the early 1990s (Kurvinen 2007; on the Russian changes at the same time, see Healey 2017, 111-130; Stella 2015, 37-38). The book that contained this anecdote, which was published in Tallinn in 1990, was clearly a part of this change that occurred in the public discussion on sexuality.

One of the topics that helped to break the silence on homosexuality in Estonia was the discovery of the first HIV cases in the Soviet Union (Nõgel 1991, 115; Kurvinen 2007). The AIDS crises of the 1980s has been, in addition to Stonewall, an important turning point in queer history that has likewise played an important role in forming queer memory (Piontek 2006; Castiglia and Reed 2012). AIDS has relevance in both Finnish and Estonian queer pasts. In Finland, the need to coordinate between Seta and health officials in order to contain the HIV epidemic helped Seta to break away from the margins (Nikkanen and Järvi 2014; for a discussion on the Finnish AIDS crisis in the Nordic context, see Rydström 2011, 46-50; on AIDS crisis as delegitimising the exhortation ban, Mustola 2007a, 241).

In the early 1990s, the general public in both Finland and Estonia were increasingly aware of topics related to homosexuality. This process was more rapid in Estonia, as it was part of the restoring of national independence and the changing modes of publicity and discussion (see Kaskla 2003, 306-308) that enabled the rapid beginning of the Estonian gay and lesbian organisation at the turn of the 1990s. In May of 1990, Tallinn hosted the first conference on homosexuality for the Soviet Union (Parikas and Veispak 1991). This conference led to the establishment of the Estonian Lesbian Union (*Eesti Lesbiliit*) as the first LGBT organisation of the country (Kotter 2006; on the Estonian LGBT movements in an international comparison, see also Talalaev

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<sup>8</sup> "Nõukogude kooli oli sisse viidud uus õppeaine – seksuoloogia. Õpilased ootavad õhinaga esimest tundi. Siseneb ebamäärases eas naisõpetaja. Rõhutatud asjalikkusega paneb ta oma asjad lauale ja ütleb: "Avage vihikud, pange kirja: punkt neli." Klassis puhkeb kohutav lärm: "Mis punkti neli!... Tahame algust peale!.." Õpetaja ootab ära kuni klassi jääb vaiksemaks ja ütleb tüdinult: "Punkt üks oleks – poisi ja tüdruku armastus, seda teate isegi; punkt kaks: naise ja naise armastus, see on Nõukogude Liidus keelatud; punkt kolm: mehe ja mehe armastus, ka keelatud... Võtke nüüd vihikud ja kirjutage: punkt neli, rahva armastus partei vastu!"

2010; on the portrayal of the gay and lesbian organisation in the Estonian media in the early 1990s, see Kurvinen 2007). Finnish gay and lesbian activists participated in this conference and particularly the contacts between Estonian and Finnish women continued in the early 1990s (for a conference report in *Seta* magazine, see Nissinen 1990 and for a report on the two year anniversary of *Eesti Lesbiliit*, see Mustola 1992). As Estonia regained restored the independence in 1991, homosexuality was decriminalised in 1992. The change in the public discussion in Finland had been slower. Even so, during the 1990s, gays and lesbians became a part of the mainstream media discussion and became more prominent in political discussion (on homosexuality as a political question in Finland, see Juvonen 2015). At this time, discussion on bisexuality also began to be covered by mainstream media (Kangasvuo 2014, 294-334).

More recently, the 2000s have brought an advancement of rights for same-sex couples. Some examples of this are a law for civil partnership passed in Finland in 2001 (late according to the Nordic standards – see Rydström 2011, 46-50) as well as in Estonia in 2014, and a law on same-sex marriage that was passed by the Finnish parliament the same year. These changes, nonetheless, have not occurred without controversy. For example, the enactment of the new legislation in Estonia has been difficult, and in Finland, as the law on same-sex marriage was about to take effect in March 2017, the parliament voted merely weeks before on a citizens' initiative that demanded its cancellation.

Carla Freccero (2011, 64) discusses the intent to prove the “persistent existence of same-sex desires and communities over time” (see also Love 2009). I suggest that this is not only desire but an important political need. The historical existence of undisciplined sexualities and genders has been used as an argument against the understanding that queer would be just an easily erasable cultural phenomenon (on the Swedish discussion on the decriminalisation of homosexuality and arguments on how “social factors” contributed to it, see Rydström 2003, 170). Thus, the past is an essential element in the construction of the present queer, and the focus on the pasts has likewise been an element of LGBTI activism in the form of gathering community archives and writing activist histories. Tuula Juvonen and Livia Hekanaho (2008) define interest in historical research as one of the key features of Finnish gay lesbian studies, a field that developed in Finland in the late 1980s and gradually became queer studies. However, this research has been conducted in other disciplines besides history.<sup>9</sup> By comparison, the field of queer studies in Estonia as an academic field is far smaller, and the discussion on queer in Estonian pasts is only now emerging.

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<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the first academic dissertation on Finnish queer history in a historical discipline was only accepted in 2015 – in Italy (Hagman 2016). Tom Linkinen's dissertation (Linkinen 2014) on the same-sex desire in late medieval England was accepted in 2013 in the discipline of cultural history at the University of Turku.

### 1.3 The structure and main contributions of the dissertation

The contributions of this study to the field of queer historical research are primarily theoretical and methodological. I discuss queer as a category of historical analysis in the spirit of Joan Scott's classical theorisation of gender (Scott 1986). In other words, I use queer as a methodological tool to understand the traces of undisciplined sexualities in historical sources. My aim is to discuss how *queer-as-being* and *queerness-as-method*, as these approaches are proposed by Laura Doan (2013), coexist in the research on queer histories and memories. Like Doan, who perceives different forms of queer historical research as shaping one another, I consider the internal contradiction formed by the dissonance as well as the mutually constructive nature of these approaches as a fruitful contribution to queer historiography but also to historical research more broadly.

My analysis questions the nature of sources in general and archives in particular within historical research. I offer a critical perspective on the sources consulted in the study of queer pasts, and address how memory and history are inevitably entangled in the discussions of queer pasts. My research participates in the discussion of queer time by offering memory as one means other than linearity to discuss time. As my work addresses past memories, it connects multiple locations of time, the *Time Remembered* (heterogeneous and layered in itself), the *Time of Remembering* and the present time, the *Time of Research*. Addressing the time of producing these memories, the *Time of Remembering*, especially the 1990s, is also historiography of the recent past. Whereas recent past is often "not yet" history, it is in itself a troubling position. This is because it is "not yet" ready for periodization or the critical view of historical research.

Cultural memory scholar Astrid Erll (2011a, 40) argues that "memory research could be seen as making possible for historians both a study of the past and at the same time acknowledgement of the insights of postmodernism." As Erll (2011a, 42-43) maintains, the focus on memory has been perceived as a challenge to historiography, as a means to introduce alternative pasts to public discussion. However, Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (2003, 10) observe that history can be perceived as less connected to the present, less emotional and with more critical distance than memory. Nonetheless, this detachedness may be the privilege of those that have been represented in historical research, and the possibly emotionally loaded memories have been particularly needed by the underrepresented. I therefore suggest that the challenge posed by these memories should not be confined to memory studies and that this discussion should also challenge historical research. In other words, while focus on memory definitely broadened how the past is viewed, this is not sufficient. Historiography and the academic discipline of history need to be addressed with this criticism (on the difficulties of combining queer theory and academic history, see Doan

2013, 7-14). My dissertation develops this critique in the field of queer historical research by closely examining the sources in queer historiography.

Oral history has been important for queer historical research (see especially Boyd 2008; Roque Ramírez and Boyd 2012; and Murphy, Pierce, and Ruiz 2016), and oral history interviews have also been consulted in studies on Finnish queer history (especially Juvonen 2002; Mustola 2006; Sorainen 2005). Although the fields of oral history and cultural memory studies have often been perceived as separate (Hamilton and Shopes 2008), they have been entangled in Finnish and Estonian scholarship. The Finnish field of *muistitietotutkimus*, literally translated as “research on remembered information” (Fingerroos and Haanpää 2012, 87), but perceived as a part of the international field of oral history, extends beyond oral sources and combines aspects of oral history and life-writing research. The field has been replete with debates on the culturally and socially constructed ways of remembering. The same is true for the Estonian field of studies on life writings. (For a recent discussion on both Finnish and Estonian oral history fields, see Heimo 2016.)

My analysis addresses the cultural processes of remembering from a queer perspective. While gender and remembering have been extensively analysed both in Finland (for example, Ukkonen 2000; Tuomaala 2006; Koskinen-Koivisto 2014; Kurvinen 2013; Liljeström 2004b; Rotkirch 2000) and Estonia (for a research anthology on women’s life stories, see Kirss et al. 2004; see also Kurvet-Käosaar 2003; Kurvet-Käosaar 2016), the discussion on the possibilities of reminiscence writings and life stories for queer historical research have not yet been fully addressed. In fact, there has not been considerable discussion in Finland and most of that discussion has occurred within queer historical research, and this type of approach is only beginning to emerge in Estonia. My aim is to offer a queer approach as a yet unstudied perspective on Finnish and Estonian cultural and personal memories. My research has determined that the mutually constructive nature of personal and cultural memories as well as fragmentary nature of memory become highlighted when addressing queer memories (on this entanglement of public and personal memories, for example, see Roque Ramírez 2008). However, it is essential to consider these mutually constructive and yet fragmentary aspects when conducting research on cultural and personal remembering in general. In short, the contribution the present study makes to these fields constitutes an eclectic combination of different approaches to memory.

The main research questions of my study address queer memory as an intertwined combination of cultural and personal remembering. I also explore how these memories can be studied, what types of sources we can utilise and how sources shape our understanding of memory and history. Firstly, I inquire as to *how queer personal and cultural memories construct each other in the Finnish and Estonian life stories, archives and public uses of history*. And secondly, I ask *how the focus on queer in memory sources in the*

*semiperiphery of Finland and Estonia shapes the understandings of the concepts of queer, memory and history.*

The answers to these questions are neither short nor simple and they begin by introducing new concepts. The main contributions of my dissertation consist of the concepts of *glimpses* and *fragments* as perspectives on pasts. As a visual metaphor of memory, a glimpse is a means to look at the past in the present, produced in the subjective process of remembering. Glimpses may be constructed in life stories, oral history interviews, or on any occasion that the past is addressed, constructed and evaluated. Glimpses may be only passing, and this is important because queer is often constructed in what is silent or invisible, the glimpses may reveal what is possible to interpret of these absences. Fragments, on the other hand, are material traces of the past, and they are discussed in this study in relation to archives and museums. Fragments remain, in essence, the same over time but their context shapes their interpretation. By contrast, glimpses vary as memories are retold and reinterpreted. The concepts of glimpse and fragment are interwoven in queer memories, as I demonstrate in sub-section 5.1 with the example of “grandpa’s parcel” that is depicted on the cover of this dissertation. With the help of these concepts, I discuss the understanding of both time and queer in memories. Queer as an approach and this fragmentary and glimpse-like understanding of past and its traces in the present are also the contributions of my study that I offer for historical research more broadly.

This introductory and summarising section of my dissertation serves as a bridge that connects the individual articles. This section also allows me to elaborate on how I perceive the theoretical discussions my dissertation participates in and allows me to discuss the development of my own theoretical thinking during the research process. This section also addresses the methodological and ethical aspects of my study more thoroughly than is possible in the limits of an individual research article. Firstly, I address the theoretical orientation that I base my study on and then move on to consider the materials I have utilised and the methodological choices I have made, as well as their limitations and the ethical considerations related to them. I then present the publications that form the core of the contribution of my dissertation. After presenting the individual articles, I combine the theoretical outcomes of my study and discuss their implications. Finally, I conclude by elaborating on the main message of my study on the research of queer history and memory.

The title of this dissertation, *Queer Politics of Memory: Undisciplined Sexualities as Glimpses and Fragments in Finnish and Estonian Pasts*, combines the main findings of this study. In these publications, I discuss memories that describe sexuality represented and interpreted as outside of normative heterosexuality, or in opposition to it. These sexualities I refer to as either queer or undisciplined, which translates into English as one of my favourite Finnish translations for queer, *kuriton* (undisciplined or unruly). Additionally, “undisciplined” has, in English, a connotation that the word

*kuriton* does not have, that of a reference to academic disciplines. The choice of this word reflects that my study is transdisciplinary, or even “disloyal” to existing disciplines (Halberstam 1998, 10).

The concept of politics of memory, on the other hand, positions my research as a study of the past and especially as a dissertation in political history. This concept connects cultural memory studies and oral history, as I understand politics of memory as the plurality of ways in which that past is constructed, conceptualised and made relevant in the present and the implications that these pasts have for possible futures. My study addresses both the uses of the pasts as well as the sources of queer historical research. However, all of these – the sources, the research, and the uses of the past – occur in the present. This is a feature of all historical research, but it becomes even more evident when addressing queer pasts and histories. The overall theoretical frame of my dissertation is the politics of memory and in the concluding section, I discuss the contribution my study makes to this discussion more generally.

The present, of course, is not independent of the past. A reference to this is the first epigraph at the beginning of this dissertation by historian David Halperin (2002, 21), “[t]o live in the present is indeed to inhabit simultaneously a multitude of historical worlds.” The pasts thus live in the present as we construct them with our constant references to what has happened before and what it means to us now. In this analysis, I discuss this multi-layered time by adopting the concept of triple-reflective contextualisation that takes into account the *Time Remembered*, *Time of Remembering* and the *Time of Researching*. The second epigraph by novelist Leena Krohn (1977, 51) is from her poem and translates roughly as “Dreams. Gender. Death. / What is most private / that is / shared by all.”<sup>10</sup> This quotation illustrates the inevitable entanglement in queer pasts of personal, or private, with cultural, or shared. Together, these two aspects – the multidimensional temporality and intertwined personal and collective – form what I refer to as the queer politics of memory.

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<sup>10</sup> ”Unet. Sukupuoli. Kuolema.

Mikä on yksityisintä

se on

kaikille yhteistä.”



## 2 Theorising queer, history, and politics of memory

This section places my study in the theoretical framework that ties the publications together and creates the foundation for the theoretical contributions of my study. I have developed these contributions based on the individual articles, although within a single empirical article, the opportunities for theoretical discussion have been limited. For this reason, I will discuss further the theoretical contributions in sections 5 and 6 of this introductory and summarising section.

In this section, I first explore my use of the concept of queer and examine the theoretical discussion I place it into. To position my study in the field of queer historical research, I subsequently discuss the queer critique of time and temporality, focusing particularly on how historical research has been addressed in this debate. As the third topic, I turn to the concept of memory and explore it first as a personal and cultural approach to the past and finally, I examine memory in relation to history with the concepts of politics of memory, forgetting and silences. A theoretician to whose work I return in all these discussions is Michel Foucault. Specifically, I discuss Foucault's concept of genealogy. This approach to the past from the viewpoint of the present serves as a basis for my focus on memory, in essence a phenomenon that links the past and the present.

### 2.1 Queer as a category of historical analysis

During a roundtable discussion on queer temporalities that was published in 2007 (Ferguson et al. 2007, 189), Lee Edelman (un)defines "our queerness" as something we are "never at one with". Edelman's statement captures well the internal tension within queer, as he argues elsewhere, both referring to as queer to those "so stigmatized for failing to comply with heteronormative mandates" and, simultaneously, that "queerness must insist on disturbing" (Edelman 2004, 17). In other words, queer can define, even if vaguely, a group of people who can claim "our queerness", referring to those who are "stigmatized for failing to comply with heteronormative mandates". But at the same time, this concept requires its indefinability, that it is something one is "never at one with" and that "must insist on disturbing". This internal tension within the concept of queer somewhat resembles the difference between *queerness-as-being* and *queerness-as-method* in the queer historiography proposed by Laura Doan (2013). I consider these aspects of queer – that it is something claimed by people, lives and practices as "ours", but that it simultaneously eludes exact definitions – as being entangled and inseparable. Therefore I suggest that to certain extent, these aspects of are both present in

all queer historical research, although the emphasis between them certainly varies.

My use of queer refers to the past practices, people and identities that have fallen outside of the historically changing norms that govern gender and sexuality. I have used queer when I have needed an abbreviation instead of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intergender, or some other combination of sexual and gendered marginalised identifications and practices, and especially when I do not want to assume a named identity. Compared to identity-based listings, such as LGBTI, the concept of queer allows shifting, constructed and unstable identifications to emerge and makes it possible to analyse practices and self-understandings that fall outside the identities. In this way, my work is somewhat similar to Doan's *queerness-as-being*, geared towards writing queer lives visible in history. This aspect is emphasized in the research articles included in my dissertation, although I challenge the most common notions of sexual and gendered identifications and attempt to construct diverse and fragmentary understandings of the past. In Doan's *queerness-as-method*, on the other hand, queer works as a verb, to queer, to look at something from a perspective of sexualised or gendered disturbing, while taking into account Doan's critique of the normal as a historicised concept against which queer as a concept is often defined (Doan 2013, 168-173, 190-193). This aspect of queer historiography and queer memory is foregrounded in this introductory and summarising section and this allows me to extend my analysis beyond the materials consulted in the individual articles.

In my understanding, queer should not be interpreted as detached and ahistorical, but on the contrary, it needs to be placed in a highly specific historical setting. Valerie Traub (2013, 33) explores how queer has been constructed as "a position taken up in resistance to specific configurations of gender and sexuality". Indeed queer as an academic concept emerged from the political AIDS activism of the late-1980s (on the "unremembering" that connects the AIDS crisis and queer, see Castiglia and Reed 2012, 145-174), poststructuralist philosophy (on the importance of Foucault for queer, see Halperin 1995, 15-16; for an early review of queer theory's poststructuralist genealogies, see Jagose 1996, 75-83; on the early usage of queer as a political concept, see also Kornak 2015, 16-103), and as an internal critique within feminist theory (see for example Butler 1999, vii-xxvi). One of the major achievements of queer has been its power right from the start to shake and challenge the naturalised conceptualisations of gender and sexuality (de Lauretis 1991, v).

During what is now considered to be the initial development of queer theory, many of its founding texts did not even use this concept. To me, the most influential of these texts, which have now become classics of queer theory, have been *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler (1999; originally published in 1990), and *Epistemology of the Closet* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2008; also originally published in 1990). I utilise Butler's concept of performativity and repetition as essential elements of constructing gender and sexuality in

relation to life story telling as a productive act (see also Kaskisaari 2000). Sedgwick's understanding of the dichotomous construction of heterosexuality and homosexuality, as well as her differentiation between minoritising and universalising understandings of homosexuality, have offered me an essential theoretical tool to discuss my findings on queer in memories.

My objective is to advance the queer theorisation in the field of historical research by using queer as a category of historical analysis, as a present-day construction to understand the past. My understanding of queer and history is inspired by Joan Scott's theorisation of gender. In her influential article published in 1986, Scott outlined her position on how the concept of gender offered a tool that remained underused by historians. She argued that gender was useful concept to analyse the construction of the binary opposition of men and women as well as the category of gender as a whole (Scott 1986; for a discussion on the reception of the article, see Scott 2008). Thus, this concept offered a means to break the essentialised understandings where the category of "women" was taken as given. Laura Doan (2013, 82-83) proposes that the categories of gender and sexuality cannot be simply replace one another because the forms of oppression are not similar. Extending Doan's findings, I perceive queer as a category that can challenge the ways of understanding sexuality in the past in a manner resembling how Scott perceived gender in the 1980s (but no longer at the end of the 1990s: Scott 1999, xi-xii).

Scott published an article in 2010 that revisited her argument after a quarter of a century, defining her work as genealogical, as a way to incorporate the arguments of Michel Foucault into an understanding of naturalised categories of gender (Scott 2010, 9). Scott subsequently argued that "that no history of women is complete without a history of 'women'" (Scott 2010, 12), that is, gender history should also address the historical construction of the categories of gender. In her article on the concept of experience in historical research, Scott (1993, 408) called for a change in the object of history, for recognising the "emergence of concepts and identities as historical event in need of explanation." She summarised this as "assuming that the appearance of a new identity is not inevitable or determined, not something that was always there simply waiting to be expressed, not something that will always exist in the form it was given in a particular political movement or at a particular historical moment" (Scott 1993, 408-409).

Scott's understanding of the role of experience in constructing the subject has radical implications for the subject of history in general, and therefore also for questions on queer subjectivity. As Scott (1993, 401) maintains, is it not that prefixed subjects *experience*, but that experiences *construct* the subject. This formulation combines both the discussion by Foucault on the emerging of subjectivity in power relations (for example, Foucault 1978, 101; see also Halperin 1995, 56-62) as well as Scott's earlier work on E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (Thompson 1968). In both her analysis of Thompson's study (Scott 1999, 68-90) as well as in her work on the concept of experience (Scott 1993), Scott develops an understanding of history not as

involving pre-defined subjects but as reflections of experiences that construct these subjects.

Inspired by Scott, my objective is to use the concept of queer not as something already known, but to explore what the concept of queer can *do* when applied to my particular materials of Finnish and Estonian memories. Rather than track the trajectories of the concept of queer, however, I analyse the types of memories, glimpses and fragments that have been preserved of diverse past practices, feelings and understandings that have fallen into the categories now perceived as fitting under the umbrella of queer.

Another question I ask concerns the type of memories that could be analysed by using queer as a tool. To develop Scott's (2008, 1429) formulation regarding gender, "the particular meanings" of queer "need to be teased out of the historical materials". The focus of my research is predominantly on the materials themselves and on how different sources on the past produce queer. On the one hand, this involves an analysis of how the current labels of both sexual identities, such as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and the word queer itself have been applied to the past people and practices in the present-day uses of the past. On the other hand, my study addresses queer as a position of the sexual (and gendered) outsider, focusing on the often fragmentary and glimpse-like sources that remain of the past lives and practices, and on how these sources shape the ways queer is understood today.

Even though queer is often perceived as an American-born concept and American-based theory, especially outside the Anglophone context (for example, see Piontek 2006, 2-3), it has a multi-sided intellectual history. This concept seems to have taken off in various locations at approximately the same time, without knowledge of each other or even recognised affinity (see Tiina Rosenberg's comment in her essay, 2008, and Teresa de Lauretis', 1991, xviii, fn. 2, that Rosenberg refers to). Furthermore, not all current conceptualisations of queer in non-Anglophone settings are products of translation. For example, according to Tone Hellesund (2016, 132-133, fn. 2 and 3), the Norwegian concept of *skeivt*, which is currently used as a translation of queer, is in fact at least slightly older than queer as it is used in queer theory. Moreover, *skeivt* does not have negative connotations in itself, and hence it does not convey a similar pejorative past as queer does. For this reason, Hellesund advises caution when translating, as local particularities may be lost when concepts are replaced with others that carry histories of their own.

Queer has been discussed in Estonia particularly in relation to art. In her essay on Eastern European art, Rebeka Põldsam (2014) offers the term *kväär* as an Estonian translation of queer. *Kväär* exhibits a phonetic similarity to queer, and additionally, it is similar to the Estonian word for erroneous or false, *väär*. Põldsam, in agreement with Redi Koobak (2013a; 2013b), criticises the Western notions of queer for assuming a simplified teleological trajectory. This understanding is based on the claim that Eastern European countries are supposed to follow the Western progress and they have been

lagging behind (see also Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011). Despite Koobak's critique of a single progressive trajectory projected onto the area, she also demonstrates the contradictions and ambivalence in the position of a feminist or queer scholar from Eastern Europe. Koobak (2013b) analyses how Estonian post-Soviet history can be perceived as a project of becoming "European". To Koobak, despite her criticism of the colonial positioning of Eastern Europe as "catching up", feminist thinking in the "West" was something that she wished Estonia would "catch up" with.

In Finnish academic discussion, "queer" is typically not translated but the term retains its English form, although a number of translations have been suggested (on the different translations, see Kekki 2006). As queer was originally a reclaimed pejorative word, this aspect is no longer visible when it is utilised in a context where it was never used before (see Mizielińska 2006, 88-89). Also, as those Finnish queer scholars studied by Joanna Mizielińska (2006, 90) describe, adopting an English term may contribute to the credibility of the study as well serve to minimise the directly sexual connotations that a Finnish translation of the term might convey. However, as Mizielińska (2006, 91) states, Finnish scholars have been creative in producing one-time translations of this word, especially those that are formed as verbs and thus denote action, process, and performativity in queer.

Mizielińska (2006, 91-92) notes that in Finland, the positions of queer as a critique of fixed identities was not relevant to the same extent as it was in the American context. One obvious reason for this is that whereas an active field of gay and lesbian studies already existed in the Anglo-American context at the beginning of the 1990s with queer constructed as its internal critique, this field has only developed in Finland simultaneously with the queer theorisation of sexuality and gender. Tuula Juvonen and Pia Livia Hekanaho (2008) observe that Finnish gay and lesbian studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s were small-scale and did not have academic positions to defend, which made the inclusion of queer perspectives within the developing field relatively flexible (I have discussed the trajectories of Finnish queer historical research in Taavetti 2018, forthcoming). This may have added to the value of queer as an identity, even if it was unstable and contested. As Tiina Rosenberg (2008, 15-16) notes, the concept of queer in the Swedish context has offered a point of identification despite its identity-critical content, partly precisely due to its outsider position and "foreignness". To conclude, the term queer was adopted in the Finnish discussion with relative ease while some of the translations that would have pejorative connotations were resisted. I suggest that this combination of easiness and rejection reveals how some of the critical potential may have become lost in the (non)translation.

## 2.2 Queer in time and the queering of history

In his book on the tensions between queer theory and gay and lesbian studies, Thomas Piontek (2006, 24-29) offers an interesting reading on the contesting interpretations of the Stonewall riots. For Piontek, a gay interpretation involves trusting the possibility to determine a “total history”, a truth in the sources, and to access the past as it actually was. A queer reading, on the other hand, dismisses the facile differentiation between fact and fiction and portrays history as yet another story to be told. On a similar note, Madhavi Menon (Freccero, Menon, and Traub 2013, 783-784) has argued that the queer perspective emphasizes that “complete understanding” is never possible of either queer or the past. This insistence of not knowing and the emphasis on the productive role of not being able to know is, for me, what is intriguing in the intersection between history and queer. This is most relevant for my own position as a researcher of fragmentary and glimpse-like memories.

The discussion on queer and history has been complicated by the diverse understandings of history and the concepts related to it in different disciplines and theories, making the discussion between disciplines a process of complex translation (see Doan 2013, 7-11). Even the concept of history is in itself complicated, as it can refer both to the past as well as to the research or interpretation of the past (Doan 2017, 114; Doan 2013, 30). Valerie Traub (2013, 37 fn. 15) recognises this confusion over history, historiography, historicism and temporality and how it makes the discussion perplexing for those coming from the historical disciplines. According to Traub, the confusion also alienated trained historians from queer theorisation of temporality, past, and history (see also Doan 2013, 8). The term historicism (and unhistoricism) is particularly bound to raise confusion. The “historicism” criticised by the queer unhistoricists refers, according to Traub (2013, 37 fn. 15), to a field of literary criticism, not to the term used by historians.

Traub (2013) identifies the main points of the queer unhistoricist critique as the assumed teleology of historiography and the call for radical alterity of the past. Traub (2013, 30) asserts that research that is unhistoricistically-aligned has produced rich analyses of sexuality at a certain time, but it has failed to discuss sexuality and change over time that can be perceived as the main focus of historians. Furthermore, as the unhistoricists are wary of empiricism, it seems their work has more to offer to the theorisation of history than to the actual craft of the historian. Another point is made by Doan (2017; 2013, 81) when she criticises some queer scholars for not really being familiar with the work of historians and for their projecting out-of-date understandings of academic historical research as periodization or as a search for facts and their temporal order onto a discipline that no longer meets this description.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A similar critique was presented by Carolyn Dinshaw in a roundtable discussion on queer temporalities (Ferguson et al. 2007, 186), although this was countered by a reply from Lee Edelman that

One of the defendants of queer historicism has been historian and classicist David Halperin. He addresses the critique of historicism by examining the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty. To Chakrabarty (2000, 7-16), the very idea of historicism as it developed in nineteenth century Europe is tied to colonialism because it enabled the establishment of the European history as the neutral measure for all the “rest” of the world. Commenting on the complex history of the term, Chakrabarty emphasizes the “tension between the Rankean insistence on attention to the uniqueness and the individuality of a historical identity or event *and* the discernment of a general historical trends that the Hegelian-Marxist tradition foregrounds.” (Chakrabarty 2000, 22, emphasis added.) In other words, the concept of historicism as used by Chakrabarty, combines both these aspects of historicism, perceiving the past as unique, and as therefore essentially different from the present, and understanding the development over time as essential. According to Chakrabarty (2000, 23), even as historicism does not denote teleology, “the idea of development and the assumption that a certain amount of time elapses in the very process of development are critical to this understanding”.

Halperin (2002, 158 fn. 25) states that his own understanding of historicism is connected to “a non-colonial relation to the past”. Halperin understands the practice of historicism as a means to escape the imperialist tendency of over-expanding the self and exaggerating our ability to understand (Halperin 2002, 20). In the field of the history of sexuality, Halperin calls for positioning modern homosexuality as a historically specific construction, one that is in itself a hybrid combination of different ways of understanding sexuality (Halperin 2002, 18-19).<sup>12</sup> In other words, homosexuality is not constructed as the ultimate goal of liberated human sexuality, but as a part of the historical variety of sexuality (Halperin 2002, 21-23). Here, it seems that Halperin interprets Chakrabarty’s historicism as being more directly linked solely to the idea of linear progress rather than to the internally tensioned, complex and in itself historical concept that Chakrabarty uses.<sup>13</sup> It therefore appears that although Halperin clearly supports the postcolonial project of undoing the Western-centred understandings of history, he seems to dismiss somewhat too lightly the critique of the linearity of time that Chakrabarty perceives as incorporating colonial notions.

Michel Foucault’s work has been essential not only to queer historiographers and theorists of time and history, but also to the work on the history of sexuality in general. Foucault’s genealogical approach is discussed

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the denial of “old-style historicism” would seem more credible if it would not be repeated as often (Ferguson et al. 2007, 188).

<sup>12</sup> For Halperin’s response to the critique by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2008, 44-48) on how his formulation of “homosexuality as we understand it today” constructs present homosexualities as too uniform, see Halperin 2002, 11-13.

<sup>13</sup> The reference that Halperin (2002, 158, fn. 25) makes is to pages 6-8 and onwards in Chakrabarty’s book, not to pages 22-23, where Chakrabarty most clearly defines historicism.

in his essay titled “Nietzsche, genealogy and history” (Foucault 1977b), although, as Gary Gutting (2005, 50) observes, the text often is unclear as to where Foucault is, in fact, developing his own conceptualisation and where he is summarising Nietzsche (in more detail on this essay, see Prado 2000, 33-44). This essay by Foucault describes the genealogist as “an inexhaustible lover”, as Heather K. Love (2009, 269) phrases it, one that is “attentive to every detail”. As Foucault argues, genealogy “disturbs what was previously considered immobile, fragments what was thought unified” (Foucault 1977b, 146) and as he defined elsewhere, his project is “the history of the present” instead of the “history of past in present terms” (Foucault 1977a, 31). As is often the case with Foucault’s thinking, however, a more nuanced understanding of his method can be extracted from his genealogical works rather than in his theoretical papers.

Even though genealogy is firmly based in the present and on the need to understand the present as historically constructed, it opposes the search for origins. As C.G. Prado observes, “[w]hat genealogy unearths is the antithesis of essence” (Prado 2000, 34). Maria Tamboukou’s position is that “[g]enealogy as a method of analysis searches in the maze of dispersed events to trace discontinuities, recurrences and play where traditional historiography sees continuous development, progress and seriousness.” (Tamboukou 2017b, 2) In Halperin’s (2002, 13) formulation, a genealogical approach begins with “an analysis of blind spots in our current understanding, or with the problematization of what passes for ‘given’ in contemporary thought”. Additionally, Colin Koopman (2013), perceives the focus on the emergence as one important contribution of Foucault’s genealogy compared to his prior work on archaeology (Koopman 2013, 39-44; see also Foucault 1977b, 148-150).<sup>14</sup>

As Foucault and his genealogy are highly essential for the practices of queer historical research, the different interpretations of the concept of genealogy complicate the distinctions between the approaches to queer past. Laura Doan (2013) differentiates between two forms of doing lesbian, gay, and queer history, jointly named as the “genealogical project”. Doan refers to the older of these forms as “ancestral genealogy” and perceives it to be invested in tracing the history of how gay and lesbian experiences have been marginalised, as well as tracking the progress towards emancipation over time. The newer one, which has by no means replaced the older form, Doan has named as “queer genealogy”, and she conceives of it as more invested in ruptures and discontinuities. However, Doan regards both forms as sharing many similarities in that they both take the modern notions of identity as their departure point, even as “queer genealogy” searches more for differences than similarities.

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<sup>14</sup> While the archaeological and the genealogical have been interpreted as different phases of Foucault’s work, this distinction has been repeatedly questioned (see Koopman 2013, 30-44; Pulkkinen 2000, 82; M. Peltonen 2004).



Doan outlines “queer critical history” as an additional queer approach to the past – not, it should be emphasized, as an alternative, as Doan recognises enormous value in the genealogical project. What is essential for Doan’s critical history is the ability to understand that past sexualities were structured differently from the present, and that no sexual subjectivity is necessarily found in traces that remain of the past (Doan 2013, 140, 144). In addition, queer critical history analyses the different modes of regulating and understanding sexuality than the modern concepts of normal and deviant (Doan 2017, 192-193). Another point is that for Doan (2013, 23), radical queer history is a self-reflexive project that focuses on how the writing of history itself produces the past in the present.

Doan develops her concept of “queer critical history” in dialogue with Joan Scott’s formulations. However, this connection to Scott’s work makes Doan’s differentiation between genealogical project and critical history somewhat confusing. In the texts that Doan cites, Scott explicitly combines her understanding of critical history with genealogy by stating directly that “[g]enealogy was Foucault’s name for this critical history” (Scott 2009, 46). Whereas Doan considers it to be essential that critical history not begin from the modern concept of sexuality, Scott defines critical history as beginning from the present, although definitely not by accepting the current identity categories as given and ahistorical but as objects of critique (see also Scott 1993). In her article on critique, Scott (2007, 26-31) discusses the usefulness of Foucault’s genealogy for historical research, and that for Foucault, genealogy was a means to interpret the current understandings and our subjectivities as products of historical shifts and trajectories.

While Doan emphasizes the unknowable essence of the queer in the *past*, her formulations appear to make the *present* queer knowable. Doan examines issues such as the past labelling of sexuality being “similar to our own” (Doan 2013, 136), and discusses viewing “sex or sexuality as we do now” (Doan 2013, 198). Doan remains unclear as to who “we” is and when “now” is. To me, it seems that there are a myriad of ways to understand same-sex desires at any given moment, and that these understandings are both rapidly changing and unfixed. In short, there is no “we” in any “now” that would understand (homo)sexuality in the same, fixed way. Furthermore, Doan’s analysis contrasts with Halperin’s understanding of present sexualities. Halperin (2002, 17) defines the historicity he supports as “an approach to the history of sexuality that foregrounds historical differences, that attempts to acknowledge the alterity of the past as well as the irreducible cultural and historical specificity of the present”. This approach also implies that a contemporary scholar may find some historical experiences incomprehensible (Halperin 2002, 20).

Even as Doan criticises Halperin among other “queer genealogists” for adopting the current notions of homosexuality as a point of departure, her own work could, in fact, be described in the same manner. Firstly, even when the notions of sexuality are used to construct questions, not answers, as Doan

(2013, 90) does, these notions work as an ignition. Secondly, Doan presents her new theory of queer and historical research as a self-critical argument building on her previous work, which traced the “roots” of modern lesbianism. Thus, is not her new theorisation derived from the modern identity category of lesbian and constructed as a critique of searching for its origins? After all, the current notions of sexuality, even though changing and unstable, are the only ones we have to begin constructing the past even if we might arrive at completely different understandings.

The concept of anachronism addresses how the present-day concepts and understandings affect the construction of past. Traub (2013) questions why some unhistoricists claim that the utilisation of anachronism and proximity, rather than historical alterity, would be a particularly queer line of thought. As Noreen Giffney, Michelle M. Sauer and Diane Watt (2011, 1-3) emphasize in their introduction to *The Lesbian Premodern*, no historian is free from anachronism. According to Giffney, Sauer and Watt, while adopting modern concepts – such as the lesbian – hides some aspects of the past, not using it does as well. Furthermore, while questions of anachronism are relevant in all historical research, they are especially topical when discussing queer history. This is because the concepts related to undisciplined sexualities and genders are so obviously connected to our time and politics and because the sources in queer historical research are often constructed in the present with anachronistic concepts. This is highly relevant to my work even though it focuses on memories and not on history per se.

### **2.3 Personal and cultural memory**

Valerie Traub (2013, 32) notes that although unhistoricists criticise the chronological time that they consider to be linked to the teleology of history, they do not break the dichotomy between “now” and “then”. I would suggest as one way to, if not break this binary division, then at least to bend it, is to consider the concept of memory. Memory is inherently anachronistic, present simultaneously in multiple temporalities. Memory is not only connected to the time remembered and the time of remembering, but it also contains layers of reflections on previous times. In addition, the concept of memory allows me to connect my work to the thriving field of cultural memory studies. The concept of memory does require, however, a detailed analysis of the processes of remembering in order to conduct the needed theoretical work to understand past and present queerness.

Laura Doan (2013, xi-xii) perceives remembering the past as being similar to “touching”, “tracing”, “encountering”, or “documenting” in the sense that they all consider the past as already constructed. Doan observes that critical queer history acknowledges the role of the historian as a creator of the past, not as someone addressing an existing entity. Yet in cultural memory studies, remembering is perceived as a process that constructs the past, not one that

merely collects pre-existing memories. In her book titled *Memory in Culture*, Astrid Erll (2011a) defines cultural memory studies as a field interested in “the entire spectrum of possible interrelations between past, present, and future as they take shape in sociocultural context” (Erll 2011a, 173). This broad definition may result in risking that memory can refer to almost anything or that the metaphor of individual cognitive functions is stretched too far (on this discussion, for example, see Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, 8-11; Fogu and Kansteiner 2006, 289-291). However, like Erll, I recognise that only this broad perspective on the cultural ways of remembering and the multisided entanglement of personal and social memories enables an understanding of how the different forms of remembering come together when individuals or communities construct their pasts. As Claudio Fogu and Wulf Kansteiner (2006, 288-289) suggest, to avoid the dangers of overusing the psychological metaphors of memory, I focus on memory as a social, political and cultural phenomenon.

From the possible different terms that refer to the various aspects of memory, such as “collective”, “popular”, “social”, or “public” memory, as Marianne Liljeström (2004b, 19) lists them, I have decided in favour of cultural memory (on the differences in these terms, see Abrams 2010, 78-105; Fogu and Kansteiner 2006, 285-286). The concept of cultural memory has gained position not only as one term to describe the social, mediated and constructed aspects of the past in the present, but it refers to a combination of paradigms and even to the entire field of studies. Yet the field or paradigms of cultural memory studies are far from uniform and they are perceived differently in different disciplines and national contexts (see Erll 2011b, 5).

Even though the “cultural” can be perceived as vague and too all-embracing, I conceive of “collective” as an even more problematic concept, particularly when discussing queer memories. If these memories would be collective, what would then be the “collective”? A “queer community”, a problematic notion in itself, or the “straight mainstream”? Similar problems would arise with “public memory”, both understood as the “memory of publics” as well as the “publicity of memory” (Phillips 2004). There is not necessarily a “public” that would claim these memories as theirs, nor are all the memories I discuss public. Claudio Fogu and Wulf Kansteiner (2006, 288-289) point out that the English translation of the “collective” in collective memory misses the meaning of “collective” as a synonym of “social” that was essential in the original formulation by Maurice Halbwachs (1992). To Halbwachs, an important part of his theory was the construction of personal memories in social processes in which the individual and group-based memories are inseparable. Fogu and Kansteiner note that the English translation of Halbwachs’ work overemphasizes the role of “collective” as the opposite of “individual”. Even with this clarification, I consider cultural memory to be the most apt term for my research, as I focus predominantly on different cultural institutions and cultural products.

Kirsti Jõesalu (2017, 28) addresses the differentiation between cultural and communicative memory, as they have been derived from the work of Jan Assman (2008). Jõesalu does not perceive this distinction as exceedingly useful for studies on remembering recent past. Furthermore, from a queer memory perspective, “the communicative” can be as problematic as “the collective”. Some of the memories I analyse have not been communicated for a long time, as queer feelings and experiences have often remained secret. The concept of communicative memory becomes even more problematic if it is connected to generations either as relationships between parents and children, as communicated in “everyday interaction” (J. Assman 2008), or to generations as people of the same biological age who share a relatively similar perspective on their time (as in Aleida Assman’s social memory: A. Assman 2010, 41-42). Queer memories are not often shared and passed on in the context of family, and queer generations problematize the concept of social generations (as discussed briefly in Publication II, see also Freeman 2000; Taavetti 2014a). In addition, the focus on specifically queer remembering may blur the line between communicative and cultural memory, as the only memory available may be the passing glimpses in culture in the lack of actual communicative memory that would be transferred directly from one person to another.

For my analysis, the connection between cultural memory and the archive is essential. This is because I discuss queer archives, archival collections of life stories and artwork that is based on archival sources. The discussion on the “archival turn” is primarily based on the work of Foucault and on his archaeological and genealogical understanding of history. This orientation to a theory on archives began to consider the archive as a product of power, and more precisely, an archive as a *dispositif* of knowledge and truth.<sup>15</sup> This discussion was furthered by Jacques Derrida’s *Archival Fever* (1996). As Kate Eichhorn (2013, 5) asserts, Derrida’s work as well as those adopting his theorisation, has less to do with an archive as “a place to recover the past” than as a means to connect in the present with legacies or traumas of the past. Moreover, according to Carolyn Steedman (2001, 3), Derrida’s text actually has little relevance to archives – or to fever, for that matter (Steedman 2001, 7-9). Maryanne Dever (2017, 2) comments that the increased reflexivity of how the scholars in humanities engage with archival collections has rarely led to a more nuanced engagement with archival studies and the profession (see also Moravec 2017). My research addresses this gap on the part of queer archives, as I explore from the perspective of a queer historian and a memory scholar the role and nature of archives and sources historical research and in cultural memory studies.

As Kate Eichhorn (2013, 5) states, this discussion on archives has blurred the borders between “collection”, “library” and “archive” in a manner that

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<sup>15</sup> On Foucault’s concept of the *dispositif*, not easily translated into English and thus often becoming lost in the translation of Foucault’s work, see e.g. M. Peltonen 2004.

archive professionals in particular find confusing and worrisome (see also Doan 2013, 8-9). Eichhorn (2013, 18-20) maintains that this has caused a “semantic drift” of the concept of the archive to include any type of “evidence”. Thus, the discussions on “archives” combine the actual archives and more metaphorical uses of the concept. For example, in her book on Emma Goldman, Clare Hemmings (2018, 6-9) discusses the “subjective archive” of Goldman’s writings, manuscripts and letters, but also as a “critical archive” of the feminist readings of Goldman as well as a “theoretical archive” of present-day conceptualisation and discussions. In addition to these, Hemmings proposes a fourth archive, the “imaginative archive”.

Of the archives discussed by Hemmings, only the “subjective archive” is an archive in the same sense that I utilise the concept. Hemmings’ discussion underscores why I consider this form of archive to be interesting and productive, as she argues that the “subjective archive” is both “contradictory” and includes “inevitable absences” (Hemmings 2018, 6), while all the other archives are somewhat based on a researcher’s choices. As Hemmings (2018, 22) warns of the danger of flattening past lives to fit into present understandings, I suggest that focusing on these contradictory archives with absences is one means to resist this. As Leena Kurvet-Käosaar (2017, 355) concludes, “a scholarly narrative can smooth over archival traces for the sake of narrative coherence; however, these sources are not like pieces of a puzzle that fit neatly into their designed spots.” I claim that archives can reveal these pieces separately and in their fragmentation underline the endless opportunity to recount yet another story and construct an infinite number of fragmentary and never completely finished puzzles from the same set of pieces.

In addition to archives that combine and give meaning to the traces of the past, my study discusses the constructed nature of life stories. As Richard Ned Lebow (2006, 4) points out, individual and collective memories are formed by one another (see also Halbwachs 1992, 37-40). Claudio Fogu and Wulf Kansteiner (2006) develop this idea further, stating that individual memory is virtually impossible to differentiate from cultural remembering and that collective memory is not merely a metaphor because memories “originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past” (Fogu and Kansteiner 2006, 291). While this circular process occurs in all types of memories, it varies remarkably in what ways the cultural, societal and political contexts of remembering become visible in the personal recollections. For instance, as Horacio N. Rogue Ramírez (2008) notes, for a queer Latino/a in San Francisco in the 1990s, the AIDS crises and mourning and loss it caused were an undeniable context of remembering and this shaped the construction of personal past.

The process of narrating oneself as a coherent account in the intersection of personal and cultural memory can be analysed as what Foucault referred to as a “technology of the self”, where the operation of power enables its objects to turn themselves into subjects. Foucault developed an understanding of these processes during the final years of his life, in the second volume of the

*History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1986) and in posthumously published seminar texts (Foucault 1988). Halperin (1995, 79-81) emphasizes this late interest of Foucault and connects it to Foucault's work on practices and ethics in addition to ideas and knowledge. The first volume of *The History of Sexuality* by Foucault already discussed constructing the self by confession. Foucault (1978, 67-70) argued that even though the processes of truth-confessing were by no means limited to the topics concerning sexuality, in the Western societies from the nineteenth century onwards, precisely sexuality was considered to be the "fundamental secret". Perverse sexuality in particular was made to produce, over and again, the truth about itself in the name of science (Foucault 1978, 20-22, 27-30). This led to pathologising practices of queer life story production, but also offered perspectives for self-reflection and self-construction to those deemed as perverse.

Portraying oneself as queer in the form of a confession or a life story can be perceived as a performative act, a repetition that constructs the identity it claims to reveal (see also Kaskisaari 2000, 76-77, on the connections between a confession and a life story; see Butler 1999, on the performative construction of identity by repetition). As Tuija Pulkkinen (2000, 160-165) notes regarding lesbian identity, the narrating of a life that constructs lesbian as authentic requires constructing a life story as a series of events that inevitably follow one another and lead to lesbianism in the present. Thus, the "confession" of a lesbian identity is a productive act, but at the same time, it hides its own construction by producing a story of a self that was always there waiting to be revealed. These life stories, which have been a part of community-forming, such as participating in a lesbian community, resemble those confessions that have been produced in the field of medicine (for a Finnish example on lesbian life stories as a form of community-building, see Kaartinen et al. 1992, 4-5; for an analysis of lesbian life stories, see Kaskisaari 1995 and on the performativity of life stories, see also Kaskisaari 2000).

As an example of how the confessions of the sexual self may serve as points of identification over extended periods of time, Jennifer Terry (1999, ix-x) describes how she became "obsessed" with the early twentieth-century scientific and medical texts on homosexuality:

*They were accurate and inaccurate at the same time. What I mean is that the texts spoke of things that were familiar to me: they offered details of homosexual desire not unlike what I had experienced, but they used these details to represent it in terms of repulsive stereotypes and to underscore the idea that homosexuality was an undesirable pathology.*

*(Terry 1999, ix)*

This identification, which was discovered by reading the stereotypical and othering scientific and medical texts against the grain, is by no means rare. As Terry (1999, 16-20) observes, the medical discourse on homosexuality was

possible only with the help of those who had queer desires and who participated in its construction (for an additional example, see Oosterhuis 2000 for a discussion on Richard Krafft-Ebing's work and his patients in fin-de-siècle Vienna). Even though these scientific texts were written in a marginalising tone, they provided an arena to discover glimpses that were used to construct the narrator's personal desires and self-understandings. In addition to these aspects discussed by Terry that concern the production and content of medical and scientific texts, another important feature of these texts is that they have been available to readers. Even when same-sex desires have been a silent topic, they have usually been at least mentioned in medical texts (see, for example, Ruduša 2014, 9, on Soviet Latvia).

## 2.4 Politics of remembering and forgetting

In addition to the key concept of memory, my work focuses on the concepts history and forgetting. My position is that history is a multidimensional set of ways of making sense of the past. Following Jorma Kalela (2000; 2012), I consider history to be a much broader concept than the work of academic historians. Kalela defines history as an everyday phenomena of social practice, of how people orientate themselves in the present with their understandings of the past. Kalela (2012, 2-5) divides the different approaches to the past into scholarly history, popular history produced in smaller communities and public histories debated in the broader circles of politics and culture. While Laura Doan (2013, 33-40) also examines different approaches to history, both those within and outside history disciplines, her concept of history is more limited than that of Kalela. As Kalela (2012, 2-5) emphasizes, all histories are part of the same social processes of history-making, and the academic historian is, from the beginning and throughout the research process, tied to the histories outside academia. I find Kalela's analysis useful in understanding the position of historical research in the wider cultural field of making sense of the past.

I have developed Kalela's conceptualisations for my use on the particular topic of queer memory. My own definitions differ from those of Kalela because I include the concept of memory that Kalela seems to lose somewhere within popular and public history.<sup>16</sup> I consider history to be a construction, academic or not, that seeks to combine reflections of the past into a relatively coherent understanding of what has occurred, why, and what it means for us in the present and for the future. The concept of history also implies a distance between the past discussed and those addressing it. Memory, on the other hand, is a broader concept that includes all the ways that the past takes place in the present. While histories are public, or at least build in communication

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<sup>16</sup> When Kalela quotes Bernard Bailyn, Bailyn's concept of "history" somewhat resembles Kalela's use of "scholarly history" or "academic history" and Bailyn's "memory" approximates Kalela's concepts of "public", "popular" and "non-academic history" (Kalela 2012, 20).

between individuals, memories can also be private, never disclosed or not even verbalised. This demarcation between history and memory is by no means binary, but it resembles more a continuum, or is circular, where cultural and private memories and histories construct each other.

Doan (2017) explores polarisation in the understanding of the past in queer studies, which is conceptualised either as history against memory, or unhistoricism against historicism. Doan calls for the “importance of thinking self-reflexively on what we want from our engagements with the past and how oppositionality both limits and expands historical understanding of that past” (Doan 2017, 115). Doan makes an important observation regarding the unavoidable connection between memory and history, as remembering utilises the works of historical research as well as popular and public histories. Doan (2017, 123) notes that the works of collective memory do not merely fabricate but make use of academic historical work selectively, using it to support their understandings of the past. However, Doan seems to interpret collective memory as essentially minor to academic history, although the works of academic queer history are often particularly prone to rely on oral histories, rumours, and legends – in other words, on memories (see, for example, Boyd 2008 for an overview of American gay, lesbian and queer historical works, or Juvonen 2002, for a Finnish example). Thus, in my work, particularly queer history and queer memory are intertwined in more complex ways than simply as memories utilising histories (for example, on the complex connections between the memory and history of gay and lesbian persecutions under the Nazis, see Jensen 2002).

Doan (2017, 124-125) warns against the dangers of viewing the past with an affection that, although it does bring to light similarities over time, may prevent us from seeing the past on its own terms, not in the service of the present. However, it is perhaps too self-evident for Doan to specify, but memory also requires at least a feeling of truth, of authenticity. Memory, cultural or individual, differs from fabrication as it claims to discuss the past as it really was. Sometimes this may involve opposing academic history which may feel – especially for the marginalised and excluded – as not revealing the past from their viewpoint. For something to be meaningful as a memory, it needs to have a feeling of truth – as in literature, the truth of a literary work is not based on the credibility of individual details but on the usability of the story for the readers and its potential to empower (Sedgwick 2008, 240-241). Similarly, with films, a “memory film” only becomes one with the right framing (Erll 2011a, 137-138).

Doan also seems to perceive that “invented legacies” are inevitably tied to present understandings of sexuality. This is because they reveal more regarding “our categories, our identities, our oppositional binaries” than about the past (Doan 2013, 199). I think it is important to give more room for imagination. While obviously to a certain extent imagining the past employs current understandings of sexuality and sometimes it merely projects them onto the past (as Doan demonstrates in her article on remembering Alan



Turing: Doan 2017), surely it is possible to imagine pasts in other ways than those that are limited to the present-day understandings. Furthermore, as the categories of modern identities are not – and have never been – static and all-embracing, it is possible to think beyond them and to imagine other pasts and futures than those that are based on rigid categories of identification. This, I will demonstrate, can take place in fields such as the visual arts, as discussed in Publication V.

As a much-used concept, politics of memory is rarely defined in detail. In my study, I reflect on the deliberate and non-deliberate politics of remembering and analyse how the different references to the past are used politically. Kari Palonen (2003) conceptualises the different aspects of the political. Within his conceptualisation, my use of this concept refers to politicisation. To Palonen, politicisation labels something as political and thus opens it for action. As an example, Palonen cites the feminist slogan of personal is political, which according to Palonen, “opened a new horizon for both acting politically and thematizing politics as a concept” (Palonen 2003, 182). Furthermore, to Palonen, politicisation means “detecting the political potential of some existing changes, shifts, or processes” (Palonen 2003, 182), in other words, making something that seems immovable or “impossible” a target of political action. For my analysis, using the concept of queer as a tool that is verb-like, mobile and fluid to understand remembering instead of, for example, addressing solely LGBTI memories, is in itself an act of politicisation of memory.

In relation to memory, this politicisation means that the past is opened as contested and debated. Also, these competing interpretations of the past have political connotations in the struggles over possible futures. However, unlike David W. Grua (2016, 4), who envisions these conflicts as those between dominant and subordinate groups in a society, the memories in my work are not necessarily created by any particular group, and the conflicts over memory can be more subtle and fragmented than those occurring on the level of a whole “memory regime” (Kubik and Bernhard 2014). Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard (2014) argue that a political science interpretation of the politics of memory is limited to the analysis of deliberate actions to make us remember in a certain way. They emphasize the manipulation of memory in their analysis, particularly by states and other official actors. A similar formulation is offered by Simona Mitroiu (2015, 8, 16) in an introduction to politics of memory and life writing in Eastern Europe. Mitroiu argues that the concept of memory politics refers to state involvement in analysing and preserving the past, as well as to systems of justice and “political responsibility for the past”. My understanding of the politics of memory, however, is even wider, covering the whole field of how the past is constructed, represented, referred to and visualised in the present. My research addresses how archives are gathered, named, organised and utilised as well as how life stories and their collections are framed, interpreted and discussed in public. Moreover, I examine the

constructions of the past when life story collections are used and reused or when the arts utilise archives in the present.

As Astrid Erll (2011a, 8-9) reminds us, remembering and forgetting are two sides of the same coin. In addition to the sheer impossibility of remembering everything, on a social or a cultural level, forgetting comes close to different notions of silence. It is therefore possible to question how, where and when something is *not* spoken about and what type of oblivions and silences occur in relation to certain topics. Yet forgetting and silence are not synonyms. Following Luisa Passerini, Alexandra Stang (2015, 40) emphasizes that while something forgotten is inevitably lost, something silent may be recovered or at least the traces of the acts of silencing may be detected. These traces could then lead us to discover at least glimpses of what has been silenced or simply left unsaid. Passerini (2003, 249-250) also notes that silence on a certain topic is often not absolute, but relative, and it is essential to enquire why and by whom a silence is defined.

In addition to deliberate silencing, silences may be caused by something that is not deemed worthy of recounting, not sufficiently important, or as not fitting in the present frames of narration. Ulla Savolainen (2017b) has studied tellability in relation to the culturally available frames of interpretation. According to Savolainen, silence may be caused by something not felt to be worthwhile to report in a certain context, as available cultural modes of narration do not render the topic tellable – not because it would be too difficult, but because it is unremarkable. Leena Kurvet-Käosaar (2012), on the other hand, has explained the silence related to some difficult themes such as sexual violence in terms of the writer's will to maintain a common national identity as well as the narrative frame of national survival in the Estonian deportation narratives. In these examples, the available frames of narration silence certain themes.

The topic of silence has been extensively discussed in the field of queer historical research. Dan Healey (2017, 52-53) mentions that some studies have reported on the enabling silences over homosexuality in rural areas. In his own study, however, the rural areas in the Leningrad province of the 1950s were a site of violence, not of liberating silence. One of the studies Healey discussed is by John Howard (2001, 30-33), who has analysed queer oral histories in Mississippi to determine the diverse ways silence works. Howard adopts Michel Foucault's conceptualisations of silence not as an opposite of discourse but positioned within it. As Foucault (1978, 101) observes, silence offers shelter for the practices of power, but as these practices are verbalised, this exposal enables countering them. Howard (2001, 30-33) maintains that silence over queer topics has both enabled as well as disabled queer practices and identifications (see also Stella 2015, 143, contrasting Soviet and post-Soviet Russia). Reading diverse silences has likewise been essential for the histories of female same-sex desires. Because when compared to male desires, the female same-sex desires are more often detected only through what is invisible or not said. As Martha Vicinus (1994) points out, being silent is by no means

the same as being absent (see also Laura Doan's concept of "wilful unknowing": Doan 2013, 188).

Jan Löfström (1999; 2015) analyses the Finnish agrarian culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and offers a detailed description of what the silence surrounding homosexuality consists of. Löfström constructs a differentiation, one that is difficult to translate into English, between "keeping silent" ("*vaikeneminen*") and "deep silence" ("*syvä hiljaisuus*") (Löfström 2015, 128; on the difference between these concepts in queer history, see also Stang 2015, 13-14). According to Löfström, it would be difficult to explain the absence of folklore regarding same-sex sexuality in terms of the censorship of those who have gathered the tradition or by the self-censorship of those who told their stories to the collectors. Instead, Löfström (1999; 2015) has developed a model that explains why homosexuality was not a topic of discussion in the agrarian tradition. Löfström (2015, 133) summarises his position by stating that in Finland, "[i]n agrarian culture, the symbolic polarisation between the genders was, according to my claim, relatively mild and sexual dominance had relatively little effect on a man's prestige."<sup>17</sup> Löfström's findings on this silence, the "deep silence", and on the underlying causes of it, have been supported by similar findings from Sweden (Liliequist 1998) as well as by contrasting findings from the Iberian world (Grassi 2016). The concept of silence is particularly powerful in the field of oral history that often employs the metaphor of voice. I will discuss this aspect in the next section that addresses my research materials and methodologies.

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to mention that the Finnish language does not differentiate between sex and gender. "Agraarikulttuurissa sukupuolten symbolinen polarisaatio oli siis väitteeni mukaan suhteellisen mietoa ja seksuaalisella hallinnalla oli verraten vähän vaikutusta miehen arvovaltaan."

### **3 Addressing life stories, archives, and cultural memory**

Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (2008) observe that the fields of oral history and cultural memory studies had developed separately, but during recent years, this has been changing. My research emerged from this combined field of study. I discuss life stories but also address their collections as formations of cultural memory, and analyse designated queer archives from the viewpoint of memory. In addition, I consider works of art by the Estonian visual artist Jaanus Samma that utilise archives to imagine queer pasts. This section offers a description of my approaches to the materials I consult and discusses how I perceive them as enhancing our understanding of queer remembering.

My study is an act of “methodological disloyalty”, as Jack Halberstam (1998, 9-13) describes his method (see also Eichhorn 2013, 17). Like the “queer methodology” proposed by Halberstam, the methodology I adopt also uses a diverse set of means to discover traces of those memories that “have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behavior” (Halberstam 1998, 13). My aim is to develop an understanding of these different categories of materials, and to analyse how their construction and positioning as sources of historical research shapes the perceptions of the past. As queer memories are often discovered in small glimpses and disappearing fragments, this has necessitated that I combine different methodological approaches.

#### **3.1 Life stories and reminiscence writings**

As Lynn Abrams (2010, 27) asserts, an important political and ethical motivation for oral history research has been to enable suppressed voices of the past to be heard.<sup>18</sup> Queer historical research, for one, has relied heavily on oral sources (see Boyd 2008; Murphy, Pierce, and Ruiz 2016; Roque Ramírez and Boyd 2012; Boyd 2015). The reasons underlying this emphasis have been rather obvious: gay and lesbian historiographies, and later those on bisexual and transgendered experiences that have aimed to cover the past from the perspective of queer subjectivity, have not been often been able to attain this goal with any other sources. As Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horazio N. Roque Ramírez (2012, 5) state, “those who study women, queers, and – we might add

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<sup>18</sup> Although oral history has the self-understanding of “giving voice to the voiceless” (Abrams 2010, 27), oral history is not only history from below, but especially in the United States, oral history has its roots extensively in elite history projects (Richie 2011, 4). Similar trajectories can also be traced in Finland, as an oral history interview project with parliamentarians has been ongoing since 1988 (Krekola and Latvala 2014).

– other subaltern groups such as communities of color and migrant workers by and large have had to start from scratch: were no documents or acid-free folders existed, researchers set out to create them.” As John Howard (2001, 6) also notes, oral history and queer history both have given authority to the sources that it has been previously denied from. My own focus is on remembering, not the past per se, and my approach is therefore more closely connected to the paradigm of oral history that regards remembering in itself as an object of study. This brand of oral history is associated with the work of Alessandro Portelli (2016) on the different credibility of oral history sources (on this “second paradigmatic change”, see Perks and Thomson 2016, 3-5; on Finnish oral history field, see Fingerroos and Haanpää 2012).

Interviewing gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered or otherwise queer-identified people has been an essential means to cover a past that otherwise has been invisible. However, by interviewing queer-identified subjects, the stories of those who have existed outside identity-based labels, have often been left in the shadows (Howard 2001, 12-13). As Howard (2001, 5) states, he was mostly able to find “men like that”, referring to men who identified as gay, to interview for his study on men loving and desiring men in post-war Mississippi. What was equally essential for Howard’s analysis, however, were the “twice-told stories” of “men who like that”, that is, stories that the narrators could recount of those men who had sex with other men but did not identify with queer labels. As another example, due to the lack of queer narrators from the period she studied, Tuula Juvonen (2002, 52-61) relied on interviews of younger or heterosexual narrators. My sources, however, are written life stories, not interviews. Yet they can be divided in a similar manner. In Publication II, I discuss a collection that essentially consists of writings by queer-identified writers. The focus in Publication IV shifts to those writers who, for the overwhelming majority, do not label themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual, but are either “men” (and women) “who like that”, or heterosexual narrators who describe the same-sex desires of others in their life.

The Finnish term for oral history, *muistitietotutkimus*, refers to the memory-based character of the narration, but does not connote the orality of sources, which is often considered to be a defining feature of the field (Abrams 2010, 19-20). As Anne Heimo (2016, 40) argues, this Finnish term is useful because it focuses on how the process of remembering as essential for the field. Heimo also introduces the equivalent Estonian terms that refer either to the research of life stories (*elulood*, Kõresaar and Jõesalu 2016), or to (popular) narrated history (*pärimuslik ajalugu*, Jaago 2014; Jaago 2006b; Jaago 2001). As Tiiu Jaago (2006b) has noted, the latter term emphasizes the narration of the past as an object of research regardless of the oral or written form of the sources. The field of oral history in Estonia and Finland has been interdisciplinary from the very beginning, consisting of folklore scholars, ethnologists and historians, but also sociologists, geographers, scholars in religious studies, literature scholars, media scholars, and others (for an important collection of writings on the methodologies of Finnish oral history,

see Fingerroos et al. 2006; for an overview on oral histories and life stories in different disciplines in Estonia, see Jaago, Kõresaar, and Rahi-Tamm 2006).

According to Heimo (2016, 40), the field of folklore studies in Finland and Estonia has influenced oral history research in both countries. This has been partially due to the existence of vast collections of written folklore dating back to the nineteenth century and the close connection of these collections to the nation-building of Finland and Estonia. In the 1960s, the collection work of Finnish Literature Society (*Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura*) began to focus on remembered material in addition to more established genres of folklore (on this change and its connection to the memory of the Finnish Civil War of 1918, see U.-M. Peltonen 1996, 60-98). At the same time, the Labour Archives (*Työväen Arkisto*) established the “Labour Oral History Committee” (*Työväen Muistitietotoimikunta*) to collect and study working-class traditions and memories. According to Outi Fingerroos and Riina Haanpää (2012, 84), the combination of these new sources with the “history from below” approach in the 1980s led to the making of the Finnish academic oral history research.

Likewise, in Estonia, the collection of folklore played an important role in Estonian nation-building in the late nineteenth century (for example, see Kõresaar 2004, 12). More recently, during the process of restoring national independence, which began in the late 1980s, the written life stories played an important role, and contributed to “giving back” history to Estonians (on the role of the life story collection, see Kõresaar and Jõesalu 2016; Hinrikus and Kõresaar 2004; Wulf 2016, 110-111; and Jõesalu 2017, 50-54; on role of historians in restoring Estonian independence, see Wulf and Grönholm 2010 and Grönholm 2012). These writings furthered the public discussion on difficult pasts, which depicted the deportations and repression during the Soviet era (on the deportation narratives, see Kurvet-Käosaar 2012; Kurvet-Käosaar 2003; Rahi-Tamm 2015).

The Estonian researchers adopt the term life stories or life writings for their materials in their English publications (for example, see Jõesalu 2017, 47, 53-54), as the Estonian collections analysed consist predominantly of stories where the writers describe and interpret their own lives. The collections of Estonian Cultural History Archives in the Estonian Literature Museum (*Eesti Kultuuriloonine Arhiiv, Eesti Kirjandus Muuseum*) include life stories that have been collected from the late-1980s to the present. They have been gathered by organising popular calls and writing competitions that have been themed either according to the period of interest or the target group of respondents, such as women, teachers or members of the Russian-speaking minority. Reminiscence writings have also been collected by the Estonian National Museum (*Eesti Rahva Muuseum*). (Kõresaar and Jõesalu 2016; Hinrikus and Kõresaar 2004; Hollo 2017; in particular on the collections of Estonian National Museum see Jõesalu 2017, 11-12)

The Finnish collections include not only full life stories but also thematic writings on a given topic. As these collections are often created for research purposes with a researcher working in cooperation with an archive, they

somewhat resemble the Mass Observation Reports that have been compiled and studied in the United Kingdom (Savolainen 2016, 208; on Mass Observation, see for example Pollen 2013). The researchers working with these Finnish collections have used various terms for these writings. The terms chosen imply whether the researchers treat the material as their source, as an object of research in itself, or if they adopt oral history as a methodological approach (Fingerroos and Haanpää 2012, 87-88; on the different approaches to oral history, see also Perks and Thomson 2016). For example, when the writings are referred to as “oral history data” (Matilainen 2017, 37; Matilainen 2014; Kortti and Mähönen 2009), this often suggests the explicit connection to an oral history approach as well as that the researchers are using the texts to find information on past events. On the contrary, the concepts of “personal narratives”, “reminiscence writings” (Savolainen 2017a) and “memory-work” (Paasonen et al. 2015) refer more to a focus on the processes of remembering and constructing the past in the present. Naturally, these approaches are not mutually exclusive, but the researchers combine different perspectives (for example, see Kortti and Mähönen 2009).

In my own studies, I have referred to my material as life writings (Publication II) and life stories (Publications III and IV). The reason is that the material I consulted did not focus on a single event or phenomenon only, but on the narration of the life as a whole, albeit from a certain perspective. On a more general level, I have preferred the term “reminiscence writing”, as I perceive “oral” as a misleading definition for written texts, and as I regard “data” as not being sufficiently accurate for my own purposes. The object of my study has been the entire process of collecting, writing and researching these reminiscences, not only the content of the writings or their narration. In other words, my approach to life stories resembles the idea of performativity as a methodological position that Marja Kaskisaari (2000, 48-74) developed when analysing life stories. For Kaskisaari, performativity is an approach that balances between realistic reading that focuses on the referentiality of a life story and discursive reading that concentrates on a life story as a form of narration. My own method, however, differs from Kaskisaari’s in that I emphasize the importance of the process of writing and collecting life stories as a form of personal and cultural remembering.

Reminiscence writing and life story writing is commonly guided by a set of questions that are presented in the call for writings. For this reason, the calls for writing have been sometimes referred to as “surveys” (Männistö-Funk 2013) or “questionnaires” (Kortti and Mähönen 2009). While I acknowledge that it is essential to consider how the writings are produced in the process of collecting and how they are shaped by what those who have designed the call have formulated as questions, these notions of survey or questionnaire might simplify the complexity of this process. The writers are free to ignore the questions in the call, and as it is apparent that the questions guide their writing, it likewise obvious that they are guided by their own

thoughts and associations as well as cultural understandings of what is worth mentioning.

In the fields of oral history, folklore studies and ethnology, the connections between Finland and Estonia have been strong and long-lasting (see Rui 1999, for a discussion on this history before the Second World War; for post-Soviet developments, see Heimo 2016). This has also resulted in works that combine an analysis of collections from both countries (for example, see Jaago 2006a). Furthermore, the collections that I consult in Publications III and IV have resulted from a Finnish research project that was designed for scholars to make international comparisons on the meaning of sexuality during a person's life course. Even as the collection work for that project benefitted from the Estonian and Finnish traditions of life story writing, the study was directly connected to the sociological traditions of life story research, not to either folklore studies or oral history research. These collections of life stories on sexuality were assembled first in Finland in 1992, and in Estonia and the St Petersburg area in Russia in 1996 (Haavio-Mannila 2006, 103-104; Rotkirch 2000). The sociologists who established the collection were interested in the effects that the Soviet era had on the assumed progressive trends of sexual liberation that they had discovered in their research on Finnish sexual generations (for example, see Haavio-Mannila, Kontula, and Rotkirch 2002; Haavio-Mannila, Rotkirch, and Kontula 2005).

This comparative collection gathered in Estonia in 1996 was the first public activity of the newly established Estonian Life Stories Association and was conducted at the request of Finnish researchers (Hinrikus 2016, 259-260). The collection is stored in the Estonian Cultural History Archives in the Estonian Literature Museum. It is interesting that this collection seems to elude from the descriptions of Estonian life story collection and research, even as it has been used in research (Hinrikus 2004; Kurvet-Käosaar 2016) and worked into a published anthology (Karusoo 1997) and a theatre play (published in Karusoo 2008; see also Kruuspere 2010). For example, when describing the trajectories of Estonian life writing, Kirsti Jõesalu (2017, 44-45, 50-54) neither mentions this collection nor the collection of teachers' life stories that had been gathered in 1998 (see Hinrikus 2015). These collections are smaller (60 writings in the collection of life stories on sexuality, approximately 100 writings by the teachers) than the collections produced by more massive life story writing competitions and both collections were gathered in cooperation with foreign research teams from Finland and Sweden. An analysis of these collections would have contradicted the marginality of discussions on everyday life during mature socialism in the life writings of the 1990s (Jõesalu 2017, 52; Jõesalu 2016). Those analyses would also have introduced a different aspect to the emphasis of the narrative of Soviet rupture and the dominance of pre-war Estonian past in the life story collections of the 1990s (Kõresaar 2004).

In addition to the life stories on sexuality gathered in the 1990s, I have consulted a Finnish collection from the year 2014. This collection,



*Sateenkaarinuorena nyt ja ennen* (Rainbow youth present and past) was gathered by the Finnish Folklore Archives with an open call. This call was a part of *Well-being of LGBTIQ Youth* research project, in which I worked as a researcher, conducted by the Finnish Youth Research Network in cooperation with Seta – LGBTI Rights in Finland. This project was oriented towards political work for equality and antidiscrimination. It was funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture to address the need for more research-based knowledge on the well-being and experiences of discrimination among youth in sexual and gender minorities (for additional details on the collection, see Taavetti 2015b, 11-13). The call for writings, which I designed in cooperation with the archive and with assistance of other researchers, listed the types of writings that were expected as follows:

*Tell about rainbow youth in Finland! What is it like to live as young lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans person, transvestite, genderless, intergender, queer youth, asexual, or otherwise a person challenging the norms governing sexuality and gender? What was it like before?*<sup>19</sup>

(Reprinted in Taavetti 2015b, 159.)

This call was based on a long list of identity labels and framed by the concept of challenging norms. Although some of the writers questioned the understanding of sexuality and gender that is based on fixed identity labels, responding to the call required the respondents to at least strategically position themselves with these labels in order to feel included. In addition, the concept of challenging the norms can be criticised, as clearly not all respondents felt that they themselves would challenge these norms. In fact, many writers expressed their wish to be just like everyone else. Furthermore, the word *sateenkaarinuori* (rainbow youth), which was used both in the call for writings as well as in the title of the whole research project, can be seen as emphasizing difference too strongly: not all of those who described their “rainbow youth” perceived their position to be notably different (I discuss this in more detail in Taavetti 2015b, especially 20-21).

Rather than criticising *sateenkaarinuori* (rainbow youth) for its exoticising potential, however, the term can be criticised for being exceedingly cheerful or only positive. During recent years, in Finnish discussions, and particularly in political advocacy work for equality, different terms with the prefix “rainbow“ have been used to discuss people and practises outside the cisgendered, heterosexual norm. However, these terms have predominantly been used to address topics perceived as positive, such as rainbow families or rainbow culture, not for those that would be painful or problematic. For instance, one

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<sup>19</sup> ”Kerro sateenkaarinuoruudesta Suomessa! Millaista on elää nuorena lesbona, homona, biseksuaalina, transihmisenä, transvestiittina, sukupuolettomana, intersukupuolisena, queer-nuorena, aseksuaalina tai muuten seksuaalisuuden ja sukupuolen normeja haastavana? Entä millaista se oli ennen?”

would not discuss “rainbow violence”. On the one hand, *sateenkaari*, “rainbow”, can be perceived as a “queer” term in the sense that it is not based on named identifications and it blurs (perhaps problematically) the line between being marginalised predominantly on the grounds of sexuality and of gender. On the other hand, *sateenkaari* is more a “gay” term because it tends to focus on the positive (on the connections between gay and positivity as well as queer and negativity, see Love 2007, 1-4). Indeed, the term *sateenkaari* in itself tends to direct associations to lighter topics, as it seems to denote that different sexualities and genders can equally exist in peaceful variety without normative limitations or hierarchies – similar to colours in a rainbow – and that one can simply freely choose which of the equal colours to identify with. It is therefore important to ask whether using the word rainbow in the name of the call for reminiscence writings on youth prevented some of the more painful aspects of queer youth from surfacing. Even so, the writings did include difficult memories and painful experiences of exclusion. However, possibly the choice of this positive term, along with the general selection of survivors as life story writers, may have prevented some of the most excruciating stories from being shared.

A common denominator in the Estonian and Finnish collections of life writings and reminiscence writings is that often the collections have been gathered in the form of writing competitions. To a varying degree, this and the fact that a literature institution sponsors the call have emphasized literary skills in writing as well as the context of the collection as a national endeavour (Wulf 2016, 111). As Jyrki Pöysä (2006) has observed, writing is an intimate process that allows the author to consider the text and return to what they have written previously. The collections of the 1990s that I have consulted for my analysis often contained reflections on the writing process that reveal that these editions and reconsiderations are rather common. That said, the opportunity to reflect and edit does not necessarily mean that the writers would do so. One contributor stated in 1992: “I hope the text is otherwise readable. I did not stop to edit the form. I might have been tempted to also edit the content.”<sup>20</sup> As this quotation illustrates, editing the text might reduce what the writer perceives as true or authentic. Pöysä (2006, 228) noted over a decade ago that chats and other text-based means of online communication blur the line between written and spoken narration. In my material, these reflections on the writing process were indeed rare in the material collected in 2014, which was also mainly elicited through a web form that further emphasized the unedited and fast style of online writing.

As noted above, the life stories and reminiscence writing collections are dialogues, but not only as dialogues between the collector and the writer (Pöysä 2006), but also in a broader sense (Jõesalu 2017, 47, 53-54). As Ulla

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<sup>20</sup> ”Toivottavasti teksti muuten on luettavaa. En jäänyt sitä siistimään ulkoisesti. Olisi voinut tulla kiusaus siistiä sisäisestikin.” Finnish Social Science Data Archive (Tietoarkisto, hereafter FSD), Tampere: Seksuaalisuus osana elämää 1992 (hereafter FSD2952), 19.

Savolainen (2016, 208-211) argues, writings participate in a broader sociohistorical dialogue. While the concepts of reminiscence writings and life stories highlight the authenticity of the personal, lived experience, it is at the same time clear that the narration would be impossible without the cultural frames that render the memories tellable (see also Savolainen 2017b). In my study, the cultural understandings of queer become visible to a varying extent in different collections of life stories. Whereas those who wrote about their youth in the 2014 collection often referred to cultural understandings and public discussions, such as political questions, cultural products or celebrities, this was not the case with the narrators in the 1990s. One reason for this difference probably rests in the calls for writings. Even though the call of 2014 did not inquire about the cultural models of queer, it did list a number of identity-based labels, as discussed above. This might have invited reflections on how the writers remembered the cultural existence of these very same labels. While the calls for writings in the 1990s (discussed in more detail in Publications III and IV) did enquire as to how the writers had learned about topics regarding sexuality, these calls did not list any possible sexual identities. In addition, it is important to note that while the writers in these collections from the 1990s mentioned books on sexuality that had been important to them, only one of the writers refers to a cultural queer figure. That Estonian writer mentioned the novel by Tõnu Õnnepalu titled *The Border State*<sup>21</sup> (see Publication IV for additional details).

Besides the dialogue between the writer and the collector as well as the circular process of cultural memories and personal recollections that occur in the writings, the dialogue between the writings and the researcher also shapes their interpretation. Marja Kaskisaari (1995) emphasized this dialogue by addressing the life story writers as “you” and mirroring back the stories to their writers. To me, my distinctly different access to the two rather similar collections of life stories from the 1990s has highlighted the dialogical process that occurs between the texts and myself as a researcher. I have analysed the Estonian collection as the originals that have been preserved in the Estonian Literature Museum (see also Jõesalu 2017, 54-57, for reflections on reading the collections of life stories in Estonian Cultural History Archives). This collection is special among those in the Estonian Cultural History Archives in the sense that the writers were promised full anonymity, and the collection is not catalogued as other collections in the Archives are, nor is it generally open to the public (Kurvet-Käosaar 2016 127, fn. 29). The Finnish collection, by contrast, was digitalised in the original research project of Osmo Kontula and Elina Haavio-Mannila in the 1990s, and I have had access to the digital versions available at the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (*Tietoarkisto*).

My analysis of these digitalised texts has been more efficient because I have neither needed to go to the archive nor have I had to struggle to decipher

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<sup>21</sup> Cultural History Archives (Eesti Kultuurilooline Arhiiv, hereafter EKLA), f 350a. Elulood. Erikogu, 49.

handwriting. Digitalised writings have also allowed me to search for words or phrases in the texts. Even so, something is inevitably lost in the digitalisation (see also Moor and Uprichard 2014). During the process of digitalisation, some aspects can be lost or included in the transcription as mere mentions. For instance, the handwriting, the possible corrections by the writers or the comments they have added in the margins may be lost to the reader when they are in digitalised form. (I have commented on these aspects in reading a lesbian life story in Taavetti 2014b, 14-15).

The Estonian collection has been maintained in its original form, and some of the writings submitted to the archive in 1996 continue to be stored in the envelopes they came in. The texts in the archive are surrounded by an ephemera of documents associated with the collection work and the production of an anthology and a theatre play that were created of the collection. These documents influenced how I perceived the collection and how I analysed it. Analysing this collection was an intimate and strangely contemporary experience because the collection included the actual envelopes and cover letters often with the writers' names and addresses as well as other material that had accompanied the writings. The cover letters sometimes also conveyed the writers' intentions and motivations (see Jõesalu 2017, 52). With this materiality of the collection, working with it felt almost as if I could touch the past in the form of the writings, despite the approximately twenty years between me and the authors (on the intimacy of consulting unprocessed archival material, see Cifor 2017, 12). However, both the temporal and geographical distances have helped me in preserving the anonymity of the writers: even if I would have been able to determine the identity of the author by having access to their name and even address, this was not a topic of my interest.

In addition to these material differences, the Finnish collection also contains traces of how the research process has shaped it after the writings have been gathered. Some of the thematic coding that the researchers used remain in the texts along with comments by the research assistants. Also, some stories have been omitted from the collection stored at the Social Science Data Archives, as not all writers had granted their permission for further use.<sup>22</sup> The collection has also been anonymised with a varying level of detail. All the names of people mentioned, despite some public figures, have been changed and most of the geographical locations mentioned are either removed or generalised to refer only to the broad location and the size of the locality. This anonymization limits what can be interpreted from the texts, and sometimes I could only discover important details due to the small slips in the process of anonymization. For example, in one of the writings, the nationality of the author's foreign partner was removed on all but one occasion, where I learned that he was Estonian. As I wanted to demonstrate the entanglement of the

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<sup>22</sup> I know from Marja Kaskisaari's (1998) study that some of those writings that were not submitted to the archive discussed same-sex desires.

Finnish and Estonian pasts, this piece of information that had been inadvertently left in the text was the sole clue of this transnational connection.

These differences in my utilisation of the collections have profoundly changed my interaction with the texts and as a consequence, have also affected my analysis. Publication III analyses the content of the writings rather than the entire process of collecting and interpreting the life stories. This is partly due to the fact that during my first period of working with the Estonian collection, I only had access to a small section of the writings at a time. During my next visit, I was granted the whole collection in a cardboard box, and only then I learned of the other documents that were associated with the collection. This led me to develop my overall analysis of the collection process. Moreover, I assume that many of the aspects I discuss in Publication IV would have been undetected had I worked solely with digitalised collections. To a certain extent, I have also been able to apply the analysis based on the Estonian collection to the Finnish one, but often this has been limited to imagining the possible material aspects of the texts, in other words, to understanding what type of fragments of the past these writings would have been. For example, when an author in this collection described how an electric typewriter feels “too sensitive for a working man’s heavy hand”<sup>23</sup>, I can only envision how this had affected what his writing looked and felt like. This opportunity to analyse one collection in digital form and another fairly similar collection in the original paper form, has helped me to develop my thinking on the materiality of the traces of the past.

### **3.2 Cultural memory in and outside the archives**

Besides life stories, reminiscence writings and the collections they are compiled in, my dissertation discusses cultural memory in archives and public uses of the past. For these approaches, my dissertation only cites one particular example that is discussed in Publication I (the archives) and Publication V (on the public use of the past in an art exhibition and in the discussion regarding it in media). However, the perspective of cultural memory is present in all five articles. As Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (2003, 2-3) observe, the interdisciplinary field of memory studies has been associated with the disciplines that discuss representations, such as literature or film studies. Overall, I develop a historian’s perspective on the analysis of cultural memory, a field inhabited primarily by cultural scholars.

Even as the archival turn is also primarily a concept that originates from the field of cultural studies (for an interesting overview of both texts of the archival turn as well as its genealogies, see Merewether 2006), likewise in the field of archival science, there has been intense discussion on the archives as products of power that actively shape the past (in particular, see Schwartz and

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<sup>23</sup> “liian herkkä työmiehen raskaalle kädelle” FSD, FSD2952, 22.

Cook 2002 and the special issue of archives and power they introduced and Brown 2013, introducing a special issue on archives, memory, and identity, both in *Archival Science*). As archives are connected to power and to the formation of states, archival traditions and practices tend to differ, depending on the country in question.

As I review in Publication I, the archives in Finland, as in the Nordic countries in general, are perceived as fulfilling an important role in democracy by guaranteeing the citizens' access to decisions and actions made by officials (see Jørgensen 2014, on the Nordic countries in general; Henttonen 2007, 17-20, on Finland). Finnish private central archives house documents by private individuals, associations, organisations or companies, in other words private archives that the legislation on governmental transparency does not apply to. These institutions are predominantly state-funded and work to provide access to the documents they preserve for researchers, genealogists, artists as well as to others who are interested. This, in turn, reveals how Nordic civil society is closely intertwined with the state. Of all Nordic countries, Finland has had the least thriving culture of counter institutions independent of the state that work with a volunteer base and private funding. This partly explains why the archives of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and movements are stored in government-funded institutions that cover a large section of the civil society each, rather than being housed in individual community archives.

As the title of a Finnish course book on archive profession aptly expresses it, archives are often perceived as “the working memory of the society”<sup>24</sup> (Lybeck et al. 2006). This notion has two parts that are of importance. Firstly, archives are not immobile and passive, but they are active, functioning entities (cf. A. Assman 2010; 2008, perceiving the archive as a passive part of cultural memory that preserves the past as past). Indeed, one could even depict archives, as Maria Tamboukou (2017a) has, as living organisms. The understanding of the archive as working and functioning reveals how the perception of an archive as a passive storage of documents has been not only contested but predominantly rejected, and the power around and within the archive is a topic of interest both among archival scholars and historians (for example, see T. Cook 2010; Burton 2005). Secondly, the idea of the archive as memory of the society reveals the importance of archives for documenting and constructing past events. Despite this metaphor, as Carolyn Steedman (2001, 68) contends, an archive does not really resemble human memory, as even in theory, it does not include *everything* but only selected documents and traces of the past. As Mathias Danbolt (2010, 93) emphasizes in his discussion on queer and the archive, archives are always products of exclusion.

The focus on the archives as constructors of the past has initiated debates on the role of the documents themselves as sources. Tamboukou (2017b, 4) states that the researchers who go to an archive with some precise questions in mind, should also let the documents “interrogate our a-priori judgements,

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<sup>24</sup> “yhteiskunnan toimiva muisti”

understandings and prejudices and let them redirect our analytical paths and routes of interpretation.” (Tamboukou 2017b, 4). Naturally, the documents need to be found and accessed first in order to be questioned, or to be able to surprise the researcher. When understanding the archive as a remembering entity that is shaped by the deliberate policies as well as their unintended consequences, it is clear that a researcher cannot necessarily find all the material that an archive contains. For instance, Tamboukou (2017b, 16) discusses the “silences in the catalogues”, which refers to the fact that not everything in an archive is always organised or catalogued, especially not in the manner that would serve the needs of a particular researcher. Furthermore, documents can be lost in the security of an archive, if only because no-one literally understood them (for example, see Maliniemi 2009). Thus, the archive, which includes only a selection of documents from the past, does not even “remember” all of what is included.

Even as queer historical research utilises all types of sources and archives, a queer archive is usually a more limited entity. Most often, the term queer archive refers to documents and memories produced by people and communities identified with queer labels (for example Morris 2006). For instance, in her essay analysing the forming of the Norwegian queer archive, the *Skeivt arkiv*, Tone Hellesund defines queer history as:

*a) the history of these transgressions [of gender norms and norms against sex between persons of same gender], b) the history of the people who “committed” them, and 3) the history of the various societal reactions to these transgressions.*

*(Hellesund 2016, 113.)*

Yet, *Skeivt arkiv*, an archive formed as a part of the Bergen University Library, as queer archives in general, focuses on points a) and b), and the sources on the societal responses to queer transgressions are located in other archives. Nonetheless, the resources placed in other archives that have queer relevance are linked to *Skeivt arkiv*'s web page and this enables the archive to extend its own limits (Hellesund 2016, 125-126).

The queer archives may be activist archives, established by movements and run by the volunteer activists (on the early LGBT community archives in the US, Boyd 2015, 312-314; on the Hall-Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics, see Donnelly 2008; on the LGBT archives in California, Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge 2013; on an LGBT archive in Vancouver, Canada, Cooper 2016; on queer archival activism Danbolt 2010). In the United States, the former activist archives of both the LGBT and feminist movements have been institutionalised predominately as parts of university libraries. Regarding feminist archives, while Kate Eichhorn (2013, 155-160) observes that these inclusions are considered to be complementary, not as a competitors for activist archiving, she does raise questions on how the institutionalised collections can maintain their contact with the communities

they aim to document (on community archives and public LGBT archives, see also DiVeglia 2011; on community archives and their mainstreaming, see also Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd 2009). Writing a decade earlier, Ann Cvetkovich (2003, 248-249) comments on these dangers of mainstreaming by citing the example of the *Lesbian Herstory Archive* based in New York. In contrast to the assurance that a public institution would offer better protection for the collection, the women responsible for the archive felt that no-one would protect the documents better than those who had their own history written in them.

In Finland, what may have begun as an alternative archive, such as The Labour Archives or The People's Archives (*Kansan Arkisto*), which have housed the documents and tradition of the defeated side of the Finnish Civil War and the underground communist movement from the 1920s to the 1940s, have become general social history archives with substantial state funding. Beginning in 2002, the Finnish solution has been to include the LGBT archive as a part of the Labour Archives. In Publication I, I examine the development of this collection and the benefits and drawbacks of this inclusion. Since Publication I was written, there has been increasing interest in queer archives in Finland. Particularly the archives of the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (*Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland*) has been active not only in collecting queer life stories, but also in organising cooperation between different archives and raising awareness of queer archival issues.

As a part of my studies in a master's programme in archival science, I worked as an intern in the Labour Archives, and my responsibility was to organise the LGBT collection, or more precisely, the collection of Seta. My master's thesis (Taavetti 2013) at the University of Jyväskylä was partly based on these experiences, and Publication I also stems from these reflections. Thus, the viewpoint of that article is both practical and participatory, as I analyse a process that I participated in. Organising an archive is never a neutral activity, but something that is affected both by societal as well as epistemological considerations of the topic in question. In other words, the processes of archiving shape the past (see Schwartz and Cook 2002; Blouin and Rosenberg 2010; T. Cook 2010). These considerations affect the specific practical choices made in the archive in terms of what type of material is collected, how the documents are appraised and how the archive is organised and catalogued. While working on Seta's archive, my choices were affected mainly by the practices of the Labour Archives, which now also shape how Finnish queer pasts are constructed in the archive. As an organisational archive of Seta constitutes a major part of the archive, it is organised as any other NGO archive. Even though queer pasts may sometimes require queering the archival practices (cf. the feminist archival practices discussed in Ashton 2017), for this project, the queering was only a minor issue. The prominent role of Seta in the establishing this archive is also reflected in the access policy, as the permission to access all the LGBT collections are granted by Seta.



For Ann Cvetkovich (2003, esp. 269), queer archives are archives of feeling and archives of trauma that protect the painful past from oblivion. However, the queer archive is not necessarily only a documentation of loss and mourning. As Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed (2012, 156.) state, “pride, exuberance, shamelessness, defiance, purposefulness, enthusiasm, hilarity, and joy [–] would constitute an alternative ‘archive.’” Indeed, all these emotions can be constructed from the fragments in queer archives. Nonetheless, whether a queer archive is perceived as a trauma archive or as any other type of archive of feelings, actions and practices, it is often fragmentary and consists of fading glimpses. If the discovery of possible queer pasts is understood as an important task, then these glimpses and fragments need to be actively protected.

Queer archives of the past have often disappeared or been destroyed on purpose. This is illustrated by the infamous and often cited example of the archives of the Hirschfeld institute that were demolished by the Nazis in 1933 (for example, see Chauncey, Duberman, and Vicinus 1989, 1). Other examples are described in stories of the loss of personal archives, especially at the time of the AIDS crisis (for instance, Roque Ramírez and Boyd 2012, 4). These lost archives have shaped how the pasts can be understood, but they have also added a danger of oblivion for present-day LGBT and queer communities and lives. Carla Freccero (2011, 62-63) argues that the search for queer pasts is partially a fulfilment of a need to secure the future existence of the present-day queer. As Freccero concludes, if the queer past can be constructed from the traces of the past, this helps to ensure that the present-day queerness is able to leave traces of its own existence for the future. Even as an archive documents the past, it is work for the future, especially for future histories (Hellesund 2016, 112).

During the process of defining the concept of the archives of feeling, Cvetkovich at the same time constructs a rather unidentifiable picture of the “other”, or mainstream, archives. Sara Edenheim (2013) states that this conception of an archive created by Cvetkovich is hardly one that any researcher who works in archives would recognise. Edenheim continues that some researchers might dream of such an archive, organised to serve the purposes of the researcher, not those of a (past) bureaucracy. As Edenheim observes, other archives than dedicated queer archives also contain both feelings and the traces of the queer lives, as those who have not fitted into the norms of their times have often been recorded as criminals, sinners or sick. Indeed, those deemed queer have often left archival traces against their will and these traces have often been defined by medicalising and pathologising understandings of queerness. In addition, archives of feeling can be found elsewhere than in the trauma archives that Cvetkovich describes. For example, Edenheim (2013, 41-42) lists the Nordic folklore archives as those that do not fill a (past) bureaucratic function per se. Similarly, Matt Cook (2017b) refers to the British Mass Observation archives as “archives of feeling”, citing the title of the book by Cvetkovich. Indeed, both Finnish and Estonian archives of

folklore, life stories and reminiscence writings fall well within the concept of “archives of feeling”.

As Carolyn Steedman (2001, 75) maintains, the will to go to an archive is “a specialist and minority desire”, even though she perceives the need to know the past as an essential element of modernity. An intriguing contradiction occurs because a number of writers explore the connection between the dustiness and dullness associated with the archive and the researcher’s obvious passion towards it – the works of Tamboukou (2011; 2014; 2017b) serve as an excellent example. As an additional example, Tamboukou (2017b, 3) describes Foucault as an “archive addict” because he spent a large part of his working hours buried in collections and libraries. Also, Edenheim (2013, 50-51) points to the “dry, cold and uncanny” archives which many historians seem to love. To Edenheim, (2013, 58), “the only things found in an archive are dead matter and dust, and that is very queer indeed.” What I see as even more queer is the desire felt by researchers and the pleasure of the archive that are embedded into these notions of dustiness and dullness. After all, as Laura Doan (2013, 222, fn. 129) notes, students of history are often warned that archives can be “quite seductive”.

These notions of desire towards an archive and especially the feelings associated with a queer archive have an interesting connection to the materiality of an archive (see Cifor 2017). Liz Moor and Emma Uprichard (2014) address the Mass Observation archives from the perspective of materiality, and “getting dirty with data”. Moor and Uprichard focus on the material aspects of the Mass Observation reports, such as the type of paper and the handwriting as well as on the access to the archive. For Moor and Uprichard, these material aspects have “the capacity to make us feel closer to the respondent.” As the writers argue, these material aspects are not “outside” the data but constitute an integral part of it and they also invite emotional responses from the researcher in addition to the “purely cognitive”. Indeed, feelings, queer and materiality all intertwine, particularly in the concept of “dirt” that Moor and Uprichard use. Queer histories inevitably deal with feelings and bodies (on the bodily aspects of queer oral history, see Roque Ramírez and Boyd 2012), and these histories may even be recounted by reliving bodily memories (for example, see Freeman 2010, 137-169). Sometimes these histories particularly rely on material sources, as the stories have not been recounted with words, let alone written down in the past (see Juvonen 2002, 58).

As stated above, the archival traces that can be analysed from a queer perspective are not located only in archives labelled as queer. Sometimes, the discovery of queer in mainstream archives may require the researcher to “unveil the hidden structures of the archives” (Tamboukou 2017b, 16). In fact, this “unveiling” of the archival structures would be a queer project, as a means of enquiring how an archive could construct queer pasts. Utilising the documents found in other archives, often hostile and violent to the practices they describe, requires reading the silences, “listening for feelings that can be

too ephemeral to leave material markers” (M. Cook 2017b, 56). Moreover, understanding these traces demands both heightened attention to ethics because the materials have often been produced against the will of those who they describe, as well as imagining the aspects of the past queerness that the archive cannot cover. Often, these archival fantasies, the pasts that are not available in the documents, have been created in the arts (for example, see Cvetkovich 2002; Edenheim 2013; Kumbier 2011; Rowley and Wolthers 2010).

In Publication V, I analyse an art project by Estonian visual artist Jaanus Samma. This project utilises archived court cases involving a Soviet Estonian man accused of sex between men. This artwork by Samma can be interpreted as a means of imagining the pasts that cannot be found in the archives, as his work extends beyond what is documented in the reports of the violent and invasive examination that his protagonist was subjected to. My analysis of the media discussion regarding Samma’s work reveals how these pasts, which were partly documentary and partly imagined, were received within the cultural understandings of Soviet pasts in present-day Estonia. Furthermore, I discuss the effect of the Estonian narratives of national victimhood on the construction and understanding of repression on the grounds of homosexuality. As a work of art and a post-Soviet interpretation of Soviet Estonia, Samma’s work can be analysed in a similar light as Alexei Yurchak (2008) analyses the work by Russian artists in the early 2000s. According to Yurchak, unlike the earlier post-Soviet artists whose work on the Soviet past was characterised by cynicism and notions of absurdity, these artists approached the recent past with warm irony, genuine interest and sincerity. Likewise, Samma’s art portrays the past as conflicted and open for discussion – as one of Yurchak’s interviewees states, the attitude towards the past is “more complex” (Yurchak 2008, 265). These narratives of the past that these artists comment on naturally differ, primarily because for the Estonian and Russian understandings, the Soviet era carries rather different meanings. That said, their interest in the past as well as the documentary elements in the artworks exhibit similarities.

Unlike Yurchak, who is interested in the aesthetics of the artworks and the meanings artists attribute to them, my own interest as a historian was directed to the treatment of the past in the work by Samma and in its public reception in Estonia. I analysed Samma’s work to understand its materiality as a medium that can convey memories as well as its spatial placement in the Museum of Occupations, a place that conveys a very special meaning in the Estonian portrayal of the nation’s past (for additional details on the museum, see Velvet 2011; Wulf 2016, 147-150). Museum, as a “public place of memory” (Dickinson, Blair, and Ott 2010) affects how an exhibition is interpreted, and in this case, the place emphasized the narrative of national suffering. My analysis focused on how “the past is mobilised” (Evans 2014, 75) both in the exhibition as it was placed in this particular museum as well as in the Estonian media discussion. I analysed the meaning attributed to the past events and

how references to the past are used to support or contest interpretations of the present and the future.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations and critical views on the limitations of the study**

As Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horazio N. Roque Ramírez (2012, 5) state, while the engagement in oral historical research does not involve “taking every recorded declaration as factual truth, it does require that researchers commit to listening carefully for what narrators’ recollections reveal about their time and place in history.” From my perspective, concentrating on remembering as a process, instead of perceiving memories merely as a source of information, is an important way to value the nature of these memories as narrated and produced in the present. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that often the contributors of, for instance, a life story collection did not write their stories to be analysed as texts. These authors responded to a call requesting them to reveal the truth about their lives, and even to disclose their most intimate and secret experiences. In my study, these calls for true stories as well as writers’ confirmations that they are reporting what actually happened are themselves an object of analysis.

For a researcher, it may be that some styles of writing fulfil the truth claim more completely than others. This observation has made me more conscious of the assumptions I have made and of how the narration styles affect the interpretation of the writings. This may have also revealed some internalised understanding of what type of queer I was looking for. This, in turn, led me to consider the reasons I found some texts difficult to approach so that focussing on those texts did not seem as promising as sources as some others on the first reading. In addition, I have not only focused on the life stories but emphasized the meaning of the research project and collection work they have been produced in. Thus, the object of my analysis has not been solely queer in the life stories but queer in the collection work and research projects in general.

Working with the life stories can be an extremely emotional experience. As an Estonian theatre director with a long career in directing plays based on life stories, Merle Karusoo (2008, 354), has stated: “[t]o stand eye-to-eye with life stories of strangers is mentally very difficult, as all who have gathered them know.”<sup>25</sup> This is especially so, as the life stories on sexuality often recount difficult and hidden experiences of violence and exploitation, or discuss a topic that the researcher has a personal relationship to (for example, see M. Cook 2017b, 55-56, on how the researcher’s memories intertwine with those that he discovers in a collection of Mass Observation reports). When studying the collection on “rainbow youth” for Publication II, I was able to identify the

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<sup>25</sup> “Seista silmitsi võõraste elulugudega on psüühiliselt väga raske, seda teadavad kõik, kes neid kogunud on.”

feelings that queer Finnish youth had of growing up, and relate to the ways of recalling these memories in adulthood. While working on this collection, the proximity to the feelings described in the writings made me recall uncomfortable memories I thought I had long since forgotten (I discuss these topics in my joint articles with Jukka Lehtonen: Lehtonen and Taavetti 2018; Taavetti and Lehtonen 2018, forthcoming). This proximity may have led to emphasizing some aspects more than others, such as the entanglement of sexuality and gender.

Jorma Kalela (2000; 2012) writes in an appealing and highly influential manner on the ethical requirements of scholarly history. Kalela examines these requirements by adopting the concept of doing justice (Kalela 2012, 24, 80) as well as the obligation of fairness. While these might mean the same for Kalela, I discern a difference between these conceptualisations. As examples of fairness, Kalela (2012, 36) stipulates that it is “whether past people’s actions have been presented in their own terms or whether an event has been situated in a justifiable past context.” To me, the demand of fair treatment, or not doing wrong to the people of the past, seems more achievable than an abstract call to do justice. Historians may not be able to know what is certainly right, but we might be able to recognise what would be completely wrong. When conducting historical research, as well as when addressing memories, the duty of a historian is to speak for the fair treatment of those remembered while bearing in mind that some others may be forgotten. This similar obligation of fairness also covers those actors of the not-so-distant past who are analysed in my study. These include the narrators of the life stories as well as the researchers whose work I examine. They also need to be discussed on their own terms. However, this ethical requirement includes my critical attitude. This is one means of taking seriously both the views of the life story writers as well as the research conducted in the past.

The selection of materials and the methodologies I have used to analyse them have evolved during this study. My initial interest in archives as producers of past led me to consider the opportunities afforded by queer archives, and the study of these archives led to my interest in the collections of life stories. The analysis of life story collections combine the questions of personal memory and archiving. These methodological choices have been affected by my interest in the margins of queer and my objective to imagine past queerness beyond how the concept is utilised in the present. This interest led me, after I had gathered and studied the collection of life writings on queer youth, to reread existing collections both in Estonia and in Finland. Conducting oral history interviews would probably have, if it would have succeeded at all (see Juvonen 2002, 51-56, on the difficulties of finding interviewees), been connected to those with queer identifications, as they are usually the respondents that the interview calls can reach (Howard 2001, 5). By contrast, with these collections, I could reach further back in time, revealing the temporal layering in life stories and their collections and gain access to the memories of narrators in the margins of queer. And finally, becoming involved

in conducting the catalogue for Jaanus Samma's exhibition (see Põldsam and Taavetti 2015) offered an opportunity to circle back to the discussion on archives and queer pasts, to address art as another means of constructing queer pasts and to develop in particular my understanding of queer cultural memory.

Evaluating the limitations of my material and those of the whole study has an element of constructing the past from the known outcome of the present. Now that I have conducted my study, I recognise its limitations because I know what I could discover with these materials and these methodological choices. The materials I access to analyse queer memories – life stories, their collections, archives and uses of the pasts in arts and media – are, of course, only a fraction of all the possible ways that the pasts become remembered in the present. Other opportunities to explore queer memories could have been offered by historical films (for example, see Pullen 2011; Doan 2017). Likewise, literature has been an arena of constructing pasts (see Love 2007 for a discussion on the layers of pasts in queer literature), and queer in Finnish literature has already been the subject of a number of studies (see Stang 2015, 19–22, for an overview; see also Mustola 1996, and Pakkanen 1996) and also occasionally discussed in Estonia (Tamson 2018; Kaldmaa 2010). Furthermore, published (auto)biographies have been a productive source for analysis (see, for example, Minich 2015). Museums and especially historical exhibitions would have also offered interesting opportunities for analysis. But this interest is only possible to note in retrospect, after this study has been completed and I have already analysed the life stories and their collections as well as archives and their utilisation. The analyses I have conducted could form a basis for an approach on museums, films, and perhaps also literature, as presentations of the past that does not take what is most obviously queer for us in the present as a departure point.

Despite my interest in the margins and possibilities of queer, it is important to ask whose memories are included and which are excluded. The life story collections that are discussed mainly cover only the language majorities of Finland and Estonia, and thus both the memories of Russian-speakers in Estonia as well as Swedish-speakers in Finland have been largely excluded. Would the collection titled *Minoritet i minoriteten* ("Minority within a minority"), gathered in 2016–2017 by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland have been available when I was writing Publication II, it would have offered an interesting perspective on Swedish-speaking queer memories.

As often is the case in discussions on queer pasts, the gay male experiences are highly prominent in my study. In Publication I, I elaborated on how the modes of gay male activism have been more visible and recognisable as political activism and as a result, sources on them are also found more often in the LGBT archives. This has partly led to the dominance of gay male activism as a topic of research over lesbian activism, let alone that of bisexuals, transgendered or otherwise queer people. However, the collections of life writings offer an opportunity to read recollections of female same-sex desire

of which very few other sources may be left. Furthermore, even as asexuality is mentioned and briefly discussed in Publication II, this addition does not yet bend queer as my category of historical analysis to actually address asexuality as a historically constructed self-understanding.

I discuss the memories of gender-nonconforming people only by citing sporadic examples. In Publication I, I explore how the archiving of documents on transgender pasts may generate new questions on the issues of trust and anonymity in queer archiving (on trans visibility in LGBT museum exhibitions, see Mills 2006, 256-257). Publication II features some memories by self-named transgendered narrators who offer glimpses to the past (as well as present) transgender youth in Finland. Indeed, gender disobedience often disappears into the historiographies of same-sex desire (for example, see Rydström 2008; Holmqvist 2016, 45). As David Halperin (2002, 104-137) demonstrates, the histories of homosexualities need the histories of inversion and effeminacy. But gender deviance does have its own trajectories that cannot be reduced to the histories of homosexualities. As the field of transgender histories has slowly been growing, scholars have pointed out where historians of homosexualities have discussed gender disobedience as a form of “protohomosexuality” in ways that override the existence of the gender deviancy as a phenomenon independent of homosexuality (for a Finnish example, see Suhonen 2007). Even as my study includes only rare fragments and glimpses of transgender and other gender-nonconforming pasts, they offer some insights into this field that has not yet attracted extensive scholarly interest.

## 4 Outcomes of the publications

My dissertation is based on the research results that have been developed in five individual research articles, all of them participating in the academic debate in a slightly different field. Each of the research articles utilises different material and participates in partly different theoretical discussions. However, all of them address theories concerning queer, personal and cultural memory as well as the politics of memory addressed in section 2. The different materials and methodologies are discussed in section 3. This section presents briefly the publications and their most important results for my dissertation. I combine the theoretical contributions in the next section where I also discuss the three temporal layers of my study.

Table 1 presents the publications, the materials utilised in them as well as the time covered in each of the articles. The *Time Remembered* refers here to the time that the material of the publication describes, the *Time of Remembering* refers to the time of collecting life writings, gathering a collection of documents or using an archive, and the *Time of Researching* to the time when I have conducted my research for the particular publication. These three layers of time and how they are intertwined in my study are discussed in section 5. The main research questions and the main contributions of the publications for the dissertation as a whole are presented in Table 2.



**Table 1** *The publications, their materials, countries discussed and the temporal layers addressed*

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Published in</b>	<b>Material and Methodology</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Time Remembered</b>	<b>Time of Remembering</b>	<b>Time of Researching</b>
<b>I</b>	A Marshall in Love: Remembering and Forgetting Queer Pasts in the Finnish Archives	Archival Science, 2016	LGBT archives; archival science approaches on analysing archives as producers of pasts	Finland	from the 1970s to the 2000s	2004–2012	2012–2015
<b>II</b>	Reflecting the Queer Me: Memories of Finnish Queer Youth from the 1950s Onwards	Lambda Nordica, 2016	life stories; oral history and life stories research	Finland	from the 1950s to the 2010s	2014	2014–2016
<b>III</b>	“A woman should not be so cheap”: The Prostitute as a Constructed Other in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories	European Journal of Life Writing, 2017	life stories; oral history and life stories research, collections as cultural memory	Estonia	from the 1940s to the 1990s	1996	2015–2017
<b>IV</b>	Discovered Queer Desires: Rereading Same-Sex Sexuality from Finnish and Estonian Life Stories of the 1990s	Journal of the History of Sexuality (passed peer review)	life stories; oral history and life stories research, research history	Finland and Estonia	from the 1930s to the 1990s	1992; 1996	2016–2017
<b>V</b>	Queering Victimhood: Soviet Legacies and Queer Pasts in and around Jaanus Samma’s “Not Suitable for Work. A Chairman’s Tale”	Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, Sofia Laine, Päivi Salmesvuori, Ulla Savolainen, and Riikka Taavetti (eds.): Difficult Memories: Transnational Dialogues with the Past and the Future (forthcoming)	visual arts, media discussion; cultural memory studies	Estonia	from the 1960s to the 1980s	2013–2016	2016–2017

**Publication I**, “A Marshall in Love: Remembering and Forgetting Queer Past in the Finnish Archives”, published in *Archival Science* in 2016, discusses the construction of Finnish queer archives. This publication examines the effect of Finnish archival institutions as well as the Finnish queer pasts on the organisation of these queer archives in the 2000s. Considering that both the archival theory and queer historiography mainly originate from the Anglo-American context where the archival institutions and archival practices differ from those in Finland, this article offers a novel perspective on how the current understandings of the queer pasts are affected by both the practical choices made in the archives and the Finnish archival system.

My claim that the concept of queer can be utilised to fragment the past, which I did not yet use while working on these archives, emerges from my findings in two ways. Firstly, the focus on queer may challenge and fragment archival practices by questioning their underlining assumptions and by calling for a queering of the archival profession. Secondly, archival practices that are indifferent to the content of the documents help to avoid archiving based on identities and thus allow diverse, if often fragmentary, queer readings of the collections. An example of organising an archive without considering its content was how the Seta archives were organised as any other NGO archives discussed in the article. As a conclusion, this article calls for queer competence in the archives to ensure that documents of queer lives are both available and protected and that the differences between the groups and individuals under the umbrella of queer are taken into account (on LGBT donors and trust in archives, see also DiVeglia 2011).

**Publication II** analyses how Finnish self-identified queer narrators utilise the public understandings of queer in writing about their youth and how they construct their life in relation to different identity-based labels. The Publication is titled “Reflecting the Queer Me: Memories of Finnish Queer Youth from the 1950s Onwards”, and was published in the Nordic queer studies journal, *Lambda Nordica*, in their special issue on queer temporalities in 2016. This article is based on the analysis of a collection of youth life stories compiled in 2014 in which the 129 writers recounted their queer youth from the 1950s onwards. This article examines three aspects, the naming of the queer self, intertwined sexuality and gender, and the glimpses of queer others in public discussion. The article addresses the differences as well as similarities between generations of writers and offers a queer perspective on generations and assumed progress trends of sexuality.

My analysis of this collection allowed me to make comparisons and to detect differences as well as similarities in the memories of narrators of different ages. This led to the queering of generations and questioning of simplified generational differences. This, in turn, motivated the development of my layered understanding of time, where the *Time of Remembering* is deeply intertwined with the *Time Remembered*. Within this temporal framework, the article focused on the content of the life stories, on what I have begun to call glimpses, that is, the queer memories constructed at the time of

writing. As the life stories analysed are accounts by narrators who are queer-identified – even if they are in diverse, ambiguous and sometimes identity-rejecting ways – the concept of glimpse also refers to the relationship between personal and cultural memories. It is the small, often hostile and outdated glimpses of queerness that the narrators use to formulate their understanding of their selves. Furthermore, all these stories, constructed from the glimpses of cultural memory, participated in the construction of the cultural understanding of queer, as the writers participated in a collection on life writings gathered for research. This analysis furthered my understanding of the intertwined nature of personal and cultural memory.

**Publication III** shifted my focus to the life story collections that were gathered in the 1990s. This article titled “‘A woman should not be so cheap’: The Prostitute as a Constructed Other in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories” was published in 2017 in the *European Journal of Life Writing*. This article presented my analysis of how the writers of Estonian life stories on love and sexuality, which were collected in 1996, used the figure of the female prostitute as a sexual other. The Finnish researchers asked the Estonian narrators questions about sexuality and one concerned their stance on prostitution. When commenting on prostitution, the writers concentrated on the women who sell their sexual services and perceived the underlying causes for prostitution to be mainly due to the prostitute’s personal traits. The prostitute was constructed in the life stories as a sexual outsider who is nevertheless essentially needed in society. The qualities associated with the prostitute were disease (or more concretely, sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS, and prostitution as a disease), and excessive sexuality and consumption. In addition, the figure of the prostitute in these life writings was characterised in terms of ethnicised notions.

As in Publication II, my focus was mainly on the content of the writings, although I analysed the texts within the context of the life story collection campaign. I adopted the formulation by Matt Cook (2017a, 249) and utilised the writings to search beyond the “simplifications of cultural memory” regarding prostitution. For my dissertation as a whole, this article offers a perspective on queer as a structural position that defines the limits of acceptable sexuality. Furthermore, research conducted for this article helped me to further develop my understanding on the *Time of Remembering* and how the analysis of the mid-1990s Estonia contributes to the understanding of remembering in these life stories. When I worked on this article, I had not yet studied the Finnish parallel of the Estonian collection, which was a compilation of life stories on sexuality that were gathered in 1992 in Finland, nor was it my original intention to consult the Finnish sources for this dissertation. However, the analysis for this article motivated me to detect how same-sex desires appear in these life stories and how the modes of othering might differ between the Estonian and Finnish collections.

My analysis of the life story writers’ conceptualisations of prostitution in the Estonian collection helped me to develop my understanding of the role of

ostensibly marginal mentions in the construction of a life story. I advanced this approach in **Publication IV**, where I analysed how life story collections that seem to not reveal much of same-sex desire can, in fact, uncover the diversity of experiences in the margins of queer. In addition, my claim in this article is that a research project could both marginalise same-sex desires and provide a space to discuss them. The article is titled “Discovered Queer Desires: Rereading Same-Sex Sexuality from Finnish and Estonian Life Stories of the 1990s”, and it has passed peer review in the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. This article discusses the construction of same-sex sexuality in life story collections from Finland and Estonia that were gathered in 1992 and 1996, respectively. The article rereads the collection work that had been conducted for sociological research on sexual life course around the Baltic Sea area and was framed by a gender-neutral equality paradigm that the researchers adopted. The writers in these collections, although living predominantly heterosexual lives and not identified as gays, lesbians or bisexuals, described their own same-sex desires as well as those of others. They used the concept of homosexuality to understand others around them, and Finnish writers in particular constructed their heterosexual self by drawing the line at homosexuality. This article reaches out to the double margins of the past same-sex desires by studying the semiperiphery of Finland and Estonia as well as the life stories of those who have not adopted identity-based labels. These accounts are often only found as the “twice-told stories” (Howard 2001) by queer narrators.

Although this article analyses the construction of the glimpses of same-sex desires that were detected in these life stories, it likewise addresses the collection processes and the further utilisation of these collections in research and in the arts. According to my analysis, the gender-neutral equality paradigm of the researchers concealed the flexibility of identities, diversity of affections and pressuring desires in these writings. Thus, the queer glimpses discovered in this collection were not offered as a point of reflection in public discussions on sexuality. The manner in which these accounts of queer desires were marginalised in research has, according to my analysis, contributed in Finland to the understanding of same-sex desires as either a feature of a small, defined minority of gays and lesbians, or as a sporadic sexual experimentation in heterosexual lives. This paradigm dominated in the Finnish discussion but the use of the Estonian collection has been somewhat different. A selection of the Estonian writings was published as an anthology and used to produce a theatre play by Merle Karusoo (1997; 2008). In these works, the references to same-sex desires were mentioned but not emphasized. Thus, art offered opportunities to imagine sexual pasts that departed from the heterosexual norm.

This theme of the opportunities offered by art to imagine and construct queer pasts was developed further in **Publication V**. This article is titled “Queering Victimhood: Soviet Legacies and Queer Past in and around Jaanus Samma’s ‘Not Suitable for Work. A Chairman’s Tale’”, and it will be published

in a volume with a working title *Difficult Memories: Transnational Dialogues with the Past and the Future*, which is edited by Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, Sofia Laine, Päivi Salmesvuori, Ulla Savolainen, and myself. This article, which is titled “Not Suitable for Work. A Chairman’s Tale”, presents an analysis of an art exhibition by an Estonian contemporary visual artist, Jaanus Samma. I also discuss the reception Samma’s show received in the Estonian media when it was exhibited at the Museum of Occupations in Tallinn in 2016. The article presents my analysis of the reasons the exhibition was not considered to be suitable for that particular museum and why it was framed as a scandal in the Estonian media. I argue that the exhibition crossed the limits of the Estonian narrative of national victimhood, as it raised debate on homosexuality as a cause for repression.

Besides addressing art as a means to imagine queer pasts as well as the effect a work on queer past can have in the media, this fifth article also returns to the questions raised in Publication I on archives. Nonetheless, my angle here on addressing archives is considerably different from the one I adopted in Publication I. The archives that Samma consulted are not a dedicated queer archives but archives of the Soviet court, recording what is now perceived as repression and human rights violations. Moreover, this study reveals the entangled nature of the personal and cultural memories of queer pasts. Samma’s work was a public art exhibition that was created as a contested national representation because it not only represented Estonia in the Venice Biennale, 2015, but it was also exhibited in a nationally important context in the Museum of Occupations. At the same time, Samma’s work illustrates how diverse stories can be read out of the fragmentary archival evidence left by one man’s life. This multiplicity of possible readings is emphasized, as the artist has combined these sources with other glimpses – those found in the oral history interviews of gay men – that reveal alternative stories of the Chairman. This article focuses on a particular intersection between personal and collective, as a story of a single man, which is documented against his will in court files, becomes a topic of public art work and media discussion.

**Table 2:** *The research questions and the main contributions of the publications for the dissertation*

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Main research question</b>	<b>Main contribution for the dissertation</b>
I	A Marshall in Love: Remembering and Forgetting Queer Pasts in the Finnish Archives	How have the Finnish queer archives been shaped by the Finnish archival practices and queer pasts?	Finnish queer archives are constructed as a part of a general social history archive, which places the LGBT movement as one movement among others, creating opportunities to question and resist identity-based labelling. The inclusion in a general archive may minimise the queering of archival practices and emphasizes the importance of archive professionals' competence on queer issues.
II	Reflecting the Queer Me: Memories of Finnish Queer Youth from the 1950s Onwards	How do Finnish queer-identified writers construct their youth in relation to the queer identity labels and the public understandings of queer?	The queer life stories are constructed with the help of outdated and negative cultural queer glimpses. While the memories of the writers at different ages differ, especially regarding the publicity of queer issues, there are also some persistent similarities. The younger writers express reluctance to identify with the available labels especially regarding sexuality, which reveals that for them, it is possible to be intelligible to others and claim rights without identity-based labels.
III	"A woman should not be so cheap": The Prostitute as a Constructed Other in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories	How have the Estonian writers in post-Soviet context constructed sexual otherness in their life stories?	The structural position of queer as other is constructed in the life stories with the figure of the female prostitute. This figure is othered by her association with excess and disease. Simultaneously, the female prostitute is described as essentially needed in society.
IV	Discovered Queer Desires: Rereading Same-Sex Sexuality from Finnish and Estonian Life Stories of the 1990s	What possibilities do life story collections that are gathered for research and consisting predominantly of others than queer-identified writers offer to broaden the understanding of same-sex desires in life stories?	The gender-neutral equality paradigm employed by the researchers offered an opportunity to discuss same-sex desires and offered glimpses to the margins of queer lives as predominantly heterosexual participants also wrote of their same-sex desires. While the research offered space to reflect on same-sex desires, these desires were marginalised during the further utilisation of these collections.
V	Queering Victimhood: Soviet Legacies and Queer Pasts in and around Jaanus Samma's "Not Suitable for Work. A Chairman's Tale"	How can a Soviet-era Estonian homosexual life and same-sex desire be constructed in the arts and how are these constructions placed in the Estonian national narrative of suffering and victimhood?	Queer pasts that are not discovered in the archives can be imagined in the arts. These new histories offer opportunities to challenge the prevailing notions of queer. Furthermore, the reflections on queer pasts can be utilised to confirm, broaden as well as to question the dominant national narratives.

## **5 The contributions of the dissertation: fragments and glimpses of queer times**

This section introduces the theoretical contributions of my study that are based on the findings of the publications discussed above. Firstly, I present the key concepts I have developed in my work – fragments and glimpses – and describe how I understand them in my three-layered conceptualisation of time. The second sub-section presents my discussion of the fragmentary and glimpse-like queer pasts that combine cultural and personal memories. Even though my study is based on the analysis of queer in memories, I envision these findings as being a theoretical contribution to historical research more generally. I will return to how the analysis of the past as fragmentary and glimpse-like, as well as the focus on queer, can contribute to the discipline more broadly in the concluding section.

### **5.1 Fragments and glimpses in layered times**

The present study considers fragments and glimpses as being two sides of the remains of the past. The concept of fragment refers to all types of material traces, such as documents and artefacts, which are preserved from the time under study. Glimpses, on the other hand, are the memories that are produced after the events they describe. As my study is also based on reading and interpreting silences, the glimpses can be merely short or fleeting, surfacing as insignificant slivers of something silenced, hidden, unremarkable, or unspeakable in the past. Furthermore, even when the glimpses are full life stories of living as queer, as especially those discussed in Publication II, they contain glimpses of others that the narrator has relied on while constructing their life story. This illustrates the entangled nature of individual and collective memory, or what Astrid Erll (2011a, 97-98) refers to as the “collected” and “collective” memory in her analytic mapping of the different ways that memory is manifested in culture and culture in memory.

The glimpses detected in this study create an understanding of the past in the present, whereas the fragments remain, in essence, the same throughout time. Even as the fragments do not change, a context such as an archive, a private collection or a museum in which they are placed all shape how they are perceived and how they can be used to construct the past. A fragment is often not in itself sufficient to construct the past but can only convey the memories combined with other fragments or glimpses. Glimpses, on the other hand, may be based on fragments, as a life story writer can utilise their diaries, letters, or other fragments when crafting their writing. Furthermore, a life story, which is essentially a glimpse or a combination of glimpses, can later become a fragment. As a physical object, a document that contains the writing, it can be

preserved and serve as a fragment in the future. This means that aspects of queer memory – the fragmentary and the glimpse-like – are inseparable.

I illustrate this entangled nature of glimpses and fragments by citing an example of the first Finnish museum exhibition of LGBT history in 2005 at Werstas Labour Museum (*Työväenmuseo Werstas*) in Tampere. One of the objects on display was “a grandpa’s parcel” (“*vaarin paketti*”, see cover photo). This packet was a firmly tied up stack of papers that the donor’s grandfather had wanted to save for “future researchers” (Jaskari, Juvonen, and Vallinharju 2005, 4-5). Even though the parcel is presumed to contain manuscripts, which in turn are believed to contain glimpses of queer pasts, it remained unopened in the exhibition. Thus, it served as a fragment of the past, as a conveyor of memories of a man who was connected to the queer circles of his time. The stories that the manuscripts possibly contain were enclosed within the parcel, a fragment. As head of the collections, Leena Ahonen points out that the packet was more interesting when it was unopened, as if it contained secrets.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the story of the donor was a glimpse that connected the parcel to a queer past and made it an item of interest for a queer historical exhibition.

Publications III and IV focus on the collections of life stories from the 1990s and analyse the glimpses of the past. In Publication III, the glimpses of the cultural understandings and personal experiences of prostitution are used as an othered mean to construct the writers’ selves and the cultural limits of normative sexuality. In Publication IV, the line between normal and queer is drawn at homosexuality, but the writings also offer glimpses to the margins of queer lives. They reveal glimpses into the lives of those with same-sex desires but no queer identification, as well as of memories of same-sex desires of others in the writers’ lives. As I have discussed in section 3, taking into account the material sides of the reminiscence writings affects the analysis. This connects the aspect of the fragment to the analysis of life stories because the writing on paper is also a material trace of the past.

As Niels van Doorn (2016) argues, in queer communities, memories may be especially connected to the material traces. Van Doorn’s example addresses a gay leather community, which is created around the fabric of leather. Van Doorn (2016, 87) analyses leather as a “mnemonic technology” that ties together individual memories into a collective understanding of past in the community. As van Doorn (2016, 92-93) observes, the histories of queer communities are fragmented with ruptures, amnesia and (self-)censorship. Especially the AIDS crises caused a loss of knowledge of the community’s past (on the “unremembering” related to the AIDS crisis, see Castiglia and Reed 2012; Morris 2004, 91-92). In this danger of losing the past, the rituals around the material in the heart of the community have offered ways to preserve the memories.

In relation to the material approach to memory, Astrid Erll (2011a, 99-100) warns against the confusingly metaphorical use of the concept of memory.

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<sup>26</sup> Head of Collections Leena Ahonen, email message to author, 22 January 2018.



According to Erll, as critics contend, the overusing of the concepts of memory may result in a situation where “archives remember and statues forget” (Klein 2000, 136). Granted, the statues, archives – or leather, for that matter – cannot have an independent agency, but they need someone, a person, to remember with them. As Laura Doan (2013, 49) points out, no matter how activist or political archives are in their orientation, they cannot challenge historical interpretations on their own. That said, the materials and objects may be essential to both create and preserve memory as well as history. As Erll (2011a, 123) notes, an individual or a community can always turn down an “offer” from a medium of memory, such as a statue. Even so, like van Doorn (2016), I suggest that remembering is something that may occur *with* these objects in ways that would be impossible without them. Thus, even though the fragments themselves do not remember, they participate in remembering and community-building. As van Doorn argues, the whole community around leather would not even exist without the material of leather and it is this material that keeps the different practices and codes of the community together.

I suggest that sometimes the silence, silenced and not easily phrased queer memories may be especially entangled with material sources. In the analytic distinction made by Erll (2011a, 124-125), these are “reception-side functionalisations”, that is, these material fragments were not originally intended to be mediums of memory (unlike, for instance, a memorial statue that is planned for future remembrance, although on queer monuments, see Evans 2014; Castiglia and Reed 2012, 75-83), but they are perceived in this manner by a certain communities or individuals. Erll (2011a, 135-136) observes regarding photographs as a medium of memory that only a narrative attached to a picture connects it to memories. But as some queer memories address silences and unverballed feelings, they might live as recollections that do not easily assume a narrated form, which may be precisely the reason they are so attached to a material medium. Sometimes, as with the work of art by Samma discussed in Publication V, these fragments do not even need to be original to function as the objects of memory. For instance, the objects that Samma utilised in his installations, such as the every-day objects of the Soviet era, were not primarily mediums of memory. As they were collected, worked into an installation, and framed in the exhibition with the glimpses of queer past, they were constructed as mediums of memory. Thus, these objects that were formed into a work of art became “production-side functionalisations” as mediums of memory according to the differentiation proposed by Erll (2011a, 124-125).

This connection between the materiality and the queer raises interesting questions on the consequences of digitalisation in the archives. If the queer memory is tied to the material, what happens when the documents are digitalised? And what if some documents cannot be digitalised? Furthermore, what is the meaning of digitalisation, as it entails a certain type of loss of the material archive, for those, like the queer, who have not had the fragments of

their lives represented in the mainstream archives from their own perspective? Digitalisation is inevitably rapidly changing the actual archival work, but it also directly influences how the researcher experiences the archive (see Moravec 2017; Dever 2017). The inability to touch the digital documents erases some of the affectionate, bodily sensations of the archive, where the researcher could (and was forced to) literally breathe in the dust of the past (Steedman 2001, 17-31). After all, the archive is not only the content of the documents, but also the form of the documents, their *fonds* and the physical environment where the documents are studied.

Moira Pérez (2016, 21) bases her analysis on Lisa Duggan's (1995) discussions and examines how the metaphor of visibility implies that the past is both transparent and knowable. Agreeing with Laura Doan (2013, xi, 2), I could add that the conceptualisations of seeing or touching the past construct the past as existing prior to the act of remembering or conducting historical research. Likewise, as a visual metaphor, a glimpse might imply perceiving the past as already existing. However, I consider the concept of glimpse to be something more constructive. A glimpse may include something not completely visible – something not understood, not recognised, or not necessarily even in existence. For this reason, I suggest that this concept works well to understand the disappearing or not easily defined queer pasts. For example, some of the queer glimpses in the Estonian collection of life stories from 1996 were included in the theatre play by Merle Karusoo (the script of “Kured läinud, kurjad ilmad” is published in Karusoo 2008, 353-412), but these glimpses were largely ignored in the media discussion on the play (see Publication IV). This example illustrates how queer glimpses may exist but they nevertheless remain uncommunicated and unnamed.

These aspects of the traces of the past, fragments and glimpses, are interwoven with how I perceive the time of memories. I have formulated my understanding of time into a three-layered conceptualisation. I refer to these three temporal layers as the *Time Remembered*, *Time of Remembering* and *Time of Researching*. How these layers are connected to chronological time in different research articles is presented in Table 1. The *Time Remembered* refers to the time when the events described in the material discussed have taken place and of which only fragments remain. The *Time of Remembering* refers to the time of gathering collections, forming an archive, writing life stories or using an archive to construct pasts, as I consider all of these as acts of cultural remembering. In this layer, some glimpses, such as the memories produced in a life story, can become fragments as life story collections are stored in an archive as physical documents. On the other hand, fragments may also become glimpses when stories of the past are linked to them, as in the case of the “grandpa’s parcel” discussed above. The third layer of time, the *Time of Researching*, refers to the time when I have conducted my study.

These three layers of time are deeply intertwined. For instance, when writing a life story, the past of the *Time Remembered* is discussed in present terms and understood in the context of the *Time of Remembering*, and

contrasted with the differences and similarities between the past and the present. Furthermore, the *Time of Researching* is the temporal position used to discuss both the *Time Remembered* and *Time of Remembering*. On the other hand, the *Time of Researching* cannot escape its multiple pasts that include the *Time Remembered* and *Time of Remembering*. As Jyrki Pöysä (2011) observes in his discussion on the temporal layers in reminiscence writing, all these layers have their own histories as well as their future expectations. Of course, my study also has a fourth layer of time, that is, the time of reading this dissertation. At the time of writing, however, this remains an open future.

These three layers of time form the triple-reflective contextualisation of my study. I have developed this concept from the research by Marianne Liljeström on Soviet women's life stories (Liljeström 2004a; Liljeström 2004b). Liljeström discusses the need to consider the three layers of time present in the stories. In her article, Liljeström (2004a) explores the double-reflective contextualisation of life stories, which she conceives of as "the concept of context referring both to the contexts of historiography recounting past and to the temporal context of my own time of writing"<sup>27</sup> (Liljeström 2004a, 143). Liljeström perceives both as constructing each another. In her book, Liljeström (2004b, 170) distinguishes between "the context of narrated life" and "the context of narration" as a "contextual doubling". Liljeström also acknowledges that her own understandings and expectations form the contextualisation of the narratives she studies. My concept of triple-reflective contextualisation combines these "contextual doublings" by Liljeström and her reflections on her own position as a reader.

The contextual reflection occurs on the all three temporal levels, as interpretation already arises during the *Time Remembered*. What was experienced or felt then, was never only a pure event or experience, but it was interpreted in light of past experiences, the present situation and future expectations. In her critique on the utilisation of the concept of experience in historical research, Joan Scott (1993) emphasizes that experience has always already been interpreted, at least in the form that it is available for a researcher of the past, a historian or a memory-scholar. For us, the experience always comes as mediated and reflected. Astrid Erll develops a similar stance from the perspective of cultural memory. She argues that memory and experience are deeply entangled, and it is impossible to determine where an experience ends and a memory begins. This entanglement is emphasized even more, as Erll maintains that experience is also shaped by the schemes offered by cultural memory (Erll 2011a, 111-112).

Concerning queer memories, I wish to delve further into the discussion on how the memories are constructed at the *Time Remembered*. Elizabeth Freeman (2000; 2010, 62-65) utilises the concept of "temporal drag" to

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<sup>27</sup> "kontekstin käsitteen viittaavan sekä menneisyydestä kertovien historiankirjoitusten konteksteihin että omiin kirjoitushetken ajallisiin konteksteihin."

understand how generational assumptions are disturbed in queer identifications. Freeman uses the concept of “temporal drag” and this deepens her understanding of melancholic gender identification and citation as a part of performativity in the analysis by Judith Butler (1999). “Temporal drag” calls attention to how these citations also include temporal transgression, not solely transgressions of gender or sexual identifications. Freeman (2010, 70) cites one example of this as how the daughter’s identification with her mother utilises past understandings and corporealizations of gender.

In Publication II, I examine how the writers employ outdated glimpses of queer and these conceptualisations therefore exert power over long stretches of time. This power surfaces in forms of “temporal drag”, cross-temporal identifications enabling the construction of queer subjectivity, and the disturbance of generational order in queer memories (see also Stella 2015, 17-19). However, even as I find Freeman’s discussion useful for my work on queer as formed in and by memories, I consider the term “drag” to be problematic. Firstly, this term all too easily points to gender transgression, even though Freeman’s examples are not necessarily that, and secondly, it implies a reading of Butler that understands performativity as a construction of gender on a pre-existing subject (for this critique of some utilisations of Butler’s work, see Edenheim 2015). While Freeman ties her concept of temporal drag to the psychoanalytic aspects in Butler’s work, the term drag seems to loosen this connection because it is tightly linked to gender as performance. Even so, the concept of temporal drag illustrates well how the *Time Remembered* is in itself layered and conveys citations of cultural and personal memory of earlier times.

The second reflective layer, the *Time of Remembering*, occurs when the life stories or reminiscence writings are written, or when archives are formed or utilised. At this point, the most immediate context of reflection is how the collection of writings or documents is framed. For example, as discussed in Publication I, the forming of LGBT archives within the Labour Archives illustrates the changing position of the labour movement and the interest in the histories, and thus a need for archives of the “new” social movements. Furthermore, the collection work reveals that LGBTI rights have been framed as political questions (see Juvonen 2015). Likewise, the collection of life stories discussed in Publication II is framed in terms of the politicisation of LGBTI issues and political equality work. A particularly relevant aspect of this politicisation was the citizens’ initiative for the equal marriage act, *Tahdon 2013* (“I do 2013”), which made the question of same-sex marriage a topic of popular organising on an unseen level in Finland. This campaign was also reflected in the life stories, while other political changes were predominantly absent. Similarly, Jaanus Samma’s artwork discussed in Publication V became placed within the current understanding of gay rights as human rights, and the international interest in queer pasts contextualised it, especially at the time of the Venice Biennale of 2015.

The *Time of Remembering* also affects the concepts the writers have at their disposal to understand queerness. The contributors to the collections of

life stories gathered in the 1990s utilised the terms gay and lesbian, and even projected them back onto the time when these concepts were not yet used (on the emergence of lesbian as an available identity in Finland, see Pulkkinen 1999, 228-230; on the history of the term lesbian in Finnish, see Sorainen 2005; 2006). Even so, the writers also decline to use certain terms. An Estonian writer, discussed in Publication IV, who wrote on her relationship with another woman, refused to use the term lesbian.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, some of the younger writers who are discussed in Publication II rejected the available identity-based labels.<sup>29</sup> The ability to reject these terms reveals that, at the time of the writing, the concepts were available and the writers could use them to construct an understanding of their selves even as they ultimately dismissed these concepts. Thus, even an understanding of the queer self that rejects identity-based notions is constructed in these texts with precisely these same notions.

The interplay between the second and the third layer, the *Time of Remembering* and *Time of Researching*, becomes salient when I reuse the collections that were gathered in the 1990s in publications III and IV. As Maija Runcis (2016, 156) observes, when reusing oral history collections, the researcher needs to be highly aware not only of their own background but also that of the original interviewer and the context in which the interview has taken place. The collection of written life stories differs from a collection of oral history interviews in the sense that those who gathered the life stories were, to begin with, more distant from their respondents than the interviewers are from narrators. However, I perceive this double contextualisation to be essential.

The results of my analysis of the life stories that I have consulted demonstrate that writings can divulge both the understandings of their time as well as the pasts the writers describe if the contexts of collecting are analysed with the same thoroughness as the content of the life stories. When reflecting on my results, I have found the research by Markku Hyrkkänen to be useful, particularly his conceptualisation of the history of ideas as questions and answers. For Hyrkkänen (2002, 157-174), a historical source offers an answer to a question that is unknown to us in the present. Thus, the historian's task is to use sources to construct the questions that were answered in the past. Only this combination of past questions and answers constructed by the researcher actually tells us about the past. When this structure of questions and answers is applied to remembering, it emphasizes that the life stories or reminiscence writings themselves are not highly revealing of the memories or of the past. It is important to analyse the writings themselves, the call for writing as well as other sources that describe their production and the time of

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<sup>28</sup> EKLA, f 350a. Elulood. Erikogu, 9

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, the Finnish Literature Society, Traditional and Contemporary Cultural Collections (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, Perinteen ja nykykulttuurin kokoelma), Sateenkaarinuorena nyt ja ennen, 368–369.

writing because these all together constitute perspectives on the past and memories.

The questions that Hyrkkänen perceives to be equally important to answers may be those posed to the narrators in the call for writings, but they may as well be something else that the writers have reflected upon or found important in their own life and time. Thus, Hyrkkänen's analysis may be developed further. The researcher's task is to construct the vague notions and impressions available from the time of writing as questions that the writings may offer answers to. For the writers, the research project as a context of life stories is both limiting and highly productive. Moreover, the content and the context of the life stories are inseparable in the sense that the life stories provide clues on how the context should be evaluated. The writers mention their reasons for writing, by stating, for example, that they wanted to tell a life story they assume would have been otherwise left untold,<sup>30</sup> or that they wanted to help both the researchers as well as themselves by taking the opportunity offered to lighten their hearts.<sup>31</sup> These comments reveal the writers' perceptions of their own context of writing, the type of cultural understandings of sexuality they want to confirm or reject, or the questions their writings address (cf. Hyrkkänen 2002, 157-174).

## **5.2 Personal and cultural memories of our queer histories and the pasts of the others**

Joan Scott (1993) discusses the processes of bringing into historiography those who have been previously left unrepresented. According to Scott, the histories of "women", "gay" or "black" may end up unintendedly strengthening the naturalised categories that have made these groups invisible in the first place (see also Scott 1996, 22-24). In other words, the process of working to bring marginalised voices heard in history may also consolidate the marginalising structures. Laura Doan (2013, 66-80) has analysed this internal tension particularly in queer historical research by differentiating between the *history of us*, that is, the "ancestral genealogy" of tracing the queer experiences of the past, and the *history of "us"* that studies the ruptures and discontinuities in the history of current identities. By contrast, Carla Freccero (2011, 65-66) places queer history on the side of "history from below" and history of the "people without history", as a "history from beside". To Freccero, this means that history in the form of partial narratives, interruptions and memories, as queer history is not so much yet another story of those marginalised in the past as it is another means to envision the past in which memories and histories are also inseparable.

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<sup>30</sup> For example EKLA, f 350a. Elulood. Erikogu, 57.

<sup>31</sup> For example EKLA, f 350a. Elulood. Erikogu, 30.

In her book, Doan does not address in detail the questions concerning the political implications of these different approaches to queer and history. She does mention how the lesbian, gay and queer histories are mobilised to support political identities and communities (Doan 2013, x), and that the current movements need approaches that view the past from the perspective of present-day sexual identities (Doan 2013, 10). Doan's comments on these political implications are the clearest regarding "ancestral genealogy", which is committed to unfolding the hidden queer lives of the past and often originating from the research by those engaged in the gay and lesbian movements (Doan 2013, 14). Doan (2013, 46-47) discovers traces of these similar political motivations in what she refers to as "queer genealogy", but does not pursue further the possible political differences between these approaches, nor the political implications of her own development of queer critical history. Heather K. Love (2009, 262) considers those histories that Doan associates with queer genealogy those who focus on affects and especially desire as a motivation for historical research. According to Love, these studies have turned away from questions regarding the historical existence of queer subjects to enquire why it is important to find these subjects and to analyse the relations formed between the present and the past queernesses.

Doan's analysis, however, offers opportunities to address the political implications and to discuss the different queer histories in the context of the queer debates on politics and the future. Sara Edenheim (2013, 36-37) frames an essential topic in these debates, following Lee Edelman, as an opposition between "queer utopianism" and "political negativity". Even though the division is far from absolute and some scholars support both these positions (for example, Freeman 2010, 10, and 177 fn. 10), this differentiation maps some key divisions. The concept of political negativity refers to the critique of society's overinvestment in the future, and to Edelman (2004, 16-31), queer remains outside this futurity that defines politics. Edelman's work has received important criticism for its privileged position of the white, male, middle-class American from which it is relatively easy to problematize the notions of progress and investments in a better future (for a summary of critiques, see Freeman 2007, 166-167; in particular from a Central and Eastern European perspective, see Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011, 18).

While Doan seems to disengage her own critical queer history from direct political implications, it is not devoid of investment in the future. This future, however, is unknown and is not mapped onto the modern understanding of sexuality (Doan 2013, 195-199). Doan seems to distance critical history from the community-building practices of the genealogical project, and to even perceive it as unsuitable for political or identity work. I suggest, nonetheless, that some communities, practices and political engagements that have not been reflected in the ancestral genealogy may indeed find the queer critical history as a form of a usable past. As ancestral genealogies have been predominantly work for the continuities and origins of gay, lesbian and later

transgendered and bisexual identities, those who do not share these identifications in the present, may have found themselves excluded from the genealogical project. If we take seriously, as Doan does, Lee Edelman's notions that "queer must insist on disturbing" (Edelman 2004, 17) and that "[w]e're never at one with our queerness" (Ferguson et al. 2007, 189), I suggest these notions affect how we perceive both the past and the present. Those who have not been able to find their genealogies within the projects that depart from modern sexual identities because they are not at one with their queerness, might indeed discover uncanny similarities in projects that construct other ways of knowing sexuality and being sexual in the past.

In the publications included in this dissertation, queer is constructed in the memories of "us" that are called to remember "our" past and, on the other hand, as an othered, undisciplined, sexuality that constructs the norm, as something that "we" are not like. This latter form of queer in the past was neither utilised to construct identifications nor is it used in the present, but it was utilised to demonstrate the limits of acceptable and proper sexuality. Fashioned in this manner, the differentiation has similarities to the difference between "memory of publics" and "publicity of memories". The definition that Kendall R. Phillips (2004) proposes is that the former discusses the relationship between diverse "publics" and memories, while the latter addresses how memories are present in the public. In a similar manner, the queer "us" is constructed by consulting memories that are shaped in juxtaposition to other "publics" and their memories, such as when LGBT archives are placed on the side of other groups and their archives, demanding inclusion in the archival system. Queer as otherness, however, is a means in which memories of undisciplined genders and sexualities are present in the public without any "public" that wants to claim them as theirs. For example, in Publication III, it is not the prostitutes who remember, but others who utilise memories and understandings of prostitution to construct their own life stories. As Phillips points out, these approaches to public memory are by no means mutually exclusive but construct and inform one another. My focus on the margins of queer lives and on the fragmentary and glimpse-like memories of these margins emphasizes this constructive process.

This differentiation is far from absolute and I do consider the emergent of unexpected similarities, affinities and feelings of recognition to be possible. However, my publications can be divided based on different understandings of these continuities. My focus in Publications I and II is predominantly on queer as "us", on activist-oriented attempts to save the pasts from oblivion, even as these endeavours occur in a general social history archive and a government-funded research project, not in independent community initiatives. Publication I addresses most directly the LGBTI movement, as the archival collection for the large part results from the activities of Seta. The act of establishing this archive has been one of saving a past of a self-named queer community as well as LGBTI organisations, motivated by the need to remember and a to foster a certain type of pride in "our" past. Publication II



also examines a collection that was motivated by a need to cover queer pasts and my analysis focuses predominantly on the processes of naming, a common stream especially in the historical research on lesbianism (Doan 2013, 136-137). Both research projects and the articles essentially take for granted the need to preserve and analyse the traces of queer pasts. They discuss the importance of versatile sources of the past, present-day identifications, and saving queer pasts from oblivion.

While these articles aim to discover the *history of us*, a past recognisable in the present, they also demonstrate the internal, and I would claim, inevitable contradictions within this process. Indeed, one of my findings when examining the accounts of queer youth was how the “othering” also occurs within a queer life story, as the glimpses of othered understandings of queer are used to construct the self. Furthermore, my research reveals how the conceptualisations of sexuality and gender have grown increasingly complex and diverse, and some younger life-story writers completely rejected the labelling. I suggest that addressing this versatility requires seriously considering the challenge that “queerness can never fully be known” (as phrased by Madhavi Menon in Freccero, Menon, and Traub 2013, 783-784), even when studying queer as “our” history and even when this history is very recent. In addition, this versatility reminds us that changes in queer identifications and ways of understanding queer may occur rapidly. Sometimes this might even imply a rapidly disappearing ability to comprehend what these past queer identifications refer to. In other words, we need not search distant pasts to realise that “[s]ome historical experiences may actually be lost to us” (Halperin 2002, 20).

My studies for Publications I and II helped me to develop my understanding of queer as a practical and methodological approach to my materials. In Publication II, I noted that I had selected a term – queer – that many of the life story writers would not probably entertain, but I chose to adopt it “to emphasize the constructed and blurred nature of identities”. In Publication I, I developed an understanding of how archives can be a means to ground queer thinking, especially when the archives do not form a dedicated queer archive but are a part of a general social history archive, as is the case in Finland. By this, I mean that because the archive contains documents from people and movements from different walks of life, the queer may merge into other identifications without strictly defined boundaries (on a similar discussion on Norwegian *Skeivt arkiv*, see Hellesund 2016, 128-129).

As Katri Kivilaakso (2017) has maintained, the fact that a person has not needed to approach a named queer archive to donate their documents as well as the “ignorance” of the archive both may have created trust and allowed the archiving of documents that describe undisciplined sexualities and genders. Furthermore, the archives mainly serve an expert clientele of researchers, and the archive users need to rely on the archivists to acquire the needed documents. This system is by no means devoid of problems, as these gatekeepers can also prevent access (on queer historical research and the

problems of accessing archives, for example, see Morris 2006, 145-146; Gentile 2009; although see also German 2010). Thus, in Publication I, I argued for the importance of archival professionals with queer competence who would be sensitive to the differences within queer communities as well as to diverse queer histories. These professionals could ensure that queer perspectives are available in an archive, but also that the documents would be protected and the need for privacy would be respected. Ideally, queer competence would also allow a discussion on how the archives negotiate with the diverse approaches within queer historical research, such as those Doan (2013, 66-80) refers to as *history of us* and *history of "us"*.

In contrast to these publications that address queer as "our" pasts, the focus on the queer as an "other" is emphasized most strongly in Publication III. This article analyses the figure of the female prostitute as a sexual other in Estonian post-Soviet life stories. This is the only publication in the present study that does not mention the concept of queer. The life stories reveal how the rather familiar and not surprising notions in the popular understanding of prostitution are utilised in individual life stories. In many ways, these post-Soviet Estonian notions resemble their contemporary understandings of homosexuality. AIDS was, particularly in the 1980s, but also later, referred to as a predominantly a gay disease (for example, see Weeks 2007, 98-103, on Britain). Homosexuality has been constructed as something alien and as originating from outside a national community – the Finnish notion of a "Swedish disease" may serve here as an example (see Juvonen 2002, 103). And most importantly, in queer theorisation, homosexuality is simultaneously needed and rejected by heterosexuality (Butler 1999, 97-99). This is also how the figure of the female prostitute is treated in these life stories: she is needed, but she is something essentially different from the writers themselves. As the line between infidelity (a common theme in the writings and not described in an othered manner) and prostitution may be blurred, this strict symbolic positioning of the prostitute as an other helps to construct the blurred line as one that is clear.

By pointing out these similarities in the structural position of prostitution as an other in the writings, I do not intend to imply that prostitution as a phenomenon would be similar to homosexuality. My claim is, nonetheless, that the figure of the female prostitute in these accounts can destabilise normative heterosexuality by occupying the "cultural category" of queer, echoing the way that Tone Hellesund (2008, 22) has analysed the position of unmarried women. In addition, my discussion resembles that of Jens Rydström (2003, 12), who studies bestiality and homosexuality side by side, as they were formed by the same "epistemological framework", not because they would have been similar in essence. It may be that these similarities between the positions of homosexuality and prostitution were highlighted in precisely this setting, where the researchers mentioned prostitution among the topics on sexuality in their call for life writings. In other words, prostitution discussed in another context, such as that of unofficial economics or gendered

exploitation, would not necessarily have attained a position similar to that of queer.

As it is this context of sexuality that highlights the similarities between the positions of a female prostitute and a (male) homosexual, my interpretation becomes a queer reading. In other words, these similarities are produced precisely in the context of sexuality. In her classical article “Thinking Sex”, Gayle Rubin placed both commercial sex and homosexuality on the perverse “outer limits” of sexuality (Rubin 1993, originally published in 1984). Indeed, it appears that for Rubin, her “protoqueer” understanding of the then novel approaches of sexuality, studies on both homosexuality and prostitution were important (see Rubin 2011, 42, fn. 7, for her list of studies that were influential on the constructionist approach to sexuality). However, as the space of a single article did not allow me the opportunity to fully develop these thoughts, I decided not to adopt the concept of queer in that publication. Furthermore, I considered that in order to challenge the concept of queer in this manner, I needed a more thorough discussion of these writings and of the concept of queer. This detailed analysis was only possible to achieve in the introductory and summarising section, because it was there I was able to combine the results from all of my articles.

As Laura Doan (2013, 168-173) argues, even though the concept of normal is used as an essential element in defining queer, it is often left unhistoricised in queer studies. As one prominent example, Doan cites a definition of queer proposed by David Halperin (1995, 62) as “*whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant*”. Doan’s point is that the concept of normal that combines what is common with what is suitable is, in essence, modern and should not be confused with all the other differentiations between the suitable and the unsuitable, or the healthy and the unhealthy. While this discussion on the historical construction of the concept of normal is, I think, important for all who work with queer pasts, it is especially essential for those who work with more distant pasts or with societies that do not utilise “normal” in its modern, Western form. In the collections of life stories from the 1990s I consulted for Publications III and IV, the concept of normal is evidently present. In the Estonian writings, the writers point to “people with an abnormal, sick interest in sex”<sup>32</sup> as a cause for prostitution, or write that they do not know “how a normal person sells their self”<sup>33</sup>. As another example, a Finnish writer expressed aversion towards “lesbians and other abnormal”.<sup>34</sup>

My approach of queer as a structural position is also adopted in Publication V. This publication emphasizes the position of queer as a forbidden sexuality. While the article discusses queer solely as sex between men, for my analytical purposes, I preferred the concept of queer instead of gay or homosexual. This was partly because I did not see grounds to assume a gay identity, but also, as

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<sup>32</sup> “Ebanormaalne haiglasliku seks huviga inimesi” EKLA, f 350a. Elulood. Erikogu, 14.

<sup>33</sup> “kuidas üks normaalne inimene müüb endast” EKLA, f 350a. Elulood. Erikogu, 58.

<sup>34</sup> “lesboja ja muita epänormaaleja.” FSD, FSD2952, 92.

one of my findings was on how the present-day understandings of same-sex desire with concepts such as “closet”, “double life”, “tolerance”, and “gay” are projected onto the past. By using these terms, the past is made intelligible possibly at the cost of omitting some of its uniqueness (on a similar reading of the story of Alan Turing, see Doan 2017). Some of the queer past may be hidden as others are constructed with the help of these present-day understandings. Also, the story of the Chairman challenges the limits of “our histories” and “othering”. Even as Samma’s artwork can be perceived as a means of constructing the forgotten pasts in the present, it constructs a troubling story that does not easily assume the positions of a victim or a hero, but occupies a conflicting condition describing the difficult choices, opportunities and restrictions of a Soviet Estonian man who had sex with other men.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2008) explores the difference between what she labelled as minoritising and universalising views on homosexuality. Minoritising refers to the understanding that same-sex desires are a feature of a small, well-defined minority, and the universalising position involves perceiving same-sex desires as relevant for people with different sexualities (Sedgwick 2008, 1, 40). According to Sedgwick, these two aspects, the minoritising and the universalising, formed an incoherence in the twentieth-century Western understanding of homosexuality. While a portion of population was considered to be gay, sexual desire was perceived as being able to dissolve purportedly stable identities, and seemingly heterosexual deeds and identifications were marked with same-sex desires (Sedgwick 2008, 85). It is also important to note that Sedgwick’s model regarded sexuality and gender as intertwined and co-constructing. On the one hand, same-sex desires were connected to gender inversion in the concepts of the masculine lesbian or the effeminate gay man, which emphasized the innermost heterosexuality of desire. On the other hand, homosexuality was connected to gender separatism, to the understanding that sexual desire was only one part of the identification and bonding with others of the same gender (Sedgwick 2008, 86-90).

Sedgwick (2008, 89) asserts that the notion of gender inversion is associated with the minoritising view on homosexuality. To support this position, the life stories discussed in Publication IV offer an interesting example. The writers do not construct a strong connection between same-sex desires and gender dissidence. Furthermore, for the writers, homosexual desire is not a feature of a well-defined species but something that can be integrated in their own heterosexual understanding of their selves. This opportunity to construct memories of same-sex desires without adopting the concept of gender inversion or the minoritising view of homosexuality was offered by the call for writings that had a gender-neutral understanding of sexuality. However, the researchers, Osmo Kontula and Elina Haavio-Mannila, established their analysis firmly within the minoritising position on homosexuality. The researchers perceived same-sex desires as a feature of a

minority (Kontula and Haavio-Mannila 1993, 245) and searched through the writings for expressions and understandings of homosexual identities, or uncertainty regarding sexual identity, in relation to same-sex experiences (for example, Haavio-Mannila 2006, 216). As FINSEX research, which these studies of life stories contributed to, has been influential in the understanding of Finnish past and present sexualities, this reading has supported the minoritising position on homosexuality, even though the life stories would also have offered other possible approaches.

The histories of male and female homosexualities, and those of same-sex desires and trans, inevitably overlap, but they are not inseparable (see Sedgwick 2008, 36-39, and Halperin 2002, 48-80, on the similarities and differences in the histories of male and female homosexualities). Different forms of undisciplined sexualities and genders are interconnected through common activism and communities, and as Dan Healey (2017, 21) has noted about Russia, the discussion on trans may occur within the general framework of (political) homophobia. That said, the acronyms, such as LGBTI, that list the identity-based notions in a pre-designed (if debated) order, appear to regard them as more similar than they often are. One means of avoiding this oversimplification of queer, of perceiving it merely a list of identifications, is to utilise the concept of queer as a nuanced, localised and historicised analytical category. In addition to the needed different analyses for different queers of the past, they might also require different sources. In Publication IV, my sources on remembering same-sex desires consisted of two collections of life stories on sexuality. These collections are as revealing about reflections on female same-sex desires as they are about male. Particularly the Finnish female authors of these writings conceptualise desire by emphasizing the similarity of sexual desire, regardless of whether it is directed towards a same-sex or different sex partner.

Different present-day queernesses may also have different relationships to history, time and temporality. As David Halperin (2002, 48-80) maintains, the timelines, trajectories or histories of female homosexuality may largely differ from those of male homosexuality. I point out in Publication I, that based on the observations by K.J. Rawson (2009, 126), for transgendered people, history has endless possibilities to betray and reveal a hidden past (although for a view that the LGBT and queer in general need “cutting ties with the past” to survive, see Pérez 2016, 28). And furthermore even though sadomasochism has been predominately absent from the historical part of queer theorising, as Elizabeth Freeman (2010, 138-144) argues, it has a highly complex relationship with both personal pasts as well as history. Thus, different queers have different temporalities, and have different glimpses and fragments in which the past is constructed in the present.

## **6 Conclusions, discussions, and new questions**

I concluded above that the fourth layer of time, the time of reading this study, is still the open future. While this is certainly valid, when writing, I have constructed several possible readers, readings and further utilisations of my study.<sup>35</sup> This concluding section addresses these future readings more directly and moves further from the outcomes of my study. Firstly, I suggest the possible implications of my study to understand the role of queer pasts in the present. Secondly, I discuss how the concepts of fragments and glimpses may be useful for historical research, and how my layered understanding of time may offer perspectives for the discussion on archives and other sources of historical research.

### **6.1 Constructing queer presents with undisciplined pasts**

As Scott Bravmann (1997, 4) argues, queer “fictions of the past” construct the “queer fictions of the present”. Moreover, an essential means of claiming LGBTI rights in the present and constructing queer inclusive futures has been to reveal the historical existence of undisciplined sexualities and genders (for example, see Kulpa 2011, 48-49). As my study has analysed the construction of queer pasts in the present, it is also worth turning the question the other way around, and exploring the type of presents that are constructed with these pasts. A key concept of my study is the politics of memory and this becomes salient when analysing the queer debates in the present. My study demonstrates how the past queerness is utilised in the national and transnational politics of memory.

Publication V in particular illustrates the difficulties of including a queer past in a national historical narrative, as the differing understandings of the present affect how the past is constructed. In this case, queer pasts are not considered to be a part of national pasts and conversely, a queer present is also not perceived as a part of the national present. While displaying the work by Jaanus Samma in the Museum of Occupations was certainly one means of attempting to include a queer past in a national past, the artwork was also placed in a transnational context. Just as the memory of the Holocaust is perceived in Estonia as a European, not Estonian, legacy of the Second World War (Mälksoo 2009; Weiss-Wendt 2008; Melchior 2016), a comparable interpretation can be applied to queer pasts. They can also be perceived as a

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<sup>35</sup> I would like to thank doctoral candidate Ada Schwanck for pointing out to me that this study, as any text, has its intended readers written in it.

foreign import, and particularly as something European (on the diverse ways that LGBT activism, rights and topics are intertwined with the concept of Europe, see Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; on the nationalist utilisation of this connection between homosexuality and Europe in Central and Eastern Europe, see Moss 2014). While queer memories have challenged the narratives of the past by addressing nationally important figures (for example, on the “homosexual panic” surrounding Abraham Lincoln, see Morris 2004; for a Finnish example of discussion on Marshal C.G.E. Mannerheim, see Hupaniittu 2010 and Publication I; see also Kulpa 2011, 48-49), the Chairman in Jaanus Samma’s artwork was only prominent due to his queerness, and his tale challenged the narrative of national victimhood and suffering. So the international interest in queer pasts combined with an understanding of LGBT rights as a “European” question may have opened another avenue besides that of the national in which to construct pasts and to claim rights to remember.

Regarding the life story collections on sexuality gathered in the 1990s, as for the Estonian case, their role in the national politics of memory is rather evident. The life story collections of the time were an essential part of the post-Soviet “memory boom”, and in this case, the life stories were even written for foreign researchers and therefore constructed understandings of Estonian pasts for national outsiders. In the Estonian politics of memory in the 1990s, the Soviet era was conceived of as a “rupture” in national history. The idea that even the “othered” figure of the prostitute, analysed in Publication III, can connect the pre-war and present-day Estonia may have worked as a means to overcome this rupture. In addition, the comments by the writers that prostitution existed even during the Soviet years may be interpreted as a means of illustrating that not even the Soviet regime could change everything. Even so, the construction of nation is not at all absent from the Estonian collection’s Finnish parallel. The Finnish writers constructed their own Finnishness in comparison to other nations and foreign people. The life story collection has been a part of the FINSEX project, which has been – and is – extremely influential in shaping the understanding of Finnish sexuality. An interesting topic for further research would be the role of the FINSEX project in constructing Finnishness.

From the memory politics perspective, the construction of Finnish queer archives, which is discussed in Publication I, can be understood as a means to include queer pasts in Finnish histories. Similarly, the research project that collected the queer youth life stories discussed in Publication II was originally motivated by anti-discriminatory political goals. While the inclusion of queer people, practices and themes into national narratives may be a viable strategy, as Robert Kulpa (2011, 55-56) has argued, it may also generate new exclusions of who is entitled to be included either based on gender and sexuality or, for example, national belonging or ethnicity. The concept of homonationalism has been used to discuss these new exclusions (Puar 2007; on European homonationalism, see Colpani and Habed 2014; on the critique of overusing the concept especially in Central and Eastern European contexts, see Moss

2014, 215-217). This discussion is beyond the scope of this study, but addressing these questions on nationalist inclusions and exclusions would offer a fruitful departure point for new research. Some useful tools for further elaboration on these topics include the considerations developed in this study on multiple temporalities, the fragmentary and glimpse-like relationship between queer presents and queer pasts, as well as the complexity of queer.

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000, 8-9) comments that the Western concept of development is formed as phases that need to follow one another in a predefined order. According to Chakrabarty, this understanding has been used against the self-rule of the colonies, as they are “not yet” at that stage. Similar conceptualisations are applied to LGBTI rights and queer discussions, as Western history is set as an example that other countries inevitably follow and which can be used to define at what stage these “others” are at a certain moment (for example, see Pérez 2016). As the past is constructed in the present, these histories, both “Western” and “non-Western”, can be constructed to follow a predesigned model of progress, or shaped in the form of more contested, contradictory and fragmented trajectories. Furthermore, the concept of semiperiphery may challenge the simplified ways of dividing between the core and the periphery.

Even though several sexual and gendered practices have been marked in the progress narrative of advancing liberation as out-dated forms that will eventually be eradicated, they often persistently continue to prevail (Halperin 2002, 19). Sometimes, these “premodern” sexualities can exist simultaneously with “postmodern” flexibility. Ngyueng Tao Hang (Ferguson et al. 2007, 191) uses Thailand as an example of this. For a Western gay tourist, the Thai tolerance of sexual flexibility and versatility is both premodern and postmodern. Of importance, I suggest, is that this place that is both pre- and postmodern is not modern and has never been – thus, the “innocent” premodern practices can be perceived as preserved and can now be linked to the postmodern “disappearance” of stable identities.

Following Valerie Traub (2011, 31-32), who proposes the research of different cultures and geographical locations as “alternative genealogies of sexual modernity”, I suggest constructing alternative genealogies of sexual postmodernity, even those that do not contain modernity as a necessary step along the way. These genealogies could challenge the Western-centred understandings of one modernity and allow the analysis of multiple modernities that are envisioned, among others, by Francesca Stella (2015, 134-141). Also, these genealogies would not need the relatively fixed modern identities, which are often constructed only in hindsight, as a mandatory phase towards more fluid, queer, understandings of undisciplined sexualities (for example, on the lack of continuity in Polish queer identifications, see Mizielińska 2011). The construction of postmodern genealogies without the modern as the previous phase could work as a way out of predefined progress narratives that perceive queer as the most advanced form of undisciplined



sexualities. This, I suggest, could encourage us to appreciate the radicality of previous understandings of sexuality and gender.

My suggestion echoes the call by Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed (2012, 173-174) to rather than imagine utopias, to remember more past stories. In the spirit of queer critiques of futurity, they call to abandon progressive time to understand how diverse the pasts can be and how they are reflected in the present. In a similar manner, Elizabeth Freeman (2010, 62-63) notes that Butler's understanding of queer as performative tends to value the new as different and thus possibly subversive, whereas to Freeman, the citations of past practices might offer a chance for temporal transgressions as well as novel combinations of past and present in transforming ways.

As queer pasts are fragmented and stories of them may be merely glimpses, I wish to add that these new forms of using the pasts call for new ways to approaching memory and history. Perceived like this, the sources of queer historiography – oral sources, life stories, material sources – and alternative ways of making history – arts and combinations of historical research with memory studies – would not be only additions or filling gaps left by history proper, but a way to challenge historical research to tell other types of stories.

## **6.2 Fragments and glimpses of memory and history**

Queer as a category of historical analysis contributes to the challenge posed by gender history and other histories that have transformed historical research to take into account more versatile pasts and presents. This challenge does not merely intend to add gays, lesbians, bisexuals, the transgendered or other undisciplined sexualities and genders to historiography, but enquires how history itself becomes challenged by a queer approach. Similarly, we need to explore what reflections of the past echo in the present as queer, and how these reflections could broaden and question the present understandings of queerness. Unlike Laura Doan (2013, 61), who argues for the “dispassionate” attitude of critical history, I suggest that affective connections with the past may also develop with fragmented, contested and critical queer approaches to history and memory. As Joan Scott (1996, 23-24) maintains, self-reflection with the representations of the past is possible without assuming an identity as a “fixed property”. As Scott (1996, 24) enquires, “[i]f ‘women’ have not always been the same, what aspects of myself can I find in ‘women’ of the past?” A queer history may construct “a past one can live with” (Hemmings 2018, 21) for those who have not been able to reflect themselves in history. But it does not construct a past that can be only celebrated and identified with. It creates a contradictory and difficult past with disrupted trajectories and unwanted genealogies that do not reach to the present, most visible forms of queer (see also Halperin 2002, 14-17; Love 2009, 263; Halberstam 2011, 147-171).

That said, my point is not to undermine the value of constructing proud queers of the past for more inclusive queer futures. On the contrary, I argue that the diversity of histories and memories can benefit from queer theorisation. As Steven Maynard (1999, 64) noted almost twenty years ago in his critique of queer history, for some white (Western) gays and lesbians, at that point it was relatively easy to call for the deconstruction of history because they were already represented in it, unlike others who were missing from the historiography, such as queers of colour. For both Finnish and Estonian history, there is still ample space to construct queer people, practices and lives of the past, for as art historian Harri Kalha (2005, 48) has stated, here “the stuffy air of the closet has hardly been freshened so much that the closet could be sealed.”<sup>36</sup>

I have worked for a more in-depth understanding of the queer historiography and queer politics of memory on two separate, yet interconnected, levels. Firstly, I have examined the speciality of the sources in queer historical research. Queer archives have often been lost or destroyed, or archives may be partial or hostile to their queer subjects. Thus, queer must be read between the lines or in the silences. In life stories, queer lives may not follow the trajectories of a proper life narration but compose alternative time lines and attachments. Secondly, queer has fragmented the representation of the pasts in historical research. This means that all queer historical research needs *queerness-as-method*. The “ancestral genealogies”, “queer genealogies” as well as “critical queer history”, to utilise Doan’s (2013) terms, can flourish side by side. Thus, there is no need to perceive them solely as progressive steps but as different approaches that can enlighten one another. I hope my analysis on the concepts of glimpses and fragments can serve as a resource to construct queer pasts from different approaches, and bridge the possible gaps between queer historical research and queer memory studies.

I concur with Doan (2013, 63-64; see also Rupp 2010) that a queer approach to the past may transform historical research more broadly than in the field of the history of sexuality. I attempt to offer the concepts of fragments and glimpses for historical research more broadly even as I have developed them for the particular purpose of my study on Finnish and Estonian queer memories. I offer my analysis of remembering as one possible means to better comprehend the relationship between pasts, sources, memories and histories. My understanding is that questions that concern the nature of our sources are always relevant for historians.

In his classical work on the philosophy and practice of historical research, studied by generations of Finnish historians, *Nykyajan historiantutkimus*, (“Contemporary historical research”, 1965), Pentti Renvall differentiated between remains (“*jäte*” or “*jäämistö*”) and remnants (“*jäänne*”). While remains refers to all “that has remained perceptible from the past”<sup>37</sup> (Renvall

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<sup>36</sup> “kaapin ummehtunutta ilmaa on tuskin tuuletettu vielä siinä määrin, että sen voisi jo sulkea.”

<sup>37</sup> “mikä menneisyydestä on jäänyt aistein havaittavaksi”

1965, 118), remnants are traces of past actions within these remains. These remnants can testify in the present to the process in which the remains participated in the past. My work stems from a very different view of historical research than that of Renvall, one that does not seek to recover a past that is perceived as pre-existing, but one that address historical research as a construction in the present. Even so, the difference I make between fragments and glimpses is similar to Renvall's differentiations between remains and remnants. My approach considers these aspects to be entangled, as glimpses may become fragments over time, and as often only glimpses can render fragments intelligible.

My study addresses the relationship between history and memory as circular. History, especially queer history, is created with memories as its sources and history, in turn, participates in the construction of these memories. The question is not whether this makes the memories inauthentic, as due to this circular process of memory and history – as well as that between personal and cultural memories – memories were never authentic in the first place. Experience is always already interpreted (Scott 1993) and interpretation is shaped by personal and cultural memories (Erll 2011a, 111-112). As Judith Butler (1999, 41) has stated, “gay is to straight *not* as a copy is to an original, but, rather, as a copy is to a copy.” In similar way, there is no original memory, but all memories are produced in the dialogue between the individual and the culture and society. In other words, the particular dialogue in which the memories are formed is their authenticity, not its opposition.

What I have developed in my dissertation is a historian's perspective on this complex dialogical process in which both personal as well as cultural memories are formed. My position on this discussion is that historians' tools offer a nuanced understanding of how the past is perceived in three ways. Firstly, a historian's craft creates the understanding needed to analyse the context of remembering, the politics of memory of the *Time of Remembering*. In my study, I have analysed the research projects in which the life stories have been produced and the contexts of forming archives and discussing an art exhibition on queer pasts. Secondly, as a historian, my aim has been to discuss narratives of history that the memories rely on, comment on, challenge and contribute to. This is not to imply that history is a context, immobile and true, and the life stories and other memories are interpretations. They both interpret each another, and when studying queer histories and memories, due to their marginal, hidden and fragmented nature, this is more than evident. And thirdly, a historian's task is to discuss the change in time, to point out that sometimes continuities may indeed stretch over a long time frame, but sometimes, salient changes may become visible even over considerably short periods (for example, see Doan's comment on how works of literary criticism may fail to note the effect of publishing time: Doan 2013, 224, fn. 171).

David Halperin (2002, 18) emphasizes that the work of a historian occurs in the present: “In terms of his or her location in time, the historian is an irredeemably hybrid animal and should allow no one to forget it.” This

comment is formulated as a reply to Dipesh Chakrabarty, who calls for an appreciation of the temporal complexity of both the present (Chakrabarty 2000, 88) as well as the past (Chakrabarty 2000, 109). As Chakrabarty observes, without undermining the differences between times, what in fact makes interpreting history possible is that it is not completely foreign to us, but that every “now” contains diverse pasts within itself. A historian cannot completely escape the hindsight of the present and is bound to the concepts and understandings of today, regardless of how critical their position, how much they dislike anachronism or as how radically different they perceive the past. In other words, the concepts of today are essential to realise even the irreducible difference of the past, or even that the sources that construct the past in the present are not intelligible in terms of present-day categorisations. As my work concerns the importance of memory for the understanding of queer in the past as well as in the present, I would extend the statement by Halperin and formulate that *everyone* is a hybrid animal in the terms of their location to time, and a historian should allow *no one* to forget that. A historian’s task is to demonstrate how the understandings of the past layer and construct the present.

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## **Appendices: Publications I, II, III, IV, and V**