MOIRA PÉREZ

Queer Politics of History

On Progress Narratives and Its Outcasts

THINKING OF LGBT rights means, among other things, thinking about various trajectories which are at once historical and geographical, as news about laws and policies often takes the shape of roads to or from somewhere – from darkness to light, from primitiveness to modernity, from East to West. Every now and then, as we hear that another country has entered the realm of LGBT rights, we are told that it has finally emerged from the past "dark ages" and entered the present – or the future – where it can join many other countries that preceded it. Some states "include" new subjects and collectives, as they broaden the spectrum of subjectivities protected by their legislation, while others are portrayed as lagging behind in this inevitable tide forward. It is seems difficult to even think of LGBT rights without drawing a line which positions us in specific historical, political, and geographical sites, which are relative to those of other subjects and countries, and relative to our own past and future. This relationship between past, present, and future – and between different places on the globe – is cast in a mold, which went through its own vicissitudes and has been severely criticized at least since the late 19th century: the idea of historical progress. By contending that "[h]istory is headed inexorably toward human emancipation" (Carr 2015), progress narratives grant meaning to historical events through a projection onto their fulfillment in the future. The renewal operated by the historical school, along with philosophical criticisms and the unfolding of profoundly tragic

lambda nordica **3-4/2016**

events in the northern hemisphere – most notably World War I and II – made it increasingly difficult to maintain those Great Stories, once their biases, violence, and exclusions had been exposed. As a result, narratives of progress seemed to leave sheepishly through the back door.

Or did they? In this paper, I seek to detect and analyze the ways in which either the idea of progress or some of its key underpinnings persist in 21st century narratives, even in the domain of projects such as many LGBT or queer histories, which renounce explicitly modern-style teleologies. I am interested in studying the mechanisms and resources through which those stories are produced, and the consequences they entail, with special attention to stories about sex and/or gender non-conforming subjects. With this aim in mind, in what follows, I will start by addressing some key issues on the idea of progress in history, in order to clarify what I mean with this term. Although it is far from being the only aspect of traditional narratives that has been criticized, it is one with specific political consequences I have chosen to focus on, as I hope to make clear particularly in the last two sections of my work. Secondly, I will consider how these narratives are built, looking into their preferred plots, themes, and strategies. Further, the paper will focus on the political consequences of these representations, on what is enabled and hindered for the subjects that produce them, and for the subjects they address. The project aims at pinpointing the implicit teleology of contemporary LGBT histories and considers their political consequences – what can be gained from adopting such narratives of progress and what is lost? In other words, when are these histories of progress not "progressive," and who do they exclude?

Before moving on, two clarifications should be made. Firstly, it should be noted that, although this paper is entitled "Queer Politics of History," its theoretical framework goes beyond scholars affiliated with queer theory. This is because in this context, *queer* refers more to a philosophical approach, than to a given body of works. I am interested in offering a queer analysis of the politics of history, which will also be supported by other contributions, mainly by philosophy of history, which partakes in its inclinations. I dare to say that a vast range of scholars in that field would share the aims Lisa Duggan (1995a) ascribes to queer theory:

> (1) the critique of humanist narratives which posit the progress of the self and of history, and thus tell the story of the heroic progress of gay liberationists against forces of repression, (2) the critique of empiricist methods which claim directly to represent the transparent "reality" of "experience," and claim to relate, simply and objectively, what happened, when and why, and (3) the critique of identity categories presented as stable, unitary or "authentic." (Duggan 1995a, 187)[1]

Rather than reviewing what queer theory has to say about the topic – although some of this will be done as well – this paper seeks to delve into the critique of the production and reproduction of contemporary narratives of progress within LGBT contexts, with particular attention to their practical ramifications.

Secondly, it should be said that while the analysis will refer repeatedly to the history of LGBT communities and their political struggles, my aim here is not to offer case studies, but rather to display various theoretical instruments useful for analyzing critically such cases.[2] Additionally, it is worth noting that the observations that follow, far from being exclusive to the LGBT domain, could be applied to other representations, particularly regarding activism and/or the various civil rights movements. In varying extents and with diverse commitments, each of them can engage in similar procedures and lead us to assess their implicit historical trajectories and their political ramifications.

On Progress Narratives

Progress as the driving force of history is usually linked to what Keith Jenkins (1997) has called "history in the upper case," that is:

> [A] way of looking at the past in terms which assigned to contingent events and situations an objective significance by identifying their place and function within a general schema of historical development usually construed as appropriately progressive. (Jenkins 1997, 5)

The idea of progress plays a key role in teleological approaches to history, that affirm a developmental curve in which events in the past can only make sense in relation to those that follow them. Each event builds upon the other toward an increasing improvement, which in the case of historiography takes the shape of an increase in sense and clarity (Menon 2008, 28–9). Positivism, Hegelian dialectics, Marxism, all drew on progressive histories, be it to support a glorious present or to call upon the struggle for a better future.

As mentioned above, teleological notions of history were among the first to be challenged in the context of the deep transformations that affected historiography in the 19th century. "History in the upper case" was gradually being replaced by "history in the lower case," which eschewed teleological structures and came forward as an objective, ideology-free, and improved version of the discipline. With time, however, it became evident that such teleological elements had their own versions circulating among these new, "scientific" narratives. As Jenkins (1997) notes,

> lower case historiography gains credit for its liberal pluralism, for its guarantee of academic freedom, [while] in practice liberal pluralism restricts its tolerances to those histories and historians who variably subscribe to the values of "the academic" lower case. (Jenkins 1997, 15)

Among other things, this leaves out versions such as many feminist or minority histories that refuse to comply with the professional mandates of historiography. The ideological load, far from having been effaced from history books, had just been replaced – under the guise of "objectivity" and "proper history"– with a different perspective: that of the dominant bourgeoisie. The trope of "progress" – both in "upper case" and in "lower case" history – functions at different levels, imbuing each of them with the same idea of being condemned to success. In the epistemological realm, a realist approach to historiography understands progress as furthering our knowledge about the past, correcting epistemological "mistakes" and misunderstandings, and gradually approaching the ideal of "'capturing' the plenitude of the past in its full complexity" (Berkhofer

1995, 31). Concurrently, the political side of progress upholds the idea that each episode in the history of humanity at large, or of a given part of it, obtains its meaning within a path that moves forward, toward its improvement. Thus, past and present are understood as hints of a greater future. As we will see in the following section, these kinds of tales are usually accompanied by other images such as those of "unveiling" or "authenticity," which convey the idea that there is some kind of core in humanity (or in any given group within it). This core will be allowed to express itself as our political landscape progresses, and will be unveiled by the discipline as its knowledge advances.

Having exposed the deflation of progress narratives, it must be said that the case of LGBT histories poses particular challenges in this respect, as do most of the "new subjects" undergoing the process of "learning to come into an identification" (Hall 1997, 54–5). In many cases the idea of progress, albeit its difficulties, has played a crucial role when imagining better life conditions for historically neglected collectives. As Heather Love (2009) assesses regarding the queer collective:

> Although many queer critics take exception to the idea of a linear, triumphalist view of history, we are in practice deeply committed to the notion of progress; despite our reservations, we just cannot stop dreaming of a better life for queer people. (Love 2009, 3)

In this context and with their history, it is understandable that "for queer subjects 'on the move' the notion of losing oneself in the past is not appealing" (Love 2009, 9), as it is a painful site to which no one wishes to return. This is why the temptation can be strong to maintain the structures of "traditional" history (in Scott's 1999 denomination), particularly in relation to the narratives of (cis) gay and lesbian identity. Below, we will return to this idea and look into the political costs of its commitments. For now, it suffices to note how Love (2009, 9) stresses that "the emphasis on progress in contemporary gay and lesbian politics has meant that today we must, like Odysseus, steel ourselves against close encounters with the queer past," as Odysseus, we are advised,

"listen to it, but do not allow yourself to be destroyed by it." This also involves affirming a sharp division between the past and the present; as if progress really meant that, the negative aspects were (all) left behind – something we will find further on, when addressing "temporal Manichaeism."

Themes and Strategies

Whether to shed hope on the future that awaits us, or to stress the difference between past sufferings and the present-day state of affairs, progress seems to accompany our understanding of the past and of historiography itself.[3] In any case, the question emerges: How are these histories of progress constructed? Which are their epistemological strategies? Which are their recurring themes and images?[4] How do they manage to contrive an idea of progress regarding LGBT subjects, even when our surroundings abound in counterexamples? In this section, in order to answer these questions, I will address four features of LGBT narratives that are particularly relevant, since they help build a teleological structure. I will start with some considerations on the differences between "gay and lesbian" and queer histories; then focus on the idea of visibility, through the work of Lisa Duggan; subsequently I will look into their dualistic presentation of time (for which I will recur to theorist of history Berber Bevernage for a general analysis, and to Heather Love for a LGBT-specific one); and finally their colonialist underpinnings, where it will be useful to refer to various postcolonial and/or queer contributions on the subject. In the next section, we will have the chance to work with the various contributions reconstructed here, as we consider the political underpinnings and consequences of these modes of relating to the past.

In his 1995 paper "The Queering of Lesbian/Gay History," Henry Abelove compares the disciplinary production in the era of "gay and lesbian" historiography with the – at the time – recent "queer" perspective. He takes as a reference his undergraduate students, who by the mid-1990s had begun to identify as "queer" and had developed a more critical approach to "gay and lesbian" historiography, of which Abelove's

own work is an example. Students questioned the recurrence of components such as the "trope of marginalization," or the presentation of characters as individuals "with deep subjectivity and a capacity for original and decisive action" (Abelove 1995, 50), or plots organized around a strong idea of the nation state. They were also critical of the idea of an "authentic" core, and maintained that there is no such thing as "unveiling" some sort of "sexual authenticity" (Abelove 1995, 51). Abelove's analysis reveals how the idea of progress is accompanied and nurtured by complementary notions such as individuality, authenticity, nationality, voluntarism, and originality, among others.

As an ally to the idea of "unveiling," we find the "trope of visibility," which also plays a key role in representations of LGBT past and present. Such is the point brought by Duggan, who quotes this trope as one of two frequent assumptions about "gay/lesbian history," along with the "narrative of heroic progress." In her review of a 1994 public exhibition named precisely "Becoming Visible: The Legacy of Stonewall," Duggan (1995b) reflects on the political and historical implications of the metaphor contained in the title. Speaking of visibility in these terms implies that whatever is made visible is transparent and knowable, and that the process of making it visible expresses a movement of progress toward greater freedom and authenticity.[5] When addressing specifically the risks of such gestures, Duggan concludes that visitors,

> might have walked through the entire exhibit without ever having some questionable beliefs challenged – that the heterosexual/homosexual binary is natural and universal, that history is the story of progress toward liberation, that the problems gay people confront are primarily ones of irrational prejudice and ignorance and the solutions are education and visibility. (Duggan 1995b, 193)

It seems that the visual metaphors contained in ideas such as "visibility," "unveiling," and "coming to light," despite their positive and buoyant tone, come at a considerable price for the communities they intend to "illuminate."

These narratives are supported by a particular understanding of time, which can be found not only in future-oriented histories (such as modern-style teleological narratives), but also in past-oriented approaches (as is the case with retrospective or reparation politics). Both outlooks, although divergent in many respects, may well share an underlying philosophy of history that "conceives of the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future in antinomic or even 'dualist' terms and treats them as discrete and mutually exclusive entities" (Bevernage 2015, 350). In the case of narratives of progress, the "dualist" opposition is between past and present, on the one hand, and future, on the other; in retrospective politics, it sets past against present and future. In both, this antinomic scenario allocates responsibilities and "evil" to one side of the binary division, and "performatively" administers temporality to the phenomena it studies. It can build events and characters as foreshadowings located in the past, anachronisms dwelling in the present, projections onto the future, and so forth. In the process, it manages to alternatively force closure or keep alive certain spaces, subjects, and possibilities in past, present, and future, and to lay the (ontological, metaphysical) grounds for political and moral judgment.

A case in point is the temporal configuration of LGBT narratives, such as the ones expressed in Stonewall memorials, in the celebration of legal recognition of same-sex couples, or in world maps of LGBT rights.[6] In them, certain turning points serve as sharp dividers of time, and define which subjects will be allowed into each side of the gap. As Love (2009, 10) has suggested, an aura of "social negativity" clings "to those who lived before the common era of gay liberation – the abject multitude against whose experience we define our own liberation," but also to "those who cannot make it" in the present. In its stead, what Love understands as an "affirmative turn" in queer studies demands we leave past "mistakes" behind (where all the suffering of those who preceded us is contained), effacing any remains of them in the present, and focusing instead on a present and a future placed in a line of progress. A universalizing gesture is necessary for the success of this "turn,"

> [g]iven the new opportunities available to *some* gays and lesbians, the temptation to forget – to forget the outrages and humiliations of gay and lesbian history and to ignore the ongoing suffering of those not borne up by the rising tide of gay normalization – is stronger than ever. (Love 2009, 10)

Thus, to the division of time in antinomic or dualist terms and the performative allocation of temporality stressed by Bevernage, we can add an affirmative turn allowed by the universalization of privileged LGBT (usually G, or L and G) experiences. Both Bevernage and Love lay emphasis on how these approaches overlook the innumerable modes of suffering and oppression still at work in our societies.[7]

In relation to this practice of universalization of specific experiences, it must be stressed that a revision of the notion of progress and its politics of history must also consider the global geopolitics of history, which plays a key role along with other axis such as class, race, and gender identity. Several authors have shown that in the (strikingly scarce) cases in which race, colonialism or diaspora are included in queer analysis, it is within a consideration of "white" queer experience as more advanced, and thus exemplary (even when this clearly contradicts what could be understood as a queer notion of temporality; cf. Halberstam 2005 or Dinshaw 2007). How can we reject the notions of progress and evolution, while presenting "queerness" as the ultimate expression beyond other experiences of sex and gender as varied as heterosexuality, feminism, and monogamy? (Love 2009; Hemmings 2011, 31–57). There seems to be a certain difficulty in offering reflections in terms of a global perspective, while avoiding a universalizing, progress-oriented bias in LGBT or even queer contributions. These narratives are rooted in what Gayatri Gopinath (2005) has called a "colonial *telos*"; depending on their geopolitical location, events, and characters are handpicked according to their relation to Western standards of advancement, and then alternatively placed in History or in Prehistory, in the past or in the present. As a counterpart, in the contexts to be invested with progress, Western narratives select as milestones the elements, which suggest an improve-

ment. It is them that distinguish "a primitive elsewhere" from "a modern 'here'" (Freccero 2007, 486), as well as from other configurations which, although chronologically contemporary, are believed to have "stayed behind" in the line of progress – or outside of history altogether.

In this regard, it is vital to turn to the dialogues queer theory has established with postcolonialism, queer of color critique, and queer diaspora.[8] Their focus on categories such as "nation," "identity," and "race," allows us to look into hegemonic Western discourse on "racialized heteropatriarchy" as "a project of modernity and modernization, as a colonial and civilizing mission, as an index of political and social advancement, and as a story of human liberty and freedom" (Eng et al. 2005, 8); in other words, as a narrative of progress under the guise of human rights or even of queer radicalness. They also allow us to turn a critical focus on queer practices themselves and question "the parochialism of some strands of queer studies" (Gopinath 2005, 160) and how we reproduce, implicitly or explicitly, a certain teleological trajectory in which we occupy a privileged location.

Political Effects/Affects

These considerations lead us to recognize how, in many cases, such narratives can be constructed in terms of progress due to a combination of privileged biases such as colonialism, but which also include cis-sexism, ableism, and racism, among others. In the remainder of this paper, I wish to focus on the practical repercussions of narratives of progress, and particularly on their exclusions. By stressing the relationship between progress and exclusion, I hope to make clear that advocating for inclusion in and by itself will not suffice, since narratives of progress are committed to a number of mechanisms (plain exclusion being only one of them) that neglect subjects, affects, and collectives in the past, present, and future.

As we saw with Bevernage (2015), temporality plays a key role in the configuration of these narratives, and consequently in their political repercussions. Among the functions that the author attributes to antinomic or dualistic temporal representations, I am specially interested in

considering what he calls their "exculpatory intellectual mechanisms": the ways in which they may serve the purpose of allocating all wrongdoing to (other agents in) the past, just like their progressive counterparts do, albeit from a different perspective. Dualistic representations (be they progressive or retrospective), such as the ones exposed by Love (2009), work along with a strict "temporal Manichaeism": "a moralistic stance in which the past is charged with the worst of all evil, while the present becomes morally discharged by simple comparison" (Bevernage 2015, 337). This serves to "protect contemporary humanity from moral responsibility" (Bevernage 2015, 348), particularly those who produce such representations and/or are targeted by them. One might ask: considering that violence and exclusion *do* exist in the present, how is such "contemporaneity" built? Fundamentally, these strategies differentiate chronological time from typological time, performatively allocate certain (negative) events and agents to the past, and blame contemporary problems on a "leaking from the past into the present." In this way, Bevernage notes, we find that not only "the past is evil," but also, and perhaps more importantly, "evil is past" – and with it, its responsibilities too. The author/s and intended readers can thus be positioned in a site of contemplation instead of "the morally more problematic position of the bystander, or worse, the beneficiary or accomplice" (Bevernage 2015, 344).

What about those who refuse to abide by such representational structures, and insist on pointing at the ongoing problems? When it comes to retrospective politics, Bevernage (2015, 348) understands that, "those people (victims and survivors as well as perpetrators) who were unwilling or unable to forgive tend to be seen as living anachronisms refusing to be contemporaneous with the rest of the nation," and as such are excluded from the profits of contemporaneity. In a similar line, although from a different theoretical perspective, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010, 22) notices that this configuration of history in terms of lineal progress, which he calls "the monoculture [*monocultura*, a game of words between a single crop and a single culture] of lineal time, the idea whereby history has a single, known meaning and direction," results in the production of "the non-existence" of "all those things that, accord-

ing to a temporal norm, are asymmetrical in comparison to whatever is considered advanced." The author concludes that this produces "the non-contemporaneity of the contemporary, the idea that simultaneity hides the asymmetry of the historical times that converge in it," which are two: the countries, people, and institutions that are "ahead of time," and those who are "left behind" and appear as residual (de Sousa Santos 2010, 22–23).[9]

This matter is particularly urgent in a celebratory atmosphere such as "gay pride culture" or queer hedonism, since celebration often means overlooking notably acute forms of violence. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, J. Halberstam (2011, 23) notices this fact and advocates against "triumphalist accounts of gay, lesbian, and transgender history that necessarily reinvest in robust notions of success and succession." Historically marginalized collectives, he contends, need stories forged in a non-triumphalist, non-grandiloquent key, capable of transmitting the complexities and contradictions present in their identities and trajectories. Relying on narratives of progress, on the contrary, draws a division in relation not only to those who did not profit from such improvements, but also to whomever denounce such exclusions. There will certainly be those who call them "traitors," but in any event it is they who, when producing narratives of the past (and when analyzing the present) do not stop short of pointing at the deficiencies, the miseries we insist on hiding in the closet – although, ironically, we celebrate having come out of it long ago.

Such considerations suggest that perhaps thinking of the relationship between politics and history means analyzing not only the political dimensions of *historiography* (how it is constructed, who can produce it, who is included in its narratives), but also the ways in which *politics* uses history and temporality. The dualistic history addressed by Bevernage (2015) (a particular – and particularly popular – version of what he calls "retrospective politics") has as one of its main consequences a sharp division between politics of the past and politics of the present and future. Apart from avoiding an engagement in contemporary violations of human rights, public discourse that places evil in the past seldom includes in its agenda the prevention of future violence – except as an appeal

to "remember," as if the mere fact of "not forgetting" was enough to eradicate present-day exclusion, violence, and death. This approach to temporality, along with the choice of certain agents and events as landmarks instead of looking into large-scale, complex processes, overlooks the ways in which "contemporary injustice often manifests itself in the form of structural repetition or continuity of injustices with a long history" (Bevernage 2015, 336), instead of presenting clean-cut differences with the past and/or the future.

To see how this functions specifically in the case of LGBT politics, we can turn to Duggan's (2002) contributions in relation to "homonormativity." She notices, for instance, that in many cases the line of progress that claims to describe the trajectory of an imagined "LGBT community," includes in its very terms a political pronouncement, reserving a specific place for radicals and conservatives. The author cites, among others, various representatives of conservative (male, cis) gay movements, which present themselves as "post-ideological," allotting civil rights activists and queer and gender theorists a place of anachronism (or we could say, following Johannes Fabian (2014), "allochronism") and even dishonesty. For example, they may be accused of trying to confound "the community" by "injecting" discussions on identity intersectionality in a conservative agenda that presents itself as unitary and inclusive, when in fact it represents an extremely limited spectrum of subjectivities. In this context, progress is sketched from a time of political tumultuousness up to one of stability and individualistic liberalism, in which the system is not questioned and individuals can finally retire to the domestic sphere (Duggan 2002, 182).

Finally, it should be noted that there are certain affects hosted by these representations, whereas others are actively expelled from them or labeled as anachronistic. Teleological histories outlined in "optimistic" tones, such as celebratory LGBT narratives, give shape to specific relations between history, politics in the present, and to our affective relation with the future we desire. In a dialogue with José Esteban Muñoz, Duggan (2009, 276) warns us about the perils of those narratives, since their "hope suppresses the messy vitality of political longings emanating from an else-

where that is always already marginalized." Far from it being a problem exclusive to the realm of the authoritarian right, it can also be found in calls from a liberal leftist politics based on "a falsely unified past" and "a vision of a homogenizing political future somehow always best represented by straight, white guys" (Duggan and Muñoz 2009, 275–6). Both theorists stress the importance of distinguishing (although not in a binary, discrete way) between a "non-critical" modality of hope and an "informed" one, between "an emotional situation predicated on control" and "a certain practice of hope that helps escape from a script in which human existence is reduced" to present possibilities (Duggan and Muñoz 2009, 277). Instead of advocating a fixed notion of universalizing progress, or of focusing our critical gaze on the past, *docta spes* is about imagining possible futures, with an awareness of the risks involved, through the exercise of critical thinking: it is Utopia's most creative and constructive moment.

Rethinking Past/Present/Future

It could be said that cutting ties with the past has been a survival strategy for LGBT and queer folks, thereby refusing to suffer the same oppressions as their predecessors, struggling to occupy new spaces (including the public sphere), and repeating almost as a mantra that LGBT and queer people deserve a better life. In some cases, the relationship with history took the shape of narratives of progress, in which painful events in the past has acquired meaning as stepping-stones in the path toward a brighter future. In others, it meant looking back at the past in search of justice, and keeping memory alive as a way of guaranteeing that mistakes would not be repeated. In both approaches, the study of the past takes center stage, and builds around images such as authenticity, visibility, hope, and modernization, while drawing on strategies that include universalization, allochronism – and even forgetting.

As perhaps every survival strategy, our relationship with the past has proven to have its benefits and its costs. In order to maintain a sharp division between past and present, subjects and events must be carefully distributed along a timeline, which carries a political and moral load, and necessarily operates certain exclusions. Queer and LGBT subjects

who do not enjoy the benefits attributed to the present are stigmatized as anachronistic, at best, and as traitorous, at worst. Progress does not arrive to all places equally, either, and lagging behind in History, or even Prehistory, the rest of the world is often presented as awaiting queer illumination from the North.

But what if those "forces of repression" that "gay liberationists" should be fighting against are not only in the past, and not only abroad? What if they dwell within LGBT and queer communities? What if by focusing on past injuries we neglect denouncing current ones, or preventing those yet to come? What if our hope for a better future makes us choose to see ourselves as a foreshadowing of good things to come, instead of returning a critical gaze upon ourselves and the exclusions we reproduce by acts or omissions?

Far from suggesting we give up hope for the future, or defend some refreshed version of that impossibly "neutral," "lower-case history," it is my stance that the best approach vis-à-vis our relationship to history and progress is to broaden our spectrum in chronological, geographical, and political terms. We need to open up our view to include past, present, and future, instead of only looking at the past – as in retrospective politics – or at the present and/or future – as in progress narratives. Queering our relationship to the past means, among other things, to question the division itself and to expose the mechanisms and interests behind it. Simultaneously, an intersectional stance challenges us to approach our history and our present avoiding the universalization of "white" identities from the Global North and the academic and/or intellectual élite, and to maintain a critical alert which can serve as a counterweight to the universalization of "white" – and, one might add, able-bodied, cis-gender, and mostly male – experience. This will probably be best achieved if we engage in collaborative knowledge production, working side by side with people from various backgrounds. Moreover, it necessarily entails modifying our own position in the tale: in all likelihood, our own investments in the present, and its continuities with past and future, will surface – together with the political and professional responsibilities derived from them.

It is, in short, an invitation to collectively build this broader picture, and contribute with creative ways of making our pasts, presents, and futures more hospitable for all.

MOIRA PÉREZ, PhD and BA in Philosophy at Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina. She is a teacher and researcher, and is currently Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, post-doctoral Fulbright scholar 2016–2017 at New York University and post-doctoral CONICET scholar 2016–2018 at Universidad de Buenos Aires. Her research applies various developments born mainly from philosophy of history, ethics and queer theory to issues that go beyond the latter's classical analysis of gender and sexuality. In her PhD research, this approach focused on the disputes on representations of the past, particularly regarding "new subjects" traditionally excluded from historiographical canons. Her current research focuses on representations of present-past in terms of progress: epistemologies, politics, and exclusions in narratives of success, particularly in Latin American and Argentinian contemporary contexts. Simultaneously, she is increasingly interested in topics of professional ethics in relation to philosophy as a profession, in both teaching and research, and professional ethics in the academy in general.

REFERENCES

Abelove, Henry. 1995. "The Queering of Lesbian/Gay History." *Radical History Review* 62:44–57.

Arondekar, Anjali, Ann Cvetkovich, Christina Hanhardt, Regina Kunzel, Tavia Nyong'o, Juana María Rodríguez, Susan Stryker (compiled by Daniel Marshall, Kevin Murphy and Zeb Tortorici). 2015. "Queering Archives." *Radical History Review* 122:211–31.

Berkhofer, Jr., Robert. 1995. *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*. London: Harvard University Press.

Bevernage, Berber. 2015. "The Past Is Evil/Evil Is Past: On Retrospective Politics, Philosophy of History, and Temporal Manichaeism." *History and Theory* 54.3:333–52.

Brown, Wendy. 2001. *Politics Out of History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Carr, David. 2015. "Teleology and the Experience of History." Paper presented at Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 12.

Caserio, Robert, Tim Dean, Lee Edelman, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz. 2006. "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory." *PMLA* 121.3:819–36.

De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. 2010. *Descolonizar el saber, reinventar el poder*. Montevideo: Trilce Editorial.

Dinshaw, Carolyn. 2007. "Temporalities." In *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, edited by Paul Strohm, 107–23. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duggan, Lisa. 1995a. "The Discipline Problem." In *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*, edited by Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter, 185–95. New York: Routledge.

–. 1995b. "'Becoming Visible: The Legacy of Stonewall,' New York Public Library, June 18–September 24, 1994." *Radical History Review* 62:188–94.

–. 2002. "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism." In *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, edited by Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson, 175–94. Durham: Duke University Press.

Duggan, Lisa, and José Esteban Muñoz. 2009. "Hope and Hopelessness: A Dialogue." *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 19.2:275–83.

Edenheim, Sara. 2014. "Lost and Never Found: The Queer Archive of Feelings and Its Historical Propriety." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 24.3:36–62.

Eng, David, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz. 2005. "What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?" *Social Text* 23.3–4:1–17.

Fabian, Johannes. 2014. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ferguson, Roderick A. 2003. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Freccero, Carla. 2007. "Queer Times." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106.3:485–94.

Gopinath, Gayatri. 2005. "Bollywood Spectacles: Queer Diasporic Critique in the Aftermath of 9/11." *Social Text* 23.3–4:157–69.

Halberstam, Judith. 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.

–. 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hall, Stuart. 1997. "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities." In *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, edited by Anthony D. King, 31–68. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hemmings, Clare. 2011. *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Jenkins, Keith, ed. 1997. *The Postmodern History Reader*. London: Routledge.

Love, Heather. 2009. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Menon, Madhavi. 2008. "Teleology: Spurning Consequence in *Venus and Adonis*." In

Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film*, 27–50. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pérez, Moira. 2010. "Figuraciones opresivas, contrafiguraciones emancipadoras." *Cuadernos de Filosofía* 55:93–116.

–. 2014. "We Don't Need Another Hero: Queering Representations of Dissident Sexualities from the Recent Argentine Past." *Historia da Historiografia* 16:203–16.

Romero Bachiller, Carmen. 2005. "Poscolonialismo y Teoría Queer." In *Teoría Queer: Políticas Bolleras, Maricas, Trans, Mestizas*, edited by David Córdoba, Javier Sáez and Paco Vidarte, 149–64. Madrid: Egales.

Scott, Joan Wallach. 1999. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press.

White, Hayden. 1973. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

NOTES

1. To a certain extent, these broad areas could be said to describe the work of feminist critique of women's history as well. Consider for example Joan Scott's (1999, 6), in which "the story is no longer about the things that have happened to women and men and how they have reacted to them; instead it is about how the subjective and collective meanings of women and men as categories of identity have been constructed." Or Wendy Brown's (2001, 4) invitation to "ask how we might conceive and chart power in terms other than logic, develop historical political consciousness in terms other than progress, articulate our political investments without notions of teleology and naturalized desire, and affirm political judgment in terms that depart from moralism and conviction." On this occasion, however, I will mostly focus on queer theorists and philosophers of history, partly due to the limited extension of the paper, and because I have chosen to refer to the specificity of LGBT narratives as such, which has been the focus of queer theory.
2. These instruments constitute the theoretical facet of a broader research in which I analyze various instances of the disputes about the past, with a particular focus on those that take place in the public space and/or beyond academic historiography, such as monuments, public statements from LGBT organizations, LGBT-themed films, and articles in printed or digital media. For some examples of the application of this theoretical framework to specific cases, see Pérez (2010; 2014).
3. During the editing process of this paper, teleologies signaling a bright(er) future took center stage on the occasion of the massive killing that took place at a gay night club in Orlando, USA. Slogans such as "Love will prevail" multiplied in banners and websites, suggesting that if these events are to have any sense, it is in relation to a future in which they will be impossible. The racist and Islamophobic accounts of this

event, on the other hand, are a good example of how LGBT "progress" is unevenly accredited around the globe, and serves not only as a historical standard (in the West, the present is interpreted as the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of those that preceded us and struggled for it to be possible), but also as a geopolitical one. Specific countries, religions, and ethnicities – be them real or assigned – are ascribed to the realm of brutality, primitiveness, "not-yet-there" in relation to LGBT rights and respect, while the West defines and is defined by what constitutes evolution.

4. Although it is not my intention here to offer a tropological analysis, I am aware of the narrativist echo in my proposal, which owes much to Hayden White's (1973: x) work on historiography as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse." As in White, I will be less interested in the explicit theoretical concepts evident in narratives of the past, and more in their formal understructure and the kinds of images and themes used to convey such concepts.
5. For another, more recent analysis of a public exhibition on LGBT history, see Sara Edenheim's article "Lost and Never Found" (2014). She criticizes the various ways in which curators assign specific meanings to the works in display, thus "killing" queer fantasies by turning them into "touchable" and "teachable" moments (Edenheim 2014, 48–9). If I prefer to follow Duggan in this respect, it is mainly because her article is specifically focused on visibility and progress, while Edenheim aims more at defending political negativity as a proper queer approach (to which I return in note 7).
6. See for example "Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights around the world," by *The Guardian* in association with ILGA and All Out: http://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2014/may/-sp-gay-rights-world-lesbian-bisexual-transgender; or http://www.hrc.org/blog/video-love-wins-at-the-supreme-court, an HRC "video that shows the rest of the world [non-USA] that love prevails" (both accessed in June, 2016).
7. Rejecting this "affirmative turn" does not necessarily mean embracing the queer "negative turn" defended by Lee Edelman and others. Since it is not the aim of this article to analyze or appraise "queer negativity," I will have to limit my comments to noting that, from my perspective: 1) queer negativity and withdrawal are far from being the only outcomes once we acknowledge antagonism as an inherent element of society, as this can also lead us to build positive strategies to deal with agonism; and 2) the negative political effects caused by narratives of progress on the most vulnerable subjects within the LGBT collective, which I shall describe in the following sections, recrudesce in a program that invites us to "trace the untraversable path that leads to no good and has no other end than an end to the good as such" (Edelman in Caserio et al. 2006, 822).
8. Apart from the works cited here, see Carmen Romero Bachiller (2005), Anjali Arondekar et al. (2015), and Roderick Ferguson (2003).
9. I wish to thank Blas Radi for this suggestion.

SAMMANFATTNING

Att framåtskridande är historiens drivkraft var en av de första föreställningarna som kom att ifrågasättas till följd av de många förändringar som påverkade 1800-talets historiografi. Det började med en kritik av spekulativ historiefilosofi och har därefter fortsatt ända fram till mera samtida synliggöranden av teleologiska drag som finns, om än inte öppet, i nutida narrationer. Historier om LHBT- eller queera grupper medför speciella utmaningar i detta avseende, eftersom tanken på framåtskridande har spelat en avgörande roll för kampen för bättre livsvillkor för, historiskt sett, missgynnade kollektiv.

Artikeln söker påvisa och analysera hur idén om framåtskridande lever kvar även i 2000-talets narrationer, till och med inom sådana projekt, som många LHBT- eller queerhistorier, som klart tar avstånd från moderna teleologier. Den granskar mekanismerna och resurserna som berättelserna skapas genom och med, samt konsekvenser som de får, med särskild tonvikt på berättelser om köns- och/eller genusmässigt icke-konforma subjekt. Texten inleds med en diskussion om vissa centrala aspekter på föreställningen om historiskt framåtskridande, därefter behandlas hur berättelserna är uppbyggda och vilka handlingar, teman och strategier som lyfts fram. Artikeln belyser även framåtskridandenarrationens politiska konsekvenser, vad som främjas och vad som blockeras för dem som skapar den och för dem som den riktar sig till. Projektet avser att tydliggöra den implicita teleologin i nutida LHBT-historier, att granska dess politiska konsekvenser och att bidra till utvecklandet av ansvarsfulla alternativ.

Keywords: progress, politics, teleology, temporal Manichaeism