agreement, I remain unconvinced that a teleological imperative is what impedes our understanding of past sexualities," she gets it exactly wrong (27). The point has *never* been to arrive at a complete understanding of either sexuality or the past. Unhistoricism's critique lies in its insistence that such knowledge can never be entirely available, that full disclosure is a fantasy whose phantasmic nature is forgotten to our detriment.

10. Especially when the issue is queerness, we need a critique of teleology that can talk back to the dominant modes of historicism. Such a critique not only challenges the freighted hierarchies among peoples and ideas that fuel much of the violence in the world today but also insists that presence is not, and never can be, full. Identities, texts, peoples, ideas register across time, slide backward, crawl forward, repeat themselves. We need an (un)historicist methodology that is fluid enough to deal with this queer cornucopia.

Madhavi Menon
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Reply:

I am grateful to have the opportunity for further dialogue with Carla Freccero and Madhavi Menon on issues raised in my essay on the new unhistoricism.

Carla Freccero is right: my essay is not a defense of teleology—nor was it intended to be. The specter of teleology I invoke is one that haunts the pages of her work, as well as that of Madhavi Menon—a specter that, I argue, is conjured to enjoin compliance with a particular mode of queering temporality. "Teleology" in their work is an accusation that anchors their assertions of antinormativity; it is not a method of history writing I champion but rather a fulcrum I use to analyze their claims. Because those claims have been heralded as a new method, I tried to unpack the various logics informing it to assess its utility for a range of projects tethered to the past, including the performance of queer affect, textual readings, and history making.

In focusing so intently on the work of three scholars—a move I thought justified by the convergence of many of their ideas and their assertions of alliance—I risked not only conjoining their different projects but also raising the affective stakes for each of us. My hope was that these risks would be offset by the benefits of a more precise articulation of our methodological differences. I could see no way to attain that precision without discussing the details of each scholar's work. But instead of engaging with the specific terms of my critique or with my own attempt to address problems of periodization and chronology, Freccero and Menon have responded, in the main, by reading my essay symptomatically: as structural repetition compulsion, as evidence of my own bad faith or of my "politically incorrect" unconscious. I leave it to others to judge whether these accusations have merit or, more important, whether my essay is less than a respectful and serious engagement with their work.

Since Menon characterizes my treatment of unhistoricism as disappointingly "entrenched in oppositionality," it might be useful to indicate the areas in which our views coincide. In addition to the items explicitly listed in my essay (27), as well as my appreciative description of aspects of their work (29–30), my analysis articulates considerable sympathy with queer explorations of temporality that seek, as Freccero puts it, "to find in time a way 'out,' or at least another way." The "mournful and celebratory queer twistings of time" in recent scholarship that she enumerates represent, to my mind, important collective developments (22, 26), in which I would include her own deconstructive and psychoanalytic "spectral . . . historiography" (28). Freccero and I concur that "history itself" has "varying phenomenal temporalities," that history "presents itself as a reading," and

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that the "work of mourning" enacts its own form of "queer temporality." Menon and I agree that "full disclosure" of the past and of sexuality "is a fantasy" (indeed, this problem forms the premise of my forthcoming book). Furthermore, my essay was motivated by the beliefs, in Menon's words, that queerness is "a critical praxis" and that the "ongoing theorization and critique of dominant concepts is a necessary intellectual enterprise."

One source of impasse, however, is a disinclination to credit unhistoricism's own ascendance to its dominance in queer studies. Unhistoricism does not possess the duration or institutional power of prior regimes of critical practice in the profession at large, but its rapid uptake as the new queer common sense has engendered its own ideological enforcements. And so, in the spirit of "ongoing theorization and critique," as well as out of a genuine desire for collective critical dialogue, I want to identify, in as neutral language as possible, remaining areas of substantive disagreement. These concern, in the first instance, the knotty problem of how to negotiate the conceptual and methodological tensions between the projects of queering time and writing history. This negotiation involves some difficult methodological decisions: whether and how to balance the claims of historical similitude and alterity when engaging with the past, whether and how to use psychoanalysis and deconstruction to enable diachronic understandings across time, and whether and how sequence and chronology might have any utility for queer studies. Beyond these historiographic issues, at stake more broadly are the role of empirical inquiry in queer studies, the adequacy of *homo* and *hetero* as descriptors of incommensurate phenomena, the tension between identity and nonidentity in contemporary understandings of queerness, and the purposes, politics, and intended outcomes of queering. I hope that these topics will be subject to others' elaboration and assessment.

One further point of dispute emerges from their letters. Both Freccero (implicitly) and Menon (explicitly) frame our differences as a replay of the "debate" between Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and David Halperin. That, to my mind, is far from the case. That "debate" is over. The historiographic choice is no longer between a supersessionist diachronic history and an examination of synchronic complexities and contradictions. Few queer historicists, historians, and theorists of sexuality are indifferent to the simultaneous existence of incoherent discourses of sexuality, whether in the past or in the present. Nor would many commit to writing a teleological history, in which one model of identity seamlessly supersedes the next. The point is not to "reenact" this debate but to take stock of where it has brought us and where we might go, as I begin to do in "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography" (*A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry [Blackwell, 2007; 124–45; print]).

This misapprehension of what is at stake may arise, at least in part, from the dedication of my essay to the scholar whose work I felt had been, above others, misrepresented as teleological in the authors' work. Although the substantive differences between Sedgwick and Halperin are no longer at issue—which is why my essay positions them as part of the *pre*history of our current concerns—what may still be relevant is the productive model of queer critique they represent. If, as Freccero (echoing Benjamin) concludes, the storm of temporality keeps blowing us "backward . . . into the future," we might locate in that prior engagement the capacity to move forward. Freccero's clarification that her aim is "to discuss a temporality that is precisely not history" is one step in that direction (although it leaves intact her claims regarding history's inevitably problematic mode of knowledge production). Menon's recognition that "[t]here is no one historicism just as there is no one form of queerness" is another. Such assertions may herald the possibility of further constructive dialogue regarding the specific work of "history," "historicism," and "queerness," as well as about, as my essay put it, "the unique affordances of different methods for negotiating

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the complex links among sexuality, temporality, and history making" (23).

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Sweden's *OED*

To the Editor:

I was delighted—nay, transfixed with patriotic elation—when I saw Ursula Lindqvist's essay "Majors and Minors in Europe's African Enterprise: Oyono's *Une vie de boy* in Danish and Swedish Translations"in the January 2013 issue of *PMLA* (128.1 [2013]: 149–55). However, my sense of jingoism diminished considerably, in a masochistically pleasurable, Coetzeean fashion, as I plumbed the depths of Lindqvist's eerily exhilarating exposé of Sweden's implication in the European colonial enterprise.

Perhaps my faultfinding is merely overcompensation, but, all the same: in the essay, the Swedish word *kommisarie* is misspelled; the correct spelling is *kommissarie*, as evidenced in the Swedish Academy's dictionary, known as the *SAOB* ("Kommissarie"; *Svenska Akademiens ordbook*; Svenska Akademien, n.d.; Web; 21 May 2013). Once completed, the *SAOB* will rival the *OED* (forgive my jingoism, obviously impervious to Lindqvist's crystalline logic).

I was, incidentally, fortunate enough to make a study visit to the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) while earning my master's degree in library and information science. The NAI will never be quite the same for me since reading Lindqvist's essay.

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