

Susanne Jung

BOUNCING BACK: **QUEER RESILIENCE**

in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century
English Literature and Culture



[transcript] queer studies

From:

Susanne Jung

**Bouncing Back: Queer Resilience in Twentieth
and Twenty-First Century English Literature and Culture**

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LGBTQ people have strategies of resilience at their disposal to help them deal with the challenge that heteronormativity as a power structure poses to their affective lives. This book makes the concept of resilience available to queer literary and cultural studies, analysing these strategies in terms of narration, performance, bodies, and space. Resilience turns out to be a highly interactive mode of being in the world, which can set free creative energy as well as draw inspiration and energy from artistic work. Authors and artists discussed include Katherine Mansfield, Christopher Isherwood, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Jeanette Winterson, Michael Cunningham, and Ian McKellen.

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Introduction

Towards a Theory of Queer Resilience

Consider the following: a world-renowned actor describing, in 2002, in an interview how he was able to cry – that is produce actual tears – on stage only after, in his late forties, he had come out to his parents as a gay man (McKellen, *Inside the Actor's Studio*). Something had obviously unlocked in him by his act of revealing his queer sexuality, which opened him up to a deeper level of connecting with his own emotions on stage. Consider also the matter-of-fact statement, two years later, of German football club FC St. Pauli's former president Corny Littman that, in his estimation, the ramifications of coming out currently as an active European top league gay male football player were bound to take too much of a toll on these young players' psychological health: "Ich würde keinem Profi raten, sich zu outen. Der soziale Druck wäre nicht auszuhalten [I would not recommend any professional player to come out. The social pressure would be unbearable, S.J.]" (qtd. in Walther-Ahrens 7). As of the writing of this book, two male football players have come out after retiring from European Premier Leagues, Robbie Rogers in 2013 and Thomas Hitzlsperger in 2014. Still, as of the last fifteen years, no active player in any of the major European leagues has dared to prove Littman's estimation wrong.¹ The question of whether LGBTQ individuals, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, deem it safe to come out of the closet seems to depend,

¹ Robbie Rogers has since come out of retirement and continued to play in a U.S. league as an active out-gay football player. Whether this proves that closeted players' fears around coming out in one of the top European leagues are unreasonable will have to remain to be seen (cf. Rogers). For some of the fears and presumed ramifications regarding a potential coming out in the *Bundesliga*, see Adrian Bechtold's 2012 interview with a closeted German gay male football player who wished to remain anonymous (cf. Bechtold). Thomas Hitzlsperger addressed his gay sexuality for the first time, after retiring, in an interview in German newspaper *Die Zeit* (cf. Hitzlsperger, "Homosexualität wird im Fussball ignoriert" and "I finally figured out that I preferred living with a man"). Openly gay ex-NBA basketball player John Amaechi blames the dearth of out-gay top league football players on the 'toxic' climate he makes out in the leadership and management of European Premier league football clubs (cf. Amaechi). No doubt, the 1998 suicide of Justin Fashanu, the first and to date only active openly-gay football player in the English Premier league, who came out in 1990, also still haunts some of these interviews. The situation seems to be slightly better in women's professional team sports.

still, on a number of factors, among them the environment they find themselves in, age and vulnerability of the individual in question, support systems available to them, and cultural and sociopolitical contexts, to name just a few. The two previous examples represent the two ends of a scale of what contemporary Western queer affective experience can look like as of the writing of this book and has, I argue, looked like for the better part of the last one hundred years. It is between these poles of queer affective experience and queer subjectivities and lives that this book wishes to situate itself.

I take as a starting point for my enquiry Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's claim from her book *Epistemology of the Closet* that "many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured – indeed, fractured – by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century" (1). In her work Sedgwick builds, among other theorists, on the ideas of Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. Foucault convincingly argued that our current system of categorizations of sexual identities dates from the nineteenth century. Earlier centuries, Foucault claimed, had not understood sexual deviancy in terms of identities, in terms of something that was believed to be innate to an individual, but as a set of deviant sexual acts that might potentially be undertaken by anyone. Says Foucault, "[t]he nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology" (*History of Sexuality* 43). Recent historical research by David M. Halperin and others has corroborated the larger historical developments posited by Foucault, but historians have also found that the ontological shift from sexual acts to sexual identities already occurred over the course of the 'long' eighteenth century and was indeed mostly completed by the middle of the nineteenth century (cf. Halperin); it can furthermore be understood to have occurred within the context of the development of larger regimes of normalization and systematization that were taking place in European society and thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Foucault developed his idea of the subject as being constituted by historically specific discourses as a direct countermodel to psychoanalytic understandings of the subject as ruled by instincts and drives, with non-heteronormative sexualities thought of as a developmentally early stage that needed to be overcome for the subject to reach full adulthood. Writing after Foucault the question remains, for queer theory but also presumably for other areas of poststructuralist thought: Can the subject and subjective experience as a field of affective experience be redeemed – without necessarily recurring to the discourse of psychoanalysis? And in what language, with what kind of terminology, what kind of discourse can it be grasped, talked about, described, understood?

I take as premises for the present study two assumptions: One, that heteronormativity poses an affective challenge to queer peoples' lives. And two, the notion

that queer people are not without means to deal with this challenge. My thesis is the following: Queer subjects have strategies of resilience at their disposal to help them cope with the challenge heteronormativity – as a power structure – poses to their affective lives.

Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, I take queer, for the context of this study, to mean “a continuing moment, movement, motive – recurrent, eddying, *trou-blant*. The word ‘queer’ itself means *across* – it comes from the Indo-European root –*twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (traverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*. [...] The immemorial current that *queer* represents is as antiseparatist as it is antiassimilationist. Keenly it is relational, and strange” (*Tendencies* xii). As Sedgwick has it, “one of the things that ‘queer’ can refer to” is “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically” (*Tendencies* 8). I also, more generally speaking, employ the term queer as an umbrella term for talking about LGBTQ subjectivities and lives.²

Previous theorists of queer affect, such as Ann Cvetcovich and others,³ have for the past two decades been focussing mainly on the traumatic effects of hegemonic power structures on a given subject’s internal experience when investigating the interior lives of queer subjects. However, there has been a slight change of focus in both neuroscientific and psychological research in recent years, moving away from the concept of trauma and focusing instead on a given subject’s strategies of resilience when dealing with challenging life experiences.

The concept of resilience, as shall be explained in greater depth below, describes a subject’s ability to withstand, deal and cope with a challenging life experience by drawing on a range of internal and external resources available to the individual at a given point in time. Some individuals, researchers claim, may be more resilient than others, at certain times, in certain contexts, but resiliency is also something which can be trained and learned. An individual may develop a range of strategies of resilience when dealing with stressful lifetime events.

This book aims at making the concept of resilience available to queer literary and cultural studies, looking at strategies of resilience in twentieth and twenty-first century cultural and literary texts. If the modern system of heteronormative power structures can be said to have been largely in place towards the middle

2 The capital letters stand for, variously, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or transsexual and queer or questioning. As this by no means covers the whole range of human sexualities and genders beyond heteronormativity, an asterisk is sometimes added, indicating that the list could be expanded to include further terms of self-identification and self-description. The common usage of ‘queer’ as an umbrella term of the above list strikes me as eminently feasible.

3 Cf. e.g. Ann Cvetcovich, *An Archive of Feelings*; and Heather Love, *Feeling Backward*.

of the nineteenth century, as Foucault and others have argued, one should also be able to assume that queer subjects have always had or have concurrently been developing strategies of resilience in order to deal with this challenge to their affective lives. Looking at cultural texts from the nineteenth – and possibly even earlier – centuries lies, however, outside the scope of the present study. I take, for the purpose of this book, the Oscar Wilde trial and Wilde's conviction in 1895 on acts of 'gross indecency' as a turning point in history that catapulted (homo) sexuality to the forefront of people's consciousness. After the Wilde trial, I argue, normative and deviant sexualities took on a new form of visibility in the English speaking world.⁴ If during the second half of the nineteenth century, one could, in the English speaking world, still evade having one's same-sex desires marked out (even to oneself), prosecuted and labelled as deviant, this proved to be much harder after the turn of the century. A case in point would be for instance Katherine Mansfield musing in Wellington, New Zealand, in her journal in 1907 on her newly developed feelings for her friend, the painter Edith Kathleen Bendal, with whom she had spent some time at her family's seaside bungalow. Katherine Mansfield explicitly links here her own feelings to the figure of Oscar Wilde and Wildean sexual deviancy. Claire Tomalin quotes Mansfield's journal at length in her biography *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life*.

"Here by a thousand delicate suggestions I can absorb her – for the time. What an experience! And when we returned to town, small wonder that I could not sleep, but tossed to and fro, and yearned, and realized a thousand things which had been obscure ... O Oscar! Am I peculiarly susceptible to sexual impulse? I must be, I suppose – but I rejoice. Now, each time I see her to put her arms round me and hold me against her [*sic*]. I think she wanted to, too; but she is afraid and custom hedges her in, I feel. We shall go away again." (Mansfield qtd. in Tomalin 36)

I thus take the first decade of the twentieth century as the historical starting point for my enquiry into strategies of queer resilience, and Mansfield's short story "Leves Amores", written later in 1907, is the earliest literary text analysed in the present study.⁵

4 On the reception of the Wilde trial and the increased visibility of the discourse on same-sex desire after the turn of the century, cf. Joseph Bristow, "Introduction" and Gregory Woods, *Homintern* 31-41.

5 For a further discussion of Katherine Mansfield's treatment of same-sex desire in her life and her work as well as an analysis of "Leves Amores" see the chapter on spatial strategies.

The Turn to Resilience

Theorists of queer affect, such as for instance Ann Cvetkovich in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* and Heather Love in *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, have been focussing mainly on the negative effects of hegemonic power structures on a given subject's internal experience. Hegemonic power structures, such as heteronormativity, can undoubtedly have a traumatizing (in the sense of wounding; trauma in its original sense translated from the Ancient Greek means wound) effect on an individual's interior experience, and these negative feelings have indeed been explored in queer studies over the last fifteen years. Cvetkovich's book is more closely concerned with an archive of feelings that is produced inside one individual, whereas Love's project is more focussed towards larger historical structures of backward feelings and our present engagement with the legacy of bad feelings of queer subjects of the past. In their thinking, Cvetkovich and Love stand in a tradition with other queer critics' theorizations on negative affect, such as for example Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on shame (cf. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*), Sara Ahmed's work on queer feelings of discomfort and grief in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* and Judith Halberstam's work on failure (cf. *The Queer Art of Failure*).

Projects like Cvetkovich's and Love's books on trauma and backward feelings make important points: past and present experiences of social exclusion that many queers still face can indeed produce bad feelings. However, I do share critic Elizabeth Freeman's uneasiness with these traditions of thinking the negative in queer studies. In her essay "Time Binds, or Erotohistoriography", Freeman suggests that the turn in queer studies toward loss, failure, shame and negativity may be premature, asking where there might be a place for a politics of pleasure in all of this.⁶ Her own countermodel of erotohistoriography suggests that "we might imagine ourselves haunted by ecstasy, not just by loss"; indeed, "residues", says Freeman, of "positive affect [...] might be available for queer counter- (or para-) historiographies" (66). Similarly, for José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, "queerness exists [...] as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future" (1). He contends that "[w]e must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*. [...] Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present" (1). Queerness is for Muñoz "an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (1). I wish to make a similar reparative argument to the one both Freeman and Muñoz make on the level of the collective or social, on the level of the individual by proposing a slight change of focus.

6 Cf. Freeman 58-59.

I am borrowing from a turn that has been happening in the neurosciences and in psychology over the course of the last fifteen years, where there has been a slight change of focus by scientists studying experiences of the negative, moving away from the concept of trauma and focussing instead on a given subject's strategies of resilience when dealing with challenging life experiences. I would like to offer the concept of resilience as a framework to theorize queer affect *alongside* the concept of trauma and feeling backward that has been predominantly used in conceptualizing queer affect so far.⁷ The concept of resilience, in these disciplines of thinking, describes a subject's ability to withstand, deal and cope with a challenging life experience by drawing on a range of internal and external resources available to the individual at a given point in time. Some individuals may be more resilient than others, at certain times, in certain contexts, but resiliency is also something which can be trained and learned. An individual may develop a range of strategies of resilience when dealing with stressful lifetime events.⁸

Resilience, in its original sense derived from its Latin root (*resilire*), means bouncing back, to rebound, to spring back, so resilience might be termed the ability to bounce back, or spring back. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines resilience as "elasticity; the power of resuming an original shape or position after compression, bending, etc.," as well as the "quality or fact of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness, etc.; robustness; adaptability".⁹ As has become apparent in resilience research over the last three decades, human resilience can more aptly be grasped by figurative notions

7 In this book, I do not make a conceptual difference between 'affective experience' and 'emotional experience'. Both describe an individual's experiencing what is commonly referred to as 'feelings'. These 'feelings' also always co-occur in the human body/mind with what somatic researchers describe as 'bodily feelings' or 'sensations' (cf. Levine). I look at 'sensations' extensively in the chapter on bodily strategies. I am following Cvetkovich and others in not differentiating between 'affect' and 'emotion' (cf. Cvetkovich in Ahmed 205-206). I am aware that a different usage of these terms can be found in the work of some cultural theorists. A critical discussion, with which I would concur, of the so-called affective turn and of a conceptual differentiation between 'affect' and 'emotion' can be found in the second edition of Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (cf. 205-211). In the discipline of psychology, Silvan Tomkins differentiates between these terms, employing the term affects only to a limited number of emotions which are similar to the emotions described already by Charles Darwin as primary emotions and studied extensively by Paul Ekman and others. Emotions in this stricter definition of the term would then apply to an unlimited number of emotional states that one can make out to describe various shades of emotional experience (cf. Tomkins; Levine).

8 Cf. Fröhlich-Gildhoff and Rönnau-Böse, *Resilienz*; Masten and Wright, "Resilience over the Lifespan". For an easy-to-read yet still thorough introduction to the topic, I can also recommend Berndt, *Resilienz*.

9 Resiliency is similarly defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "elasticity" as well as the "capacity to recover from misfortune, shock, illness, etc".

of elasticity and flexibility than by notions of hardness and hardiness. Resilience, in current research, is no longer regarded as an individual trait but is understood to be the result of a process involving an individual's capabilities, their interaction with their social environment as well as their being embedded in larger systems of relations, communities and cultures. Developmental psychologists Ann S. Masten and Margaret O'Dougherty Wright summarize current conceptualizations around human resilience as follows:

“Resilience should not be conceptualized as a static trait or characteristic of an individual. Resilience arises from many processes and interactions that extend beyond the boundaries of the individual organism, including close relationships and social support. Moreover, an individual person may be resilient with respect to some kinds of stressors and not others, or be resilient with respect to some adaptive outcomes but not others [...]. Resilience itself also is dynamic: the same individual may show maladaptive function at one time and resilience later in development, or vice versa.” (“Resilience over the Lifespan” 215)

Here are a few further definitions offered by a number of researchers studying human resilience in a number of academic disciplines, among them (developmental) psychology, pedagogy, social work and neurobiology: According to James Garbarino in the preface to the *Handbook for Working With Children and Youth: Pathways to Resilience Across Cultures and Contexts*, “resilience generally refers to an individual's ability to bounce back from adverse experiences, to avoid long-term negative effects, or otherwise to overcome developmental threats” (xi). Michael Ungar, in his introduction to the same volume, writes that in the context of a Western scientific community, “resilience has come to mean the individual capacities, behaviors, and protective processes associated with health outcomes despite exposure to a significant number of risks” (xvi). In their introduction to *The Resilience Handbook: Approaches to Stress and Trauma*, editors Martha Kent, Mary C. Davis and John W. Reich regard “resilience as a process rather than as a set of traits, outcomes, and risk, or protective factors”, and see it as “composed of three elements: resilience as a sustained adaptive effort that prevails despite challenge, as a bouncing back and recovery from a challenge, and as a process of learning and growth that expands understanding, new knowledge, and new skills” (xii). Alex J. Zautra, in his essay “Resilience is Social, After All”, points to the important role of the “perceived availability of social support” for human resilience which can foster feelings of connectedness and belonging, maintaining that “[s]ocial connections play a critical role in mitigating the effects of life's most stressful experiences” (185-186). In their introductory chapter to the *Handbook of Adult Resilience*, titled “Resilience: A New Definition of Health for People and Communities”, Zautra together with John Stuart Hall and Kate E. Murray extend the framework of conceptualizing resilience

by arguing that human resilience is not only about overcoming obstacles but also crucially about thriving. They offer “resilience as an integrative construct that provides an approach to understanding how people and their communities achieve and sustain health and well-being in the face of adversity” (4), adding that “*individual resilience* may be defined by the amount of stress that a person can endure without a fundamental change in capacity to pursue aims that give life meaning. The greater a person’s capacity to stay on a satisfying life course, the greater his or her resilience. Whereas resilient *recovery* focuses on aspects of healing of wounds, *sustainability* calls attention to outcomes relevant to preserving valuable engagements in life’s tasks at work, in play, and in social relations” (6). They conclude that the “capacity to mount effective responses to stress and to resist illness is a fundamental imperative. But survival is not enough for resilience. A fulfilling life is also fundamental to well-being, so changes that affect our plans and goals for ourselves, our families, and our communities need attention as well” (7). Margaret O’Dougherty Wright, Ann S. Masten and Angela J. Narayan make out four waves of research in resilience studies: The first wave regarded resilience as primarily residing in an individual, whereas the second wave understood resilience as a process and looked more closely into the interactions between an individual and their social environment; the third wave of research focused on implementing and evaluating programmes to help foster resilience in various settings, and the fourth wave now under way is trying to better understand the neurobiological underpinnings of individual resilience, investigating also the changes that occur in an individual (as regards e.g. biomarkers and gene expression) as a consequence of their interaction with their social environment (cf. “Resilience Processes in Development”).

Several longitudinal studies are generally taken as the starting point for the current focus on and increasing scientific interest in the research on human resilience. The most famous and most often cited study was conducted by Emmy E. Werner and Ruth S. Smith on the island of Kauai. Werner and Smith conducted a study on child development, following the lives of 698 children from their birth till the age of forty, analysing the challenges they faced and looking at strategies they developed in order to deal with negative experiences. The model they developed showed that there were protective factors that could balance out risk factors in resilient children. Some of these lay within the children themselves, others were provided by the social environment of extended family, school or community (cf. Werner 36-38). Different children showed different levels of vulnerability, so there also proved to be a range of individual reaction to certain challenges. Some children might be more vulnerable than others, and would thus have a harder time dealing with a challenge than others. Werner and Smith, as well as other scientists who undertook similar kinds of research, isolated a number of resources individuals might have at hand that would help them cope with challenging situations or

experiences; these resources might be available to them at the personal level, but also at a collective level.¹⁰

Resilience scholars differentiate between inner, or personal resources, and outer, or social resources. On the level of personal resources, Werner and Smith and others were able to make out certain resilience factors that would help determine an individual's resilience, such as e.g. self-efficacy, emotional and social competencies and problem solving skills.¹¹ In the wake of the publication of their and other scientists' studies, researchers have started employing the combined findings for the development of prevention programmes that aim at fostering children's and adolescents' resilience and help them learn and train basic skills as well as develop strategies for dealing with challenging situations. The most effective of these programmes intervene not only at the level of the individual children but also include parents and caregivers in their training and also try to positively influence school or preschool settings.¹²

Two caveats apply as concerns protective and risk factors, as more recent discussions in resilience research point out: things may be not as clear cut as researchers first believed, and what may function for one individual as a protective factor in one context may function for the same or another individual as a risk factor in another context (cf. Wright, Masten and Narayan 23-24). Furthermore, as Michael Ungar points out, definitions and conceptualizations of resilience may not work the same way cross-culturally. Ungar thus cautions against applying or mapping coordinates of resilience developed in one cultural context too easily onto another cultural context. His advice to fellow researchers is thus to keep an open mind about what resilience may mean in the context of the people and communities

10 For an excellent overview and extended discussion of protective factors and risk factors see Fröhlich-Gildhoff and Rönnau-Böse 20-57. Wright, Masten and Narayan provide a short list of promotive and protective factors (21), as do Lösel and Farrington (18). On a collective level, culturally based protective factors can include cultural traditions, ceremonies and rituals (Wright, Masten and Narayan 26-27).

11 Cf. Fröhlich-Gildhoff and Rönnau-Böse 43; Werner 35.

12 Cf. Fröhlich-Gildhoff and Rönnau-Böse 64-85; Werner 43-45; Wright, Masten and Narayan 27-30. In her essay "Risiko und Resilienz im Leben von Kindern aus multietnischen Familien", Emmy Werner remains cautiously optimistic as to the efficacy of social intervention programmes: "Es ist nicht anzunehmen, dass wir eine Patentlösung finden werden, ein einzelnes Interventionsprogramm, das in jedem Falle jedem Jugendlichen helfen kann, der unter schädigenden Bedingungen aufwächst. [...] Wir können aber Resilienz in einzelnen Kindern fördern. Dazu bedarf es keiner großen Summen, sondern einfach nur Zeit und Fürsorge. Wenn Kinder Personen begegnen, die ihnen eine gesicherte Vertrauensgrundlage bieten, sie zur eigenen Initiative ermutigen und ihnen zu Kompetenz verhelfen, dann können sie erfolgreich sein. Dieser Erfolg gibt ihnen Hoffnung, *realistische Hoffnung*. Dies ist ein Geschenk, das jeder von uns zuhause, im Klassenzimmer, auf dem Spielplatz und in der Nachbarschaft machen kann" (45).

they are studying and also about the factors they may find that help foster or promote resilience in this specific cultural context (cf. “Cultural Dimensions”).¹³

Intervention programmes that aim at fostering individual resilience are not only geared towards children and adolescents. There are also a number of psychologists working with adults who have taken up the concept of resilience.¹⁴ Some of them, like the German psychoanalyst Luise Reddemann, had previously been working in the field of trauma therapy before recalibrating their focus towards the concept of resilience.¹⁵ The resilience approach offers these therapists a way to focus not primarily on a patient’s deficit or lack but on a patient’s agency and ability to help themselves. Apart from simply helping the patient mine the resources that they already have, and train others that can be taught, Reddemann points to the body of work of medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky and his concept of a ‘sense of coherence’ to help understand why some people in some situations seem to be more resilient than others: Resilient individuals are able to attribute meaning to whatever challenge they face (what Antonovsky calls a ‘sense of meaningfulness’). They understand why whatever is happening to them is happening to them (what Antonovsky calls a ‘sense of comprehensibility’), and they are able to find ways of

13 To this end, Ungar provides an interview guide with questions that may help researchers interviewing subjects and facilitates their arriving at a thick description of what resilience may mean and how it can be achieved in a specific culture and context (cf. “Cultural Dimensions”).

14 Martha Kent and Mary C. Davis provide an overview of current programmes and interventions geared towards promoting or restoring adult resiliency (cf. “The Emergence of Capacity-Building Programs and Models of Resilience”). Different scholars put different emphases when discussing the principles that should be developed in order to overall foster resilience. John W. Reich argues for strengthening sense of control, coherence and connectedness in interventions following catastrophic events (Zautra, Hall and Murray, “Resilience” 20). Other researchers stress first and foremost the restoration of a sense of agency. As Kent and Davis conclude, “resilience is a response to challenge, just like stress and trauma are responses to challenge. Both occur in similar contexts that are characterized by noncontingency, or contexts in which individuals have little effect on that context or environment. Faced with an arbitrary, life-threatening event, the resilient response is characterized by (1) an efficient stress response, (2) an approach/engagement orientation, and (3) social relatedness” (442). Programmes geared towards fostering resilience will try to provide individuals with a skill set addressing all three aspects. Masten and Wright, more generally, see “several strategies for intervention: reducing risk (e.g. [...] removing landmines to prevent injuries to a population), increasing assets or resources (e.g. provision of food programs, employment counselors), and mobilizing powerful protective systems (e.g. [...] nurturing mentor relationships, empowering the leaderships of young people in rebuilding a community after disaster or war)” (230). Angie Hart, Derek Blicow and Helen Thomas have developed a form of resilient therapy geared specifically towards helping children in crisis (cf. “Resilient Therapy”). For an overview of what is at stake in promoting resilience across the lifespan see also Rönnau-Böse and Fröhlich-Gildhoff, *Resilienz und Resilienzförderung über die Lebensspanne*.

15 Cf. Reddemann, *Überlebenskunst und Eine Reise von 1000 Meilen beginnt mit dem ersten Schritt*.

dealing with a challenging situation ('a sense of manageability'). The therapist can help the patient regain these senses when they have been lost.¹⁶ Taken together, these three senses yield what Antonovsky calls a 'sense of coherence', a feeling which he describes as "a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement" (*Unraveling the Mystery of Health* 19). Antonovsky employs the metaphor of life as a river that may run smoothly but that may also feature strong currents and swirls; in his work, he is first and foremost concerned with the question of how one may become a good swimmer – or help others become good swimmers – able to brace the currents regardless of conditions and circumstances (cf. Antonovsky).

Antonovsky is not the first to stress the importance of a restoration of a sense of meaningfulness to human health and well-being; this was already famously put forth several decades earlier by psychologist Viktor E. Frankl, who built his therapeutic intervention of logotherapy, which he developed in the interwar years, around the concepts of meaning and purpose. For Frankl, the "striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force" in human beings, not the fulfilment of instinctual drives as Freud had argued and not a will to power as Adler had argued (*Man's Search for Meaning* 99). Frankl proposes that "the meaning of life always changes, but [...] it never ceases to be" (113). Meaning has to be discovered and can appear in several different guises. It can take the form of creating something or doing a deed; it can take the form of the experience of something or someone, which for Frankl boils down essentially to the experiencing of a value; and, if it is utterly unavoidable, even suffering can be rendered meaningful, as human beings are still always free to choose the stance they take towards the meaning of this suffering. Thus, Frankl says, one can find meaning even in suffering. Life, Frankl proposes, continues to throw questions at us, and we are called to continue to find answers to these questions.¹⁷

I suggest that in queer literary and cultural studies, the concept of resilience might prove to be a useful framework for the study of queer affect, not necessarily as a direct countermodel to the trauma approach, but as a model of framing human subjectivity and affect that could be in useful dialogue with it. Thus, I agree with the proponents of the trauma approach in queer studies that political activism working towards social change is still needed to lessen vulnerability fac-

16 Arguably, this is what the therapeutic intervention Reddemann has developed does when successfully employed (cf. *Imagination als heilsame Kraft*).

17 Cf. *Man's Search for Meaning* and *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*.

tors. Queer trauma studies does have its usefulness in pointing out how larger social and power structures can have a negative impact on queer individuals' actual (in the form of discrimination) and affective lives, and consequently a claim for social action can, and must, be made. However, I would also like to pose the question whether, as theorists of queer affect, we could imagine ourselves accepting and acknowledging the wound that queer stigma produces, and not cover it up with pride, and not remain in the victimized position either – and there is for me a danger with the trauma approach that it keeps us locked in a position of victimhood – but focus on agency on an individual and a collective level. Herein lies for me the usefulness of the concept of resiliency, which comes from a line of focussing not on being damaged but on salutogenesis, that is the study of the origin of being whole. Two points, I suggest, are useful for queer cultural studies: one, as resilience scholars stress, resiliency is something that can be trained and learned; and two: one might also look at queer historiography in that vein; to learn from past queer subjects; to find out what kinds of strategies they employed when faced with experiences of homophobic violence and/or social exclusion.

One might thus try to make out strategies of resilience in the works of the 'founding mothers and fathers' of queer theory – Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Working with Antonovsky's concept of a 'sense of coherence', I would firstly like to suggest that the earlier works of Foucault, Butler and Sedgwick may have afforded their authors with just exactly the 'senses' Antonovsky describes as making up his 'sense of coherence': Michel Foucault's discourse analysis of how current regimes of sexuality came into being historically in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* affords him a 'sense of comprehensibility' of heteronormative power structures as he encounters them in 1970s and 1980s France. Similarly, Judith Butler's earlier works of *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* might have helped their authors attain a 'sense of comprehensibility', and maybe to a lesser extent also 'manageability', through deconstructivist enquiry into the mechanisms of power, how our current sex/gender system came into being or by which means it is kept in place.

Secondly and maybe more interestingly, one can make out quite a number of what I would like to call resilience strategies in all of these writers' later work. One might thus read Michel Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia' in his essay "Different Spaces" and his concept of potential forms of queer community in "Friendship as a Way of Life" as possible outer, social resources for queer subjects.¹⁸ As for inner, or personal resources, I suggest that one might productively read the later Foucault's work on technologies of the self in terms of internal strategies of queer resilience.¹⁹

18 I take up Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia' in the chapter on spatial strategies.

19 I expand on this in the chapter on emptiness.

In the case of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, her privileging the haptic sense in her introduction to *Touching Feeling* might be read as a somatic or bodily resilience strategy, and one could include her notion of the usefulness of periperformative utterances as a form of performative or communicative resilience strategy for queer subjects.²⁰ Her discussions of gay shame, which include the idea (which she derives from Silvan Tomkins' work) that different subjects possess different shame theories, i.e. that there are people who have a high shame theory, whereas other people have a low shame theory, furthermore corresponds directly with resilience scholars' ideas about people possessing different levels of vulnerability as well as susceptibility: some people are more vulnerable than others, and different people are differentially susceptible or sensitive to contextual influences, beneficial or adversary (cf. Masten and Wright 216).²¹ Finally, Judith Butler's notion in *Undoing Gender* of a subject beside itself, which is also a subject open to transformation, a subject in open-ended process, corresponds to resilience scholars' notion of the self as processual rather than static: the resilient self is a self in progress, and risk factors interact with protective factors, determining an individual's resilience in a given situation at a given point in time.²²

Work on queer resilience so far has been undertaken mainly in the disciplines of sociology and psychology as well as social work. Kimberly F. Balsam in her introduction to the anthology *Trauma, Stress, and Resilience Among Sexual Minority Women* lists social support, the identification of sources of oppression, the confrontation of oppressive situations as well as reframing one's sexual identity as unique or a gift as strategies of resilience employed by the individuals studied in this collection of essays (cf. Balsam 6-7).²³ Marion Brown and Marc Colbourne have investigated queer youth resilience in a youth project in Nova Scotia, look-

20 I further elaborate on the sense of touch in the chapter on bodily strategies, and I draw – among other theories – on Sedgwick's discussion of the periperformative in the chapter on performative strategies.

21 Cf. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*.

22 Cf. also Aranda et al. for a discussion of Butlerian concepts of performativity and recognition and how they can be linked to ongoing theorizations around resilience ("The resilient subject").

23 For a description of resilience strategies that take into account not only instances of heterosexism but also of racism see the essay by Bowleg et al. in the same volume (cf. "Triple Jeopardy and Beyond: Multiple Minority Stress and Resilience Among Black Lesbians"). For an in-depth discussion on gender and resilience see Judith V. Jordan's essay "Relational Resilience in Girls" in the *Handbook of Resilience in Children*. Jordan argues convincingly that "resilience resides not in the individual but in the capacity for connection. [...] Mutual empathy, empowerment, and the development of courage are the building blocks of this resilience" (73). While she focuses on the importance of relational resilience in girls, she also posits that "growth-fostering connections are the source of resilience for both boys and girls" (73). For an in-depth discussion on the situation of transgender youth see Zeeman et al., "Promoting resilience and emotional well-being of transgender young people"; Singh, "Transgender Youth of Color and Resilience: Negotiating

ing at protective mechanisms at the level of the individual, family environment and gay and ally communities (cf. “Bent But Not Broken”). Their findings included that on the level of the individual youth, a belief in their right to “express truth in their being” (272) and a sense of personal agency contributed to youth resilience, as well as a “familiarity with being on one’s own in some area of one’s life” as this could help temporarily weather feelings of isolation; also helpful was a “personal orientation toward rejecting the negativity and myths promoted by heterosexism and homophobia” (273). Brown and Colbourne note that families of origin that welcomed and affirmed LGB youth contributed to their resilience, but more often family members that were supportive were likely to show only conditional support. Brown and Colbourne made out a precarious “marginal freedom” in families where same-sex sexuality remained invisible and unaddressed (274). They emphatically stress the importance of gay and ally communities for queer youth: “Locating and securing the means to break social isolation, accessing the gay and ally community, and sharing identity are cornerstones in naming protective features that contribute to resilience” (274). Gay and ally communities provide a peer group that validates a queer youth’s identity as well as a safe space for self-expression and a place to “explore one’s identity and its meanings” (274). There, information about LGB issues can be accessed and role models can be found. These “iterative and interactive relationships between self, family, and the gay and ally community” all contribute to queer youth resilience (274).

A study conducted by Michael Sadowski and Lisa Machoian with LGBTQ adolescents in a large northeastern U.S. city and later also in a rural area of the U.S. came to similar conclusions. As Michael Sadowski writes, “[f]inding spaces such as school- or community-based LGBTQ youth groups *that felt genuinely safe* and relationships in which they could *communicate openly, be themselves, and have their identities affirmed* was associated for many with the cessation of risk behaviours and a greater sense of self-acceptance” (*In a Queer Voice* 10). For the participants of Sadowski’s study, gay-straight alliances at school and/or community-based LGBTQ youth groups provided a space to feel safe, supported and where they belonged as well as sites of personal empowerment, besides giving them access to “that rare, safe adult to whom [...] an LGBTQ student could talk confidentially ‘about anything’” in the form of an adult GSA advisor or youth project facilitator (157). This was especially important as for numerous participants of Sadowski’s study, school did not prove to be a space free of discrimination or harassment (cf. 155-156). Furthermore, in situations “in which youth felt the most isolated”, such as e.g. living in a rural area, “the Internet provided a virtual lifeline. Most important [...] it served as a springboard to other forms of communication” (163-164). Again

Oppression and Finding Support”; and Singh, Meng and Hansen, “‘I Am My Own Gender’: Resilience Strategies of Trans Youth”.

echoing Brown and Colbourne's findings, Sadowski reports that family support, when it was available, was rarely unconditional. His findings "suggest that (1) when LGBTQ youth report that their parents are supportive, terms such as *support* and *supportive* can have vastly different meanings based on their expectations, and (2) open communication about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer is frequently absent even from otherwise supportive relationships between LGBTQ youth and their parents" (164). Sadowski consequently points towards a need for parents and families to develop a new language for talking about gender and sexuality: "Being able to be in true dialogue with the people to whom they feel closest – and having their real voices resonate in these relationships – requires that the traditional silences about sexuality and gender that pervade our society be broken" (165). Analysing interviews with the participants of his study who had been found via (and had therefore found their way already to) LGBTQ youth groups, Sadowski comes to the conclusion that even those youths "who endured severe harassment and isolation found ways to survive, and there is strong evidence to suggest that key relationships have made an important difference in this regard" (151). Some of the participants had "supportive parental relationships that incorporated open acceptance of their LGBTQ identities", others had "supportive relationships at school with their peers" or with adults or with both (151-152). Every youth seemed to have found "that 'one good relationship' – or set of relationships – that can help make a young person resilient in the face of risk and to progress on a positive developmental pathway. Ideally, of course, young people benefit from a multiplicity of relationships that interconnect across the ecology of their lives"; still, Sadowski's research highlights "the compensatory power that one adult or peer can play within a social environment that a young person otherwise experiences as unwelcoming" (152).²⁴

The first German nation-wide study on the situation of LGBTQ youth, which was initiated by the federal government and saw the participation of 5000 adolescents and young adults, was carried out in 2014. In the final report on the findings, Claudia Krell and Kerstin Oldemeier diagnose a heightened vulnerability for LGBTQ youth and young adults. They present an extensive analysis of the study, which comprised an online survey and forty personal interviews with study participants aged fourteen to twenty-seven, and provide a very good overview of the current situation of LGBTQ adolescents and young adults in Germany (Krell and

24 Sadowski provides in-depth follow-up case studies of six of the participants in his study. Their detailed accounts demonstrate the myriad forms of context-specific resilience strategies queer youth and young adults have come up with – singular strategies that worked in the specific situations they found themselves in – to survive in a hostile environment and thrive later on in their lives (cf. 17-130). For information on how to make school environments more LGBTQ friendly, see Sadowski, *Safe Is Not Enough* and van Dijk and van Driel, *Sexuelle Vielfalt lernen*.

Oldemeier, *Coming-out – und dann...?!*). The study focused on finding out how participants had experienced their coming out processes, as well as learning about discriminatory experiences in families, schools, at work, with friends and in participants' every-day lives. The report reveals that roughly fifty percent of study participants reported having experienced discrimination at school, at work and with their immediate family (cf. 103-115; this number was higher for trans youth in some contexts, cf. 163-177). Study participants reported that having emotional support available as well as being in contact with other LGBTQs and being able to have access to information on LGBTQ issues helped them successfully navigate their coming out journeys (cf. 92). In the coming out process, which roughly seventy-five percent of all youth and young adults experienced as stressful, friends and family were described as being an asset when they were supportive of the youths' emerging LGBTQ identities (75; 126-127). Krell and Oldemeier provide an overview of conditions that either supported adolescents and young adults in their coming out journeys or made their lives more difficult, while also noting a number of strategies study participants used to better cope with their situation, to minimize stress and to take control of their lives, by e.g. actively choosing the point in time to come out to friends or family, by moving to a different environment, by hiding their queer sexuality in circumstances deemed unsafe, and by reframing discriminatory experiences to experience them as less stressful (cf. 124-134; 183-192). In a final extensive chapter, the authors call on policy makers and schools as well as youth project service providers to take measures to reduce vulnerability for LGBTQ youth and young adults (cf. 213-220).²⁵

This book is the first extensive study approaching queer resilience from a literary and cultural studies perspective. By incorporating literary and cultural texts from the last 110 years, I open up a historical dimension to the available data on queer resilience. What is more, the human need to make art and to experience art, all art, goes back roughly 35,000 years, and can thus be regarded as one of the fundamental needs of human beings.²⁶ The experiential dimension of art is an aspect of human existence that is not extensively covered in considerations

25 For recent reports on the situation of LGBTQ youth and (young) adults in, variously, the U.S. and the U.K. see also the Human Rights Campaign's youth survey report *Growing Up LGBT in America*, which delineates the experiences of 10,000 thirteen to seventeen year-olds, and Nodin et al., *The RARE Research Report LGBT Mental Health – Risk and Resilience Explored*, which analyses context specific risk and resilience factors among 2000 U.K. study participants with attention to three specific health issues: suicide attempts and self-harm among LGBT youth under twenty-six, alcohol misuse among lesbian and bisexual women, and body image issues including eating concerns among gay and bisexual men. Both studies used state-of-the-art mixed-methods approaches, that is they combine surveys of a large number of study participants with personal interviews of a smaller number of study participants.

26 Cf. Conard; Conard, Malina and Münzel; Sinclair.

of queer resilience in psychological and sociological research. This study seeks to also address this void, primarily as regards the art of literature.

In this study, I analyse literary texts as cultural artefacts, that is to say I work with the assumption that literary texts can be regarded as much as a mirror of and a valid source material for inquiring into what is at stake in a society at a given point in time as texts of the historical archive or sociological data or an ethnographer's thick description of a culture.²⁷ Still, literary texts possess aesthetic qualities that historical texts may lack. These will also be analysed as part of the close reading of specific literary works in the following chapters. However, literary texts and acts of writing and reading can also be employed more generally to further one's resilience, as a number of writers and readers have explored.

A short sketch of answers to the question what writing can do, what reading can do, that is to say how both can be used to promote resilience on a more general level, might read as follows: As philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum has argued, reading novels can teach empathy and help develop the moral imagination of the reader, both prerequisites for a just society; it can make many different, possibly conflicting points of view accessible to the reader in the same textual universe (cf. Nussbaum). Poet Billy Collins maintains that reading poetry can provide comfort in times of crisis, arguing that "the formalized language of poetry can ritualize experience and provide emotional focus. Poetry is thus seen as a kind of floatation device for those who find themselves at sea on troubled waters"; what is more, poetry "can assure us that we are not alone; others, some of them long dead, have felt what we are feeling. They have heard the same sea, watched the same sky; looked up to see the same moon" (Collins xvi). In a similar vein, bibliotherapists Ella Berthoud and Susan Elderkin, in their introduction to *The Novel Cure*, reason that a treatment consisting of reading one or more novels may be able to help you, whatever difficult situation you may find yourself in or whatever you may be suffering from. "Some treatments will lead to a complete cure. Others will simply offer solace, showing you that you are not alone. All will offer the temporary relief of your symptoms due to the power of literature to distract and transport"; indeed, sometimes "it's the story that charms; sometimes it's the rhythm of the prose that works on the psyche, stilling or stimulating. Sometimes it's an idea or an attitude suggested by a character in a similar quandary or jam" (2). Reading may thus become a resource to someone in distress or in a situation of heightened vulnerability. It is not just the content but also the aesthetics of the work that contribute to this experience. The reader who resonates with a work of art activates not only the prefrontal cortex but also the limbic system and evolutionarily older regions of the brain. The reception of a work of art is a whole brain activity that

27 I follow the premises of both new historicism and cultural materialism in this regard (cf. Branigan).

draws on rhythm, image, metaphor and symbol as well as content for the individual to arrive at last at a deriving of meaning and insight, epiphanic or mundane (cf. Paul). This is regardless of whether the intent of reading is therapeutic or not. As novelist Ursula K. Le Guin notes in *The Wave in the Mind*, reading is “an active transaction between the text and the reader”, and thus both an active experience and a creative act; to “read a story is to participate actively in the story. To read is to tell the story, tell it to yourself, reliving it, rewriting it with the author, word by word, sentence by sentence, chapter by chapter” (269). For Le Guin, the reader is active, agent, the co-creator of the book.

“Story is a collaborative art. The writer’s imagination works in league with the reader’s imagination, calls on the reader to collaborate, to fill in, to flesh out, to bring their own experience to the work. Fiction is not a camera, and not a mirror. It’s much more like a Chinese painting – a few lines, a few blobs, a whole lot of blank space. From which we make the travellers, in the mist, climbing the mountain towards the inn under the pines.” (Le Guin 276)

For Jeanette Winterson in *Art Objects*, an encounter with a work of art can provide a range of experiences: insight, rapture, transformation, joy, as well as shock, for “the calling of the artist, in any medium, is to make it new” (12). Winterson may be a late modernist in this regard, but one of her points is that the artist is actually in this way connected to the past and makes him- or herself a connection to the future (12). The reader, or the recipient of any work of art, is then called upon to bring attention and patience to the table as well as curiosity and openness. They will partake of this connection, but this may entail a “series of jolts, or perhaps I mean volts, for art is an extraordinarily faithful transmitter. Our job [as recipients, S.J.] is to keep our receiving equipment in good working order” (13). The interactive process that occurs between a work of art and a recipient, say, a reader is finally never over. “There is a constant exchange of emotion between us, between the three of us”, Winterson writes: between the artist, the work of art and the one beholding the work of art; she is here echoing Le Guin’s notion of the process of engaging with a work of art as being a collaborative one; for Winterson, the “totality” of the work of art – in her case a picture, but it can be assumed this applies to all art – “comments on the totality of what I am. The greater the picture the more complete this process is” (19). The result of art as not only object but also as process is then manifold: an illuminating, potentially transformative encounter for the reader with open ended result; an experience of present aliveness, the “energy in being” (19); and a connection to ‘truths’ past and present (if one is inclined to follow Winterson who defines ‘truth’ in her epigraph as “that which lasts”), since art, “all art, is the communication cord that cannot be snapped by indifference or disaster. Against the daily death it does not die” (20). The encounter with art, which may

work as a training ground for curiosity and attention and invites active participation, can then act as a transformational experience, a catalyst for the resilient self in process.

And what can acts of writing do for the one undertaking them? How can writing help promote resilience? As art therapists point out, artistic practices such as writing can help externalize inner, psychic landscapes; these can be worked on and transformed and then again internalized in a changed form, thus giving the one who writes agency over his or her internal experience as well as helping them make sense of and transform difficult feelings and experiences (cf. Susanne Lücke in Reddemann, *Imagination als heilsame Kraft* 152-153; DeSalvo 29-46). Why do writers write in general? To solve a problem, to conduct a thought experiment, to think about an issue more deeply – these are some of the reasons Le Guin provides for her own artistic practice (cf. Le Guin 279). Margaret Atwood, in *Negotiating with the Dead*, has compiled a whole two-page list of reasons she has found writers provide for why they engage in the act of writing (cf. Atwood xx-xxii). Clearly, motives writers find for writing are near endless. But what exactly happens in the act of writing? For Le Guin, writing fiction results from “imagination working on experience” (265). For her as a writer of stories and novels, “fictional ‘ideas’ arise from a combination of experience and imagination that is indissoluble and unpredictable and doesn’t follow orders” (276). And by the experiential she means personal experience, personal observation as well as reading about others’ personal experiences (cf. 276-278). This applies even to the realm of the magical and the fantastic.

“Experience is where the ideas come from. But a story isn’t a mirror of what happened. Fiction is experience translated by, transformed by, transfigured by the imagination. [...] In a novel [...] the raw materials are not only selected and shaped but fused, composted, recombined, reworked, reconfigured, reborn, and at the same time allowed to find their own forms and shapes, which may be only indirectly related to rational thinking. The whole thing may end up looking like pure invention. [...] But there’s no such thing as pure invention. It all starts with experience. Invention is recombination. We can work only with what we have. There are monsters and leviathans and chimeras in the human mind; they are psychic facts. Dragons are one of the truths about us. We have no other way of expressing that particular truth about us. People who deny the existence of dragons are often eaten by dragons. From within.” (268-269)

The starting point from which a story or a novel unfolds may be different for every writer. Still Le Guin, following Virginia Woolf, proposes that one element comes first in the act of writing for a lot of writers: a deep attention to a sense of rhythm. “Beneath memory and experience, beneath imagination and invention

[...] there are rhythms to which memory and imagination and words all move; and the writer's job is to go down deep enough to begin to feel that rhythm, to find it, move to it, be moved by it, and let it move memory and imagination to find words" (281). Aesthetic qualities of a work of fiction, such as rhythm, are then inevitably bound up with content, may indeed precede or precipitate content for at least Ursula Le Guin and Virginia Woolf, and Woolf employs the metaphor of a wave to describe this sense of underlying rhythm that one is trying to capture in writing.²⁸ The attention to rhythm from which art originates, Le Guin proposes, can create a resonance that takes on an almost somatic quality, an experience of felt sense connecting writers and readers through the medium of the art object.

"None of us is Virginia Woolf, but I hope every writer has had at least a moment when they rode the wave, and all the words were right.

As readers, we have all ridden that wave, and known that joy.

Prose and poetry – all art, music, dance – rise from and move with the profound rhythms of our body, our being, and the body and being of the world. Physicists read the universe as a great range of vibrations, of rhythms. Art follows and expresses those rhythms. Once we get the beat, the right beat, our ideas and our words dance to it, the round dance that everybody can join. And then I am thou, and the barriers are down. For a little while." (282)

Louise DeSalvo has written extensively on what life writing can do for the one undertaking it. For her, too, aesthetic qualities of the written narrative provide one pillar of the sustaining power she attributes to life writing. DeSalvo emphasises the usefulness of employing metaphor when describing experiences that are seemingly beyond words. "Because metaphors say one thing while meaning another, they are important vehicles for conveying information that seems beyond the limits of language", she maintains, claiming that metaphor not only "compacts meaning, but it also evokes emotion, so it enables us to express nonliteral experiences in a highly individualized way. Its use presents one solution to the challenge of how to render extreme situations" (166). It renders sayable what has remained unsayable and it also helps link events to feelings, thus promoting an integration of a traumatic event into one's life narrative. In *Writing as a Way of Healing*, DeSalvo advocates employing life writing to help deal with challenges

28 This is Virginia Woolf in a letter to Vita Sackville-West from 16 March 1926: "As for the *mot juste*, you are quite wrong. Style is a very simple matter: it is all *rhythm*. Once you get that, you can't use the wrong words. [...] Now this is very profound, what rhythm is, and goes far deeper than words. A sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind, long before it makes words to fit it; and in writing (such is my present belief) one has to recapture this, and set this working (which has nothing apparently to do with words) and then, as it breaks and tumbles in the mind, it makes words to fit it" (qtd. in Le Guin 280).

present and past. She is drawing and expanding on the work of James W. Pennebaker, who conducted a number of writing experiments with college students, finding that students who had taken part in a study consisting of writing about a previous challenging event in their lives for fifteen minutes a day during four consecutive days, with a focus on describing what had happened to them, the impact this event had had on their lives as well as what their feelings regarding this event were then and now, improved their health in the long term (cf. DeSalvo 17-28; Pennebaker). DeSalvo advises on how to approach longer life writing projects but also posits the benefits of engaging in the act of writing itself on a regular basis:

“What [...] if writing weren’t [...] a luxury? What if writing were a simple, significant, yet necessary way to achieve spiritual, emotional, and psychic wholeness? To synthesize thought and feeling, to understand how feeling relates to events in our lives and vice versa? What if writing were as important and as basic a human function and as significant to maintaining and promoting our psychic and physical wellness as, say, exercise, healthful food, pure water, clean air, rest and repose, and some soul-satisfying practice?” (6)

Benefits of a regular writing practice, according to DeSalvo, may include: becoming a witness, an observer of one’s own life; writing as a centering ritual when one sets up a regular schedule of writing in a relaxed way; learning to let the process be the guide by keeping a process journal; in time, DeSalvo says, writing will yield surprising benefits; it can be engaged in as a form of self-care and act as an agent of transformation (cf. 69-107). Approached in this way, writing can become an engagement in an “act of creation that energizes and enlarges us”; it is then a “gift that comes to us. A gift we give ourselves. A gift we give to others” (92). DeSalvo is one of a growing number of writers and therapists positing that engaging in life writing can promote resilience. What is at stake is not only a working through of experience but also, critically, the expression of a self in language. As DeSalvo and also trauma therapist Bessel van der Kolk have argued, engaging in any artistic practice, whether writing or doing theatre, can open up pathways to navigating difficult experiences and their aftermath by providing avenues for expressing oneself, for finding a voice, giving testimony and giving a voice to experience.²⁹ What acts of writing and reading can do specifically for queer subjects, then, will be discussed extensively in the following chapter.

29 Cf. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score* 230-247; 330-346.

The Art of Bouncing Back

The current study presents and analyses an archive of literary and cultural texts from the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, among them short stories, novels, poems, plays and films as well as published interviews with queer artists and, sometimes, activists. These texts, I argue, showcase a whole range of strategies of queer resilience that queer artists and cultural workers have been able to come up with, in their life and in their art, for the past 110 years to help them deal with the challenge heteronormativity, as a power structure, poses to their affective lives. In this book I analyse these strategies in terms of how they relate to cultural concepts around narration, performance, space and bodies; I furthermore present a strategy of dealing with modern subjectivities in a way that is conducive to queer resilience that I term the art of emptiness.

In the first chapter, I discuss what I term narrative strategies of queer resilience. This chapter shows how queer subjects employ identificatory, disidentificatory and deconstructive narrative practices in order to establish themselves, that is their narrative identities, as queer subjects. The narrator of Jeanette Winter-son's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* serves as a literary example for this mode of queer becoming and being. I furthermore show how novelists, such as Michael Cunningham in *The Hours*, as well as queer historiographers employ intertextual narrative strategies to work towards extending existing queer textual archives. Another narrative resilience strategy can be found in queer reception processes of narrative media. Readers and spectators can read a narrative against the grain, and can even derive new narratives from this act of reception. Meaning thus turns out to be a field co-created by both producers and consumers of cultural texts, potentially opening up any (heteronormative) cultural text to the insertion of queer subjectivities and contents.

The second chapter presents 'other' ways of 'doing' queer subjectivities. Following Louis Althusser's notion that an individual becomes a subject by being hailed into an ideological subject position, thus becoming recognized as a subject, I pose the question whether queer artists and theorists might not have discovered ways by which one might disregard ideology's interpellating call. I present two forms of 'doing' subjectivity in another way while still being recognizable to oneself as a subject: the art of emptiness and the art of self-care. What I term the art of emptiness is basically a way of letting go of the need to be recognized as a subject. This is a stance towards human subjectivity that is best known from Buddhist epistemologies, but I suggest that the same gesture can be found in the queer subjectivities of some of the poetic personas of contemporary poet Mary Oliver and in the queer subjectivities of a number of characters in novels by Sylvia Townsend Warner from the 1920s and 1930s, especially *Lolly Willowes* and *Summer Will Show*. In a postscript, I present Michel Foucault's model of practices of

self-care as a viable alternative to knowledge practices of the self. Foucault finds notions of doing subjectivity in another way in the writings of Greek and Roman philosophers of late antiquity. These technologies of the self, as he calls them, and particularly the stance of privileging the care of the self over the knowing of the self, serve for Foucault as models of potentially doing subjectivity in another way.

In the third chapter I discuss performative strategies of queer resilience. I take a look at how queer subjects make use of both performance and performativity as strategies of queer resilience. I show how a number of contemporary queer cultural icons consciously publicly perform their queer sexuality, by (i) using patterns of disclosure and non-disclosure of their queer sexuality, by (ii) employing the performance and publication of a song as an act of creative sexual citizenship, or by (iii) drawing on the periperformative in comedic stand-up performances. For this I draw on published interviews of the actors Ian McKellen and Zachary Quinto as well as on art by musician Melissa Etheridge and writer and performance artist Lynnee Breedlove. I furthermore trace patterns of the strategic disclosure and non-disclosure of his queer sexuality in the life of George, the protagonist of Christopher Isherwood's early 1960s novel *A Single Man*. Lastly, I present a close reading of actor and playwright DeObia Oparei's play *Crazyblackmuthafuckin'self*, tracing how its protagonist Femi employs camp performance, performativity and ritual as strategies of queer resilience.

The fourth chapter deals with spatial strategies of queer resilience. In this chapter I look at how fictional characters and actual cultural workers and authors make use of the spaces they travel to, create or inhabit, spaces both metaphorical and real. I apply Foucault's notion of heterotopic space as a space of utopian possibility that already exists within the real to earlier texts of the twentieth century, namely two short stories by Katherine Mansfield and Elizabeth Bowen, which use the trope of the garden as a heterotopic queer space, and a poem by Robert Duncan in which an interior heterotopic space emerges as a safe space. Queer space, I contend, can be understood to be one form of heterotopic space. I furthermore trace the emergence of actual queer spaces in the city of San Francisco from the beginning of the twentieth century to the late 1970s. This decade saw the development of whole residential neighbourhoods with openly LGBTQ residents, fostering a sense of connection among an emerging LGBTQ community and providing a space for many to feel safe and belong and from which a political movement could eventually emerge.

In the final chapter I outline what I term bodily strategies of queer resilience. In this chapter I take a look at what I call the art of postpornography, that is queer works of art that purposefully disregard the interpellating call of the pornographic vs. the non-pornographic binary. These works of art depict sexual bodily acts and subjects of a variety of sexual identities, demonstrating the ideological investment underlying the art/porn binary, which turns out to be invested with hetero-

normative interests. I trace this in a close reading of *Shortbus*, a narrative feature film, and in a poem by Mark Wunderlich. I also trace an epistemology privileging bodily sensations and feelings and the sense of touch in poems by May Swenson, Thom Gunn, Pat Parker and Carol Ann Duffy, which I link to current neuroscientific research regarding the body and to somatic therapies that can be employed to promote resilience. Bodily experiences emerge in this chapter in a number of ways as potential resources for queer subjects.

Hegemonic power structures, such as heteronormativity, may thus have a challenging and sometimes also traumatizing (in the sense of wounding) effect to an individual's interior experience, but the individual subject, as I argue, is not without both internal and external resources. Strategies of queer resilience similar to the ones that I am going to discuss in the following can hopefully be learned and employed by any given subject. In this book I am presenting writers and artists, and characters developed by writers and artists, that have become good swimmers, to use Antonovsky's metaphor; queer subjects that have come up with a myriad of strategies to answer the question that life, that is living in a heteronormative society, posed – and continues to pose – to them, as Viktor Frankl might have phrased it. May their creativity inspire yours.