

*Love Among the Archives: Writing the Lives of George Scharf, Victorian Bachelor.* By Helena Michie and Robyn Warhol. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2015. 256 pp. Index, notes. Softcover. \$34.95.

Our users sometimes view archival research as time travel. Helena Michie and Robyn Warhol, authors of *Love Among the Archives: Writing the Lives of Sir George Scharf, Victorian Bachelor*, are two expert time travelers. In writing about Sir George Scharf, founding director of the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), Michie and Warhol take readers back to late-nineteenth-century London to examine a figure who was well known in his time, but relatively obscure in the twenty-first century. Instead of simply surveying Scharf's life, moving chronologically from birth to death as a typical biography would, Michie and Warhol explore three distinct yet intersecting planes of temporality: story time, discourse time, and archival time.

Story time, according to Michie and Warhol, corresponds to the sequential timeline of Scharf's life. Discourse time is the chronology that Scharf himself kept and is evident from the reflective departures in his diaries. For instance, in his writing, Scharf often took time to reflect on anniversaries such as the death of his mother and the immigration of his father from Bavaria to the United Kingdom. The third and, by far the most unique conception, is archival time. This is the external, modern time of Michie and Warhol's research. In traditionally written monographs and biographies, archival time is normally absent, and, when it is present, it is confined to the preface, acknowledgments, or perhaps footnotes. Archival time for *Love Among the Archives* constitutes a 15-year period and multiple research trips to London. Archival time also frames the main chapter divisions of the book.

In the introduction, Michie and Warhol unpack all the various identities that have been attributed to Scharf in his time and ours. These include "professional," "bachelor," "middle class," "queer," "snob," "diner," "eater," and "artist," among countless others. They also set up their unique book project, which transcends genre and defies simple categorization. At points, *Love Among the Archives* reads like a biography, while at others, it reads like literary criticism. At still others, it contains elements of novels or detective stories. Perhaps the most creative aspect of this book is the re-creation of a Victorian dinner party by the authors and their graduate students. The eight-course meal they hosted was based on a menu from April 25, 1877, found in the Scharf diaries. Due to the recent popularity of menu digitization projects by archives and libraries, the Victorian dinner party idea demonstrates an imaginative, but an expensive use of this type of documentation.

Chapter 2, "Reading for Romance: The Marriage Plot," deals with the authors' attempt to construct a Victorian love story out of Scharf's life. In searching for Scharf's interior life in his exceedingly guarded diary entries, Michie and Warhol contend with their own fantasies in wanting to uncover a romance between Scharf and Jacob Luard (Jack) Patisson, a relationship that was neither within the bounds of Victorian respectability, nor explicitly described. They trace Scharf's diary for mentions of Jack as Scharf progresses from using Patisson to Patisson, to Jack, to dear Jack, and, lastly, to dearest Jack. While the introduction and chapter 4 both deal with Scharf as guest

at some of the greatest aristocratic houses of the day, chapter 2 also explores Scharf in his role as host of dinner parties at his house with his predominantly male friends and guests. These dinners proved to be extremely important to Scharf, and he meticulously recorded invitees and menu items, sketched seating charts, and accounted for the money he spent on these social affairs.

The third chapter, “Reading for Differentiation: The Family Romance,” is based on a reading of the sources related not only to George Jr., but to the entire Scharf family as well. This chapter primarily examines George Jr.’s relationship with George Sr. (also an artist) and his eventual triumph in differentiating himself in terms of reputation and class from his immigrant father. George Jr.’s coming of age and ascendancy is set in the context of the family’s financial problems, particularly during the year 1856. Though George Sr. looms large over this chapter, the authors also employ psychoanalysis and family systems theory to tease out other intricate domestic dynamics of George Jr.’s relationship to his mother and brother.

Chapter 4, “Reading for Success: The Professional Plot,” concludes with a reading of George Scharf’s professional life and relationships that helped to forge George’s success in both the NPG and his personal life. Quite out of custom, George befriended Lord Phillip Stanhope, Fifth Earl of Stanhope, who was the chair of the NPG’s board. Scharf was a frequent houseguest at Chevening and Knole, both great aristocratic houses in their time. This intimate role was normally off limits to those of his station. In fact, he called Lord Stanhope his best friend and, as Michie and Warhol reveal, this label was not so far off the mark. The authors’ nuanced reading traces this growing personal friendship that Scharf and Stanhope’s professional relationship constantly kept in check.

While *Love Among the Archives* incorporates many different genre elements, this book should not be classified as a theoretical exploration of “the archive,” despite Michie and Warhol’s invoking of both Jacques Derrida and Carolyn Steedman. One element that it does share with these works that take “the archive” as a conceptual framework is the near absence of living, breathing archivists as actors. It is a bit disappointing that in such a self-reflective work, where the authors insert themselves into their writing with such gusto, the archivists at the NPG are not more visible. At times, anonymous staff members appear either bringing or retrieving materials. The authors also briefly comment on the watchful eye of the staff and the strict protocols requiring archivists to bring out items one at a time. *Love Among the Archives* is not about archives or archivists, but the authors missed a perfect opportunity to question how archival materials are arranged, described, and preserved by actual people. One keen observation about archival arrangement that Michie and Warhol make, however, is the porousness of categories in the finding aid for the Scharf papers. Often, the lines between official records and personal papers are blurred, and Scharf’s records are no exception. In fact, Scharf and his mother lived in an apartment above the NPG, making the distinction between official and personal even more difficult. Add to this confusion Scharf’s involvement with Jack Pattison (who worked for Scharf) as well as the personal

friendship struck between Scharf and Lord Stanhope, an NPG board chairman and a person to whom Scharf was accountable.

Throughout *Love Among the Archives*, Michie and Warhol quite openly reveal their expectations, desires, and emotions surrounding their research. They discuss their “archival deflation” as well as their “archival fantasies,” “archival hunches,” and “archival blunders.” The prominence of archives as both subject and adjective suggest that this book could also be read as a “romance of the archives,” a romance to which the authors both freely admit. It’s clear that they associate research with something more than just what goes on in the research room; they express the joys of trans-Atlantic travel, drinking tea and talking, and walking London’s streets. While this honesty is refreshing, the authors fetishize archival research, which, in turn, furthers the notion of it as an elitist endeavor. Michie, for example, purchased a fragment of a note or letter written by Scharf from an online rare book dealer, an act certainly inaccessible to many researchers. In addition to the lavish dinner party re-creation that the authors hosted, Michie also traveled to present-day Turkey to visit the site of the Xanthan Marbles, which Scharf sketched during a visit in 1839 with Charles Fellows. Their romancing the archives is a double-edged sword for archivists. On one hand, Michie and Warhol play into the notion that archives are exclusively for academics, a myth that archivists have tried hard to dispel for decades. On the other hand, however, due to the relative absence of archives and archivists in popular culture, this popularity is reluctantly welcomed.

Michie and Warhol offer a unique and, ultimately, a transparent portrayal of archival research. They succeed at making the research process, which is often invisible, very visible in the same way that they contribute to the visibility of homosexuality, class relations, and family dynamics in Victorian London. Instead of letting the facts of Scharf’s life completely dominate their work, they forefront archival sources in a way that very few others have done. More examples of this type of research subjectivity and reflection could help to raise the profile of both archivists and archives.

Joshua J. Zimmerman  
Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle