

Queer Celestial AC

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The intertwined regimes of power that construct society define themselves in opposition to the queer Other that directly threatens the “good” National population. Binaries that paint the Other as the virus infiltrating the healthy population that must be located and “cured” mark queer bodies for violence and death.

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This way of understanding the dispersion of power helps us realize that power is not simply about certain individuals being targeted for death or exclusion by a ruler, but instead about the creation of norms that distribute vulnerability and security. When we think about power this way, we undertake a different kind of examination of conditions that concern us, asking different questions. Mitchell Dean describes how this kind of analysis attends to the routines of bureaucracy; the technologies of notation, recording, compiling, presenting and transporting of information, the theories, programmes, knowledge and expertise that compose a field to be governed and invest it with purposes and objectives; the ways of seeing and representing embedded in practices of government; and the different agencies with various capacities that the practices of government require, elicit, form and reform. To examine regimes of government is to conduct analysis in the plural: there is already a plurality of regimes of practices in a given territory, each composed from a multiplicity of in principle unlimited and heterogeneous elements bound together by a variety of relations and capable of polymorphous connections with one another. Regimes of practices can be identified whenever there exists a relatively stable field of correlation of visibilities, mentalities, technologies and agencies, such that they constitute a kind of taken- for- granted point of reference for any form of problematization.⁶ This kind of analysis can be seen in the work of those using “industrial complex” terms to describe and resist the forces of militarization and criminal punishment that pervade US society. It can also be seen in the work that is being done for disability justice. Critical disability studies and the disability rights and disability justice movements have shown us how regimes of knowledge and practices in every area of life establish norms of “healthy” bodies and minds, and consign those who are perceived to fall outside those norms to abandonment and imprisonment.⁷ Policies and practices rooted in eugenics have attempted (and continue to attempt) to eliminate the existence of people who fall outside those norms. Native scholars and activists have shown how white European cultural norms determine everything from what property is to what gender and family structure should look like, and how every

instance of the imposition of these norms has been used in the service of the genocide of indigenous people. In these locations and many others, we can see how the circulation of norms creates an idea that undergirds conditions of violence, exploitation, and poverty that social movements have resisted— the idea that the national population (constructed as those who meet racial, gender, sexual, ability, national origin, and other norms) must be protected from those “others” (those outside of such norms) who are portrayed again and again in new iterations at various historical moments as “threats” or “drains.” This operation of norms is central to producing the idea of the national body as ever- threatened and to justifying the exclusion of certain populations from programs that distribute wealth and life chances (c) and the targeting of these same populations for imprisonment and violence (including criminal punishment, immigration enforcement, racist drug laws, sterilization, and medical experimentation). Even though norms are incorporated into various spaces and institutions inconsistently and applied arbitrarily, they still achieve the overall purpose of producing security for some populations and vulnerability for others. Many social movements have produced analyses of how various groups are harmed by the promotion of a national identity centered in norms about race, bodies, health, gender, and reproduction. These constructs often operate in the background and are presumed as “neutral” features of various administrative systems. The existence and operation of such administrative norms is therefore less visible than those moments when people are fired or killed or excluded explicitly because of their race or body type or gender, yet they sometimes produce more significant harm because they structure the entire context of life. I am going to return again and again in the chapters that follow to key examples, such as the dismantling of welfare programs and the expansion of criminal and immigration enforcement, that are central to contemporary politics and help illustrate how life chances are distributed through racialized- gendered systems of meaning and control, often in the form of programs that attest to be race- and gender- neutral and merely administrative.

The impact is overkill – Queer bodies are exposed to overkill that aims to end all Queer life, rendering them disposable and unworthy of existence. only the aff can possibly create a solidarity for Queer people.

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[Eric Stanley is an assistant professor in the Department of Gender and Sexuality Studies at the UC Riverside, "Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture," 6/01/2011, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-1259461>)]

“Dirty [redacted]!” Or simply, “Look, a Gay!” These words launch a bottle from a passing car window, the target my awaiting body. In other moments they articulate the sterilizing glares and violent fantasies that desire, and threaten to enact, my corporal undoing. Besieged, I feel in the fleshiness of the everyday like a kind of near life or a death-in- waiting. Catastrophically, this imminent threat constitutes for the queer that

which is the sign of vitality itself. What then becomes of the possibility of queer life, if queerness is produced always and only through the negativity of forced death and at the threshold of obliteration? Or as Achille Mbembe has provocatively asked, in the making of a kind of corporality that is constituted in the social as empty of meaning beyond the anonymity of bone, “But what does it mean to do violence to what is nothing?”¹ In another time and place, “ ‘Dirty [n*word]!’ Or simply, ‘Look, a Negro!’ ” (“Sale nègre! ou simplement: Tiens, un nègre!”) opened Frantz Fanon’s chapter 5 of *Black Skin, White Masks*, “The Lived Experience of the Black” (“L’expérience vécue du Noir”), infamously mistranslated as “The Fact of Blackness.”² I start with “Dirty[redacted]!” against a logic of Near Life, Queer Death Overkill and Ontological Capture Eric Stanley 2 Stanley · Near Life, Queer Death flattened substitution and toward a political commitment to non-mimetic friction. After all, the racialized phenomenology of blackness under colonization that Fanon illustrates may be productive to read against and with a continuum of antiques violence in the United States. The scopic and the work of the visual must figure with such a reading of race, gender, and sexuality. It is argued, and rightfully so, that the instability of queerness obscures it from the epidermalization that anchors (most) bodies of color in the fields of the visual. When thinking about the difference between anti-Semitism and racism, which for Fanon was a question of the visibility of oppression, he similarly suggests, “the Jew can be unknown in his Jewishness.”³ Here it may be useful to reread Fanon through an understanding of passing and the visual that reminds us that Jews can sometimes not be unknown in their Jewishness.

Similarly I ask why antiques violence, more often than not, is correctly levied against queers. In other words, the productive discourse that wishes to suggest that queer bodies are no different might miss moments of signification where queer bodies do in fact signify differently. This is not to suggest that there is an always locatable, transhistorical queer body, but the fiercely flexible semiotics of queerness might help us build a way of knowing antiques violence that can provisionally withstand the weight of generality.⁴ Indeed, not all who might identify under the name queer experience the same relationship to violence. For sure, the overwhelming numbers of trans/queer people who are murdered in the United States are of color.⁵ Similarly, trans/gender nonconforming people, people living with HIV/AIDS and/or other ability issues, undocumented and imprisoned trans/queer people, sex workers, and working-class queers, among others, experience a disproportionate amount of structural violence. In turn, this structural violence more often than not predisposes them to a greater amount of interpersonal violence. Yet many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) folks in the United States who have access to normative power may in their daily lives know very little about either structural or personal violence. The long history and magnified present of gay assimilation illustrates these varying degrees of possibility and power available to some at the expense of others. In contrast, I am marking queer as the horizon where identity crumbles and vitality is worked otherwise. To this end, queer might be a productive placeholder to name a nonidentity where force is made to live. This is not to suggest that the negativity of queer and methodologies of violence define the end of queer worlding or that the parameters of opposition are sedimented as such.⁶ On the contrary, the very fact that queers do endure is evidence, as Fred Moten has beautifully argued about the history of blackness in relation to slavery, that “objects can and do resist.”⁷ I start here, in reference to Fanon’s text, because he continues to offer us among the most compelling analyses of structural abjection, (non) recognition, and psychic/corporal violence. “Look, a Negro!” violently freezes Fanon in a timeless place as a black object, overdetermined from without, as a signifier with no meaning of its own making. In a similar way, the “dirty [redacted]” of my opening places queerness in the anonymity of history and shocks it into the embodied practice of feeling queer in a particular place, body, and time. This meditation will attempt to understand how the queer approximates the cutting violence that marks the edges of subjectivity itself. Race and gender figure the contours of my thinking on the work of violence in the gathering up of queer remains. Here the force of violence that interests me is not introduced after the formation of something that might be called queer. I am using the term queer to precisely index the collision of difference and violence. In other words, queer is being summoned to labor as the moment when bodies, non-normative sexuality/genders, and force materialize the im/possibility of subjectivity. Against an identity that assumes a prior unity, queer disrupts this coherence and also might function as a collective of negativity, void of a subject but named as object, retroactively visible through the hope of a radical politics to come. Found and Lost “There is a crime scene somewhere, we just haven’t found it yet,”⁸ stated a New York City police officer about the now-cold case of Rashawn Brazell. Brazell, a nineteen-year-old black gay man, went missing the morning of 15 February 2005 from the Brooklyn apartment he shared with his mother. Witnesses reportedly saw Brazell leave early in the morning with an unknown man who rang his doorbell and met him outside. Two days later, around 3:00 a.m. on 17 February, New York Transit Workers found two “suspicious” bags alongside the tracks at the Nostrand Avenue station in Brooklyn. Upon closer inspection of a black garbage bag, which was lined with another blue garbage bag, they discovered two legs and the arm of a then-unidentified black male. A week later, on 23 February, workers at the Humboldt Street recycling plant in New York made another discovery of body parts in an identical blue bag stuffed inside a black bag. Among these remains was a fingerprintable hand, which confirmed the body parts to be those of the missing Brazell. An assortment of bones and flesh — part of a torso,

hand, leg, and pelvis — filled the bags. According to the autopsy and coroner's report, Brazell was "kept alive" for two days before he was surgically dismembered. The report also suggests that the murderer had a "working knowledge of human anatomy" as all the cuts were "clean" and on the joints. Moreover, the cuts were all first traced with a sharp object, probably a knife, using precision and care, before the heavier work of cutting through bones was performed. The assorted cuts and stab marks on the torso suggest, according to the report, that there was probably a struggle before death. However, the actual cause of death is still undetermined, as Brazell's head is still missing. The never-found knife that traced Brazell's body into pieces is but one of the artifacts that assemble the afterlives of this murder. The original offense, the

mutilation, torture, and disarticulation of Brazell, is made to repeat, to reiterate, its trauma and terror as a grammatical constellation of the long histories and cultural narratives that equate the act of black queer sex, and queers more broadly, with the work of death.

The reiteration of the murder serves as monument to what must become of young, black queers who have anonymous sex with other men. Brazell's actual murder, along with the logic that argues that his death was of his own making, traces the inescapable circle that carved not only his body, but also his history. How then might we read the specificity that ended the life of Brazell dialectically with the cultural violence that rewrites his death as an inevitable end? The case of Rashawn Brazell is, in many horrific ways, nothing out of the ordinary. From the gruesome murder itself, the ritualistic dismembering of the corpse, and the aftermath of silence punctuated by sensationalistic pulses, Brazell, like the overwhelming majority of murdered trans and queer people in the United States, remains in the swimming generality of cold cases, murders never solved, killers never really feared, and body parts never found. The true terror of Brazell's experience is felt once we begin to read this case as so chillingly common. This typicality places Brazell in a mass grave of tangled bones, a queer burial of unmarked pain. Case after case of mutilated queers in various states of decomposition builds my archive. A random name in a news report of a murdered trans woman leads to another story of inassimilable harm.

In 2000, not all that far from Brazell's house, in Queens, New York, a large green plastic tub was found with a foot, crushed bones, and a human skull with "gay [n*word] #1"9 written in marker with an accompanying Social Security number. The skull belonged to nineteen-year-old Steen Keith Fenrich. Fenrich's stepfather later confessed to killing his stepson and trying to frame Steen's boyfriend because he was gay. Another question found me at the murder of "A. Fitzgerald Walker,"10 a black transwoman living in Fayetteville, Arkansas. According to testimony two men outside a gay bar picked up Walker, then all three went back to her apartment. One of the men, Yitzak Marta, later stated that once in her apartment they discovered that she was a "man" and so they left. Neighbors became suspicious because the tires on Walker's car had been slashed. Three days later the police entered her apartment to find her lifeless body and "KKK" in two-foot high letters written in her blood. I rehearse these other cases in hopes of capturing momentarily the unconfineable, the affective weight, the terror, and the pain of queer life, a composition sketched from missing body parts that few ever really miss. The question, then, of signifying the dead, of rewriting violence and of representation itself must be raised. Writing death tends to reproduce a pornography of violence through which the fleshiness of those we are in conversation with, their material lives, and the politics of their ends are decomposed into tropes of speculative pain and sensational disappearance. As impossible necessity I stage my etho-methodological query along with that of Moten in thinking about how one might inhabit a space of representation so overdetermined: "Is there a way to subject this unavoidable model of subjection to a radical breakdown?"11 Can there be a radical breakdown that remembers a queer corporality that may have never been? Brazell's mother seizes us with a similar plea: "I want who did this off the street, and I want the rest of my child."12 Cold Calculations Can one find what was not ever there — the missing head of a black queer or the identity of an unnamed transwoman whose body is never claimed? How do we measure the pain of burying generations of those we

love or even those we never knew? Brazell's bloody end asks these questions through its calculus of trauma. This kind of loss orders a precarious organization, a kind of trace of that which was never there, a death that places into jeopardy the category of life itself.

The numbers, degrees, locations, kinds, types, and frequency of attacks, the statistical evidence that is meant to prove that a violation really happened, are the legitimizing measures that dictate the ways we are mandated to understand harm. However, statistics as an epistemological project may be another way in which the enormity of antiqueer is disappeared. Thinking only, or primarily, statistically about

antiqueer violence is both a theoretical and a material trap. Although statistical evidence is important to make strong knowledge claims about the severity of violence, "statistics" seem to have a way of ensuring that the head of Brazell is never found. Ironically, because his head has yet to be recovered, the "actual" cause of death cannot be officially determined. Furthermore, this indeterminate cause of death bars Brazell from being entered into hate crimes statistics. Not yet dead, Brazell has never been counted as a casualty of "hate violence."13 Currently the FBI, through the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division, collects the only national data on "hate violence." These data on hate violence (or hate crimes, as they are more commonly called) contain categories for religious, racial, and disability "bias" and antihomosexual (male and female), antibisexual, and antiheterosexual incidents (in the 2008 statistics, 2 percent of reported hate crimes were antiheterosexual incidents, while

1.6 percent were antibisexual).14 This 6 Stanley · Near Life, Queer Death hate violence reporting is optional for local

jurisdictions; the FBI collects no statistics on trans/gender variant incidents; and the 2008 statistics report that only ten “victims” experienced “multi-bias” incidents. The 2008 report also counted only 1,706 incidents based on “sexual orientation,” which comprised infractions ranging from vandalism to murder. It would seem misguided at best to suggest that the number 1,706 can really tell us anything about the work of antiqueer violence. Reported attacks on “out” queer folks, such as these data, can of course only work as a swinging signifier for the incalculable referent of the actualized violence. This is not simply a numerical issue; it is a larger question of the friction between measures and effect. Not unlike the structuring lack produced by any representation that offers us, the viewers, the promise of the real, statistics can leave us with only a fragmented copy of what they might index. “Reports” on antiqueer violence, such as the “Hate Crime Statistics,” reproduce the same kinds of rhetorical loss along with the actual loss of people that cannot be counted. The quantitative limits of what gets to count as antiqueer violence cannot begin to apprehend the numbers of trans and queer bodies that are collected off cold pavement and highway underpasses, nameless flesh whose stories of brutality never find their way into an official account beyond a few scant notes in a police report of a body of a “man in a dress” discovered.¹⁵ Even when a murderer is not successful and there is a survivor who could enter the act into the official record, incidents of violence are not often reported to the FBI or local police, and for good reason. The National Crime Victim Survey (NCVS) states that only about 58 percent of such incidents are ever reported; however, I would assume the percentage to be much lower.¹⁶ Furthermore, “It’s War in Here”: A Report on the Treatment of Transgender and Intersex People in New York State Men’s Prisons, a 2005 report compiled by the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, argued that the police are still one of the largest perpetrators of anti-trans, -gender- nonconforming, and -queer violence.¹⁷ There is a growing body of work in trans/queer critical prison studies and activism that also supports these findings.¹⁸ With the police or some other tentacle of the prison-industrial complex, namely the FBI, as the primary and only collection, processing, and reporting agency for such data, people’s reluctance and fear around identifying such incidents should come as no surprise.¹⁹ Even with these fragmented and disjointed accounts, missing numbers, and never-recovered body parts, antiqueer violence overwhelms. Story after story of dismemberment, torture, mutilation, lynching, and execution coagulate a bleeding history of what it means to be queer in the United States. All available discourse seems unable to get at the enormity and brutality of this phenomenon. How can we measure the loss of Rashawn Brazell? The grinding task of transforming memories and skin into calSocial Text 107 • Summer 2011 7 culated data offers us little. Even if his murder made the official number rise to 1,707, what would we know then that we do not know now? Would we believe the interlocking systems of racism, classism, and homophobia that emptied his skin of the possibility of value would crumble? Or would we believe that the legal system that has spent its history imprisoning and otherwise disappearing people of color and trans/queer folks would suddenly reverse its architecture of power? What I am after then is not a new set of data or a more complete set of numbers. What I hope to do here is to resituate the ways we conceptualize the very categories of “queer” and “violence” as to remake them both.²⁰ Public Pain, Private Loss Where statistics fail, scars rise to tell other histories. From the phenomenological vault of growing up different, to the flickers of brutal details, one would not have to dig deep to uncover a corpse. Yet even with the horrific details, antiqueer violence is written as an outlaw practice, a random event, and an unexpected tragedy. Dominant culture’s necessity to disappear the enormity of antiqueer violence seems unsurprising. Yet I suggest that mainstream LGBT discourse also works in de-politicized collusion with the erasure of a structural recognition. Through this privatization the enormity of antiqueer violence is vanished.²¹ Thinking violence as individual acts versus epistemic force works to support the normative and normalizing structuring of public pain. In other words, privatizing antiqueer violence is one of the ways in which the national body and its trauma are heterosexualized, or in which the relegation of antiqueer violence, not unlike violence against women, racist violence, violence against animals (none of which are mutually exclusive), casts the national stage of violence and its ways of mourning as always human, masculinist, able-bodied, white, gender-conforming, and heterosexual. For national violence to have value it must be produced through the tangled exclusion of bodies whose death is valueless. To this end, as mainstream LGBT groups clamber for dominant power through attachment of a teleological narrative of progress, they too reproduce the argument that antiqueer violence is something out of the ordinary.²² The problem of privatizing violence is not, however, simply one of the re-narration of the incidents. The law, and specifically “rights” discourse, which argues to be the safeguard of liberal democracy, is one of the other motors that works to privatize this structural

violence. Rights are inscribed, at least in the symbolic, with the power to protect citizens of the nation-state from the excesses of the government and against the trespass of criminality. In paying attention to the anterior magic of the law, it is not so much, or at least not only, that some are granted rights 8 Stanley · Near Life, Queer Death because they are human, but that the performative granting of rights is what constitutes the promise of humanity under which some bodies are held. This is important in thinking about the murder of Brazell, and about antiequeer violence at large, because it troubles the very foundations of the notion of protection and the formative violence of the law itself. According to the juridical logic of liberal democracy, if these rights are infringed upon, the law offers remedy in the name of justice. This necessary and assumptive formal equality before the law is the precursor for a system argued to be based on justice. In other words, for the law to lay claim to something called justice, formalized equality must be a precondition. The law then is a systematic and systematizing process of substitution where the singular and the general are shuttled and replaced to inform a matrix of fictive justice. Thus for the law to uphold the fantasy of justice and disguise its punitive aspirations, antiequeer violence, like all structural violence, must be narrated as an outlaw practice and unrepresentative of culture at large. This logic then must understand acts like the murder of Brazell in the singular. Through a mathematics of mimesis the law reproduces difference as similarity. By funneling the desperate situations and multiple possibilities into a calculable trespass kneading out the contours and the excess along the way, equality appears. To acknowledge the inequality of “equality” before the law would undo the fantastical sutures that bind the U.S. legal system. In the hope of being clear, for the law to read antiequeer violence as a symptom of larger cultural forces, the punishment of the “guilty party” would only be a representation of justice. To this end, the law is made possible through the reproduction of both material and discursive formation of antiequeer, along with many other forms of violence. I too quickly rehearse this argument in the hope that it might foreclose the singular reliance on the law as the ground, and rights as the technology, of safety.²³ Killing Time “He was my son — my daughter. It didn’t matter which. He was a sweet kid,” Lauryn Paige’s mother, trying to reconcile at once her child’s murder and her child’s gender, stated outside an Austin, Texas, courthouse.²⁴ Lauryn was an eighteen-year-old transwoman who was brutally stabbed to death. According to Dixie, Lauryn’s best friend, it was a “regular night.” The two women had spent the beginning of the evening “working it” as sex workers. After Dixie and Lauryn had made about \$200 each they decided to call it quits and return to Dixie’s house, where both lived. On the walk home, Gamaliel Mireles Coria and Frank Santos picked them up in their white conversion van. “Before we got into the van the very first thing I told them was that we were transsexuals,” said Dixie in Social Text 107 • Summer 2011 9 an interview.²⁵ After a night of driving around, partying in the van, Dixie got dropped off at her house. She pleaded for Lauryn to come in with her, but Lauryn said, “Girl, let me finish him,” so the van took off with Lauryn still inside.²⁶ Santos was then dropped off, leaving Lauryn and Coria alone in the van. According to the autopsy report, Travis County medical examiner Dr. Roberto Bayardo cataloged at least fourteen blows to Lauryn’s head and more than sixty knife wounds to her body. The knife wounds were so deep that they almost decapitated her — a clear sign of overkill. Overkill is a term used to indicate such excessive violence that it pushes a body beyond death. Overkill is often determined by the postmortem removal of body parts, as with the partial decapitation in the case of Lauryn Paige and the dissection of Rashawn Brazell. The temporality of violence, the biological time when the heart stops pushing and pulling blood, yet the killing is not finished, suggests the aim is not simply the end of a specific life, but the ending of all queer life. This is the time of queer death, when the utility of violence gives way to the pleasure in the other’s mortality. If queers, along with others, approximate nothing, then the task of ending, of killing, that which is nothing must go beyond normative times of life and death. In other words, if Lauryn was dead after the first few stab wounds to the throat, then what do the remaining fifty wounds signify? The legal theory that is offered to nullify the practice of overkill often functions under the name of the trans-or gay-panic defense. Both of these defense strategies argue that the murderer became so enraged after the “discovery” of either genitalia or someone’s sexuality they were forced to protect themselves from the threat of queerness. Estanislao Martinez of Fresno, California, used the trans-panic defense and received a four-year prison sentence after admittedly stabbing J. Robles, a Latina transwoman, at least twenty times with a pair of scissors. Importantly, this defense is often used, as in the cases of Robles and Paige, after the murderer has engaged in some kind of sex with the victim. The logic of the trans-panic defense as an explanation for overkill, in its gory semiotics, offers us a way of understanding queers as the nothing of Mbembe’s query. Overkill names the technologies necessary to do away with that which is already gone. Queers then are the specters of life whose threat is so unimaginable that one is “forced,” not simply to murder, but to push them backward out of

time, out of History, and into that which comes before.²⁷ In thinking the overkill of Paige and Brazell, I return to Mbembe's query, "But what does it mean to do violence to what is nothing?"²⁸ This question in its elegant brutality repeats with each case I offer. By resituating this question in the positive, the "something" that is more often than not translated as the human is made to appear. Of interest here, the category of the human assumes generality, yet can only be activated through the 10 Stanley · Near Life, Queer Death specificity of historical and politically located intersection. To this end, the human, the "something" of this query, within the context of the liberal democracy, names rights-bearing subjects, or those who can stand as subjects before the law. The human, then, makes the nothing not only possible but necessary. Following this logic, the work of death, of the death that is already nothing, not quite human, binds the categorical (mis)recognition of humanity. The human, then, resides in the space of life and under the domain of rights, whereas the queer inhabits the place of compromised personhood and the zone of death. As perpetual and axiomatic threat to the human, the queer is the negated double of the subject of liberal democracy. Understanding the nothing as the unavoidable shadow of the human serves to counter the arguments that suggest overkill and antiequeer violence at large are a pathological break and that the severe nature of these killings signals something extreme. In contrast, overkill is precisely not outside of, but is that which constitutes liberal democracy as such. Overkill then is the proper expression to the riddle of the queer nothingness. Put another way, the spectacular material-semiotics of overkill should not be read as (only) individual pathology; these vicious acts must indict the very social worlds of which they are ambassadors. Overkill is what it means, what it must mean, to do violence to what is nothing.

Its displacing of subjectivity enables the creation of spaces of queerness – these allow inhuman forces to come together into a cathartic gathering that is necessary to found ethical ways of living.

Puar 9 (Jasbir K Puar, Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University, "Prognosis time: Towards a geopolitics of affect, debility and capacity", p. 168-169)

Out of the numerous possibilities that "assemblage theory" offers, much of it has already begun to transform queer theory, from Elizabeth Grosz's crucial re-reading of the relations between bodies and prosthetics (which complicates not only the contours of bodies in relation to forms of bodily discharge, but also complicates the relationships to objects, such as cell phones, cars, wheelchairs, and the distinctions between them as capacity-enabling devices) (1994), to Donna Haraway's cyborgs (1991), to Deleuze and Guattari's "BwO" (Bodies without Organs – organs, loosely defined, rearranged against the presumed natural ordering of bodily capacity) (1987). I want to close by foregrounding the analytic power of conviviality that may further complicate how subjects are positioned, underscoring instead more fluid relations between capacity and debility. Conviviality, unlike notions of resistance, oppositionality, subversion or transgression (facets of queer exceptionalism that unwittingly dovetail with modern narratives of progress in modernity), foregrounds categories such as race, gender, and sexuality as events – as encounters – rather than as entities or attributes of the subject. Surrendering certain notions of revolution, identity politics, and social change – the "big utopian picture" that Massumi complicates in the opening epigraph of this essay – conviviality instead always entails an "experimental step." Why the destabilization of the subject of identity and a turn to affect matters is because affect – as a bodily matter – makes identity politics both possible and yet impossible. In its conventional usage, conviviality means relating to, occupied with, or fond of feasting, drinking, and good company – to be merry, festive, together at a table, with companions and guests, and hence, to live with. As an attribute and function of assembling, however, conviviality does not lead to a politics of the universal or inclusive common, nor an ethics of individuatedness, rather the futurity enabled through the open materiality of bodies as a Place to Meet. We could usefully invoke Donna Haraway's notion of "encounter value" here, a "becoming with" companionate (and I would also add, incompany) species, whereby actors are the products of relating, not pre-formed before the encounter (2008, 16). Conviviality is an ethical orientation that rewrites a Levinasian taking up of the ontology of the Other by arguing that there is no absolute self or other,¹⁵ rather bodies that come together and dissipate through intensifications and vulnerabilities, insistently rendering bare the instability of the divisions between capacity-endowed and debility-laden bodies. These encounters are rarely comfortable mergers but rather entail forms of eventness that could potentially unravel oneself but just as quickly be recuperated through a restabilized self, so that the

political transformation is invited, as Arun Saldhana writes, through “letting yourself be destabilized by the radical alterity of the other,” in seeing his or her difference not as a threat but as a resource to question your own position in the world” (2007, 118). Conviviality is thus open to its own dissolution and self-annihilation and less interested in a mandate to reproduce its terms of creation or sustenance, recognizing that political critique must be open to the possibility that it might disrupt and alter the conditions of its own emergence such that it is no longer needed – an openness to something other than what we might have hoped for. This is my alternative approach to Lee Edelman’s No Future, then, one that is not driven by rejecting the figure of the child as the overdetermined outcome of “reproductive futurism” (2004),¹⁶ but rather complicates the very terms of the regeneration of queer critique itself. Thus the challenge before us is how to craft convivial political praxis that does not demand a continual reinvestment in its form and content, its genesis or its outcome, the literalism of its object nor the direction of its drive.

But venture capital plans to violently reform space into a heteronormative landscape – Elon Musk wants to nuke Mars into earthly normativity Oman-Reagan 15

[Michael Oman-Reagan, 09-11-2015, "Queering Outer Space," Medium,
<https://medium.com/space-anthropology/queering-outer-space-f6f5b5cecd0>]

When NASA received a signal from the Voyager 1 spacecraft in 2012, they called it “the sound of interstellar space” and marked the data as the moment human exploration crossed into the “space M.P. Oman-Reagan - Queering Outer Space 10 between stars” (NASA JPL n.d.). And while science and technology take us to the edges of the solar system and beyond, venture capital is planning how they can terraform new worlds—a neoliberal, capitalist project which has, of course, already stolen the phrase “Occupy.” In response, we need to pre-emptively Occupy Mars while taking one of the many important lessons offered by indigenous people to the Occupy movement, and de-colonize Mars in the process. Which means injecting all of our queer and indigenous selves into the discussions about “settling” and “colonizing” Mars, into these plans to fundamentally change the surface of another planet, to reproduce Earth there. Lisa Messeri, anthropologist and historian of science and technology, points out that if I use queering to mean something odd then something like Elon Musk’s plan to nuke Mars, for example, might be seen as queer. Her excellent question about this and our chat on Twitter inspired me to clarify. I’m looking at Musk’s terraforming language from the position that Mars is already queer. Remaking Mars in Earth’s image, and uncritically assuming this is a great idea, is exactly the kind of process that queering works against. Nuking mars is an unqueer thing to do because it uses the model of razing and rebuilding, cutting it all down to make it possible to build a normative landscape on top of the ruins. We need to think about the ways that terraforming is not always a utopian idea, but can also be seen as a violent imposition of earthly normativity on landscapes elsewhere, a colonialization of existing queer-otherworld landscapes.

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Thus we affirm, the private appropriation of space is unjust. Affirm the resolution to criticize the extension of heteronormativity to space as a rejection of the anti-queer ideologies underpinning society. To constantly stray from the flock and resist the shepherd.

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[Lepp, Nicholas, "Queering Utopia: ACT UP and the Disruption of Heteronormativity" (2019). UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones. 3642. <http://dx.doi.org/10.34917/15778497>]

Queer utopic moments are invoked in spaces of queerness, acting as utopic cuts in the heteronormative present that point towards a future where queerness is less constrained. If queerness is not yet here, constantly on the unobtainable horizon, or "can be apprehended only through the utopian,"¹³¹ then these moments must tear at the very fabric of social existence as we know it. By problematizing heteronormativity, queer utopic acts invoke a future in the here and now. But how, exactly, do queer utopic spaces invoke this future? This chapter explores what I call the queer utopic cut, or the direct challenge to heteronormativity created by instances of queer utopic moments. In order to unpack such cuts, I begin this chapter by exploring the necessity of a space-based analysis for theorizing the queer utopic cut. In doing so, I stumble across a peculiar problem—if these cuts are trapped within particular spaces, then how can they create long-lasting change? I aim to answer this question by first unpacking the immediate result of these cuts, establishing a kind of queer relationality, and then by discussing possible after effects of these cuts, detailing how they act as sites of queer worldmaking and queer counterpublics. My point in focusing on the after effects does what I believe is the necessary work of a queer utopian—I aim to focus on a queer future through the lens of what is happening in the here and now. In other words, I want the reader to have an image of queer worldmaking and counterpublics painted through the lens of the queer utopic cut. Given that this is how this cut works, I think this frame makes sense. By inviting the reader to think through this lens, I hope to uncover another layer of analysis explaining the cut and the nature of queer utopias themselves. However, before I begin my investigation into the cut itself, I invite this cut back into rhetorical theory, briefly explaining that it operates as a kind of ideological criticism. I start with this analysis because uncovering the heteronormative ideology embedded within particular spaces is the first step to cutting back against that heteronormativity. We cannot fight this power structure if we cannot first prove that this power structure is there. I turn towards this argument now. The first aspect of the queer utopic cut is to create an ideological criticism of heteronormativity. Here I mean to suggest that the first action taken by a queer utopic cut is to uncover and pinpoint the heteronormative ideologies underpinning particular locations.¹³² Upon uncovering those ideologies, a queer utopic moment can actually cut away at them. Through her analysis on Ricoeur and utopianism, Andreea Ritivoi's arguments provide an excellent introduction into my argument here: Ideology is made necessary by temporal distance, by the irreducible gap between the levels of experience and that of interpretation....its fundamental function is to integrate individuals in communities, in order to create and cement social bonds and to offer concretions of identity....While ideology integrates individuals into groups, utopian reflection allows individuals to reject or undo the integration.¹³³ In order to imagine a more perfect future and cut back against it, queer utopic spaces must find and criticize the heteronormative ideology within society. Utopian thought then becomes the method that allows a theorist to untangle the ideological pinning that have written society as is. Thus, for example when ACT UP sought to create societal change, it had to uncover

the heteronormative system that underpinned society's beliefs. There were certainly ideological reasons that people were opposed to fighting the AIDS crisis—mainly, the conception that people with AIDS were either sexual heathens or homosexuals. Thus, the queer utopic cut is an ideological criticism that specifically targets heteronormativity.

Queer utopianism is key to investment in social theory, futurity, hope, and viewing queerness on the horizon

Muñoz 9

[José Esteban Muñoz is a scholar in queer politics and professor at New York University's Tisch School. "Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity." November 30, 2009. NYU Press]

The moment in which I write this book the critical imagination is in peril. The dominant academic climate into which this book is attempting to intervene is dominated by a dismissal of political idealism. Shouting down utopia is an easy move. It is perhaps even easier than smearing psychoanalytic or deconstructive reading practices with the charge of nihilism. The antiutopian critic of today has a well-worn war chest of poststructuralism pieties at her or his disposal to shut down lines of thought that delineate the concept of critical utopianism. Social theory that invokes the concept of utopia has always been vulnerable to charges of naiveté, impracticality, or lack of rigor. While participating on the Modern Language Association panel titled "The Anti-Social Thesis in Queer Theory," I argued for replacing a faltering antirelational mode of queer theory with a queer utopianism that highlights a renewed investment in social theory (one that calls on not only relationality but also futurity). One of my co-panelists responded to my argument by exclaiming that there was nothing new or radical about utopia. To some degree that is true, insofar as I am calling on a well-established tradition of critical idealism. I am also not interested in a notion of the radical that merely connotes some notion of extremity, righteousness, or affirmation of newness. My investment in utopia and hope is my response to queer thinking that embraces a politics of the here and now that is underlined by what I consider to be today's hamstrung pragmatic gay agenda. Some critics would call this cryptopragmatic approach tarrying with the negative. I would not. To some degree this book's argument is a response to the polemic of the "antirelation." Although the antirelational approach assisted in dismantling an anticritical understanding of queer community, it nonetheless quickly replaced the romance of community with the romance of singularity and negativity. The version of queer social relations that this book attempts to envision is critical of the communitarian as an absolute value and of its negation as an alternative all-encompassing value. In this sense the work of contemporary French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy and his notion of "being singular plural"²⁴ seems especially important. For Nancy the postphenomenological category of being singular plural addresses the way in which the singularity that marks a singular existence is always coterminously plural—which is to say that an entity registers as both particular in its difference but at the same time always relational to other singularities. Thus, if one attempts to render the ontological signature of queerness through Nancy's critical apparatus, it needs to be grasped as both antirelational and relational. Antisocial queer theories are inspired by Leo Bersani's book *Homos*, in which he first theorized the so-called thesis of antirelationality.²⁵ I have long believed that the antirelational turn in queer studies was a partial response to critical approaches to a mode of queer studies that argued for the relational and contingent value of sexuality as a category. Many critics have followed Bersani's antirelational turn, but arguably none as successfully as Lee Edelman in his book *No Future*.²⁶ I have great respect for *No Future*, and Edelman's earlier book offers an adroit reading of James Baldwin's *Just Above My Head*.²⁷ *No Future* is a brilliant and nothing short of inspiring polemic. Edelman clearly announces his mode of argumentation as being in the realm of the ethical, and this introduction is an anticipation of a reanimated political critique and should be read as an idiosyncratic allegiance to the polemical force of his argument and nothing like an easy dismissal. His argument and the seductive sway of the antirelational thesis energizes my argument in key ways. Yet I nonetheless contend that most of the work with which I disagree under the provisional title of "antirelational thesis" moves to imagine an escape or denouncement of relationality as first and foremost a distancing of queerness from what some theorists seem to think of as the contamination of race, gender, or other particularities that taint the purity of sexuality as a singular trope of difference. In other words, antirelational approaches to queer theory are romances of the negative, wishful thinking, and investments in deferring

various dreams of difference. To some extent Cruising Utopia is a polemic that argues against antirelationality by insisting on the essential need for an understanding of queerness as collectivity. I respond to Edelman's assertion that the future is the province of the child and therefore not for the queers by arguing that queerness is primarily about futurity and hope. That is to say that queerness is always in the horizon. I contend that if queerness is to have any value whatsoever, it must be viewed as being visible only in the horizon. My argument is therefore interested in critiquing the ontological certitude that I understand to be partnered with the politics of presentist and pragmatic contemporary gay identity. This mode of ontological certitude is often represented through a narration of disappearance and negativity that boils down to another game of fort-da.

The role of the ballot is to vote for the debater who best performatively or methodologically ruptures normativity

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Mary Nardini Gang, "Toward the queerest insurrection," Anarchist Library,
[//SW">https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/mary-nardini-gang-toward-the-queerest-insurrection //SW](https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/mary-nardini-gang-toward-the-queerest-insurrection)

Queer is a position from which to attack the normative more, a position from which to understand and attack the ways in which normal is reproduced and reiterated. In destabilizing and problematizing normalcy, we can destabilize and become a problem for the Totality. The history of organized queers was borne out of this position. The most marginalized transfolk, people of color, sex workers — have always been the catalysts for riotous explosions of queer resistance. These explosions have been coupled with a radical analysis wholeheartedly asserting that the liberation for queer people is intrinsically tied to the annihilation of capitalism and the state. It is no wonder, then, that the first people to publicly speak of sexual liberation in this country were anarchists, or that those in the last century who struggled for queer liberation also simultaneously struggled against capitalism, racism and patriarchy and empire. This is our history. VIII If history proves anything, it is that capitalism has a treacherous recuperative tendency to pacify radical social movements. It works rather simply, actually. A group gains privilege and power within a movement, and shortly thereafter sell their comrades out. Within a couple years of stonewall, affluent gay white males had thoroughly marginalized everyone that had made their movement possible and abandoned their revolution with them. It was once that to be queer was to be in direct conflict with the forces of control and domination. Now, we are faced with a condition of utter stagnation and sterility. As always, Capital recuperated brick-throwing street queens into suited politicians and activists. There are logcabin Republicans and "stonewall" refers to gay Democrats. There are gay energy drinks and a "queer" television station that wages war on the minds, bodies and esteem of impressionable youth. The "LGBT" political establishment has become a force of assimilation, gentrification, capital and statepower. Gay identity has become both a marketable commodity and a device of withdrawal from struggle against domination. Now they don't critique marriage, military or the state. Rather we have campaigns for queer assimilation into each. Their politics is advocacy for such grievous institutions, rather than the annihilation of them all. "Gays can kill poor people around the world as well as straight people!" "Gays can hold the reigns of the state and capital as well straight people!" "We are just like you". Assimilationists want nothing less than to construct the homosexual as normal — white, monogamous, wealthy, 2.5 children, SUVs with a white picket fence. This construction, of course, reproduces the stability of heterosexuality, whiteness, patriarchy, the gender binary, and capitalism itself. One weekend in August of 1966 — Compton's, a twenty four hour cafeteria in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood was buzzing with its usual late-night crowd of drag queens, hustlers, slummers, cruisers, runaway teens and neighborhood regulars. The restaurant's management became annoyed by a noisy young crowd of queens at one table who seemed to be spending a lot of time without spending a lot of money, and it called the police to roust them. A surly police officer, accustomed to manhandling Compton's clientele with impunity, grabbed the arm of one of the queens and tried to drag her away. She unexpectedly threw her coffee in his face, however, and a melee erupted: Plates, trays, cups and silverware flew through the air at the startled police who ran outside and called for backup. The customer's turned over the tables, smashed the plate-glass windows and poured onto the streets. When the police reinforcements arrived, street fighting broke out all throughout the Compton's vicinity. Drag queens beat the police with their heavy purses and kicked them with their high-heeled shoes. A police car was vandalized, a newspaper box was burnt to the ground and general havoc was raised all throughout the Tenderloin. If we genuinely want to make ruins of this totality, we need to make a break. We don't need inclusion into marriage, the military and the state. We need to end them. No more gay politicians, CEOs and cops. We need to swiftly and immediately articulate a wide gulf between the politics of assimilation and the struggle for liberation. We need to rediscover our riotous inheritance as queer anarchists. We need to destroy

constructions of normalcy, and create instead a position based in our alienation from this normalcy, and one capable of dismantling it. We must use these positions to instigate breaks, not just from the assimilationist mainstream, but from capitalism itself. These positions can become tools of a social force ready to create a complete rupture with this world. Our bodies have been born into conflict with this social order. We need to deepen that conflict and make it spread. What began as an early morning raid on June 28th 1969 at New York's Stonewall Inn, escalated to four days of rioting throughout Greenwich Village. Police conducted the raid as usual; targeting people of color, transpeople and gender variants for harassment and violence. It all changed, though, when a bull-dyke resisted her arrest and several street queens began throwing bottles and rocks at the police. The police began beating folks, but soon people from all over the neighborhood rushed to the scene, swelling the rioters numbers to over 2,000. The vastly outnumbered police barricaded themselves inside the bar, while an uprooted parking meter was used as a battering ram by the crowd. Molotov cocktails were thrown at the bar. Riot police arrived on scene, but were unable to regain control of the situation. Drag queens danced a conga line and sang songs amidst the street fighting to mock the inability of the police to re-establish order. The rioting continued until dawn, only to be picked up again at nightfall of the subsequent days. IX Susan Stryker writes that the state acts to "regulate bodies, in ways both great and small, by enmeshing them within norms and expectations that determine what kinds of lives are deemed livable or useful and by shutting down the space of possibility and imaginative transformation where peoples' lives begin to exceed and escape the state's use for them." We must create space wherein it is possible for desire to flourish. This space, of course, requires conflict with this social order. To desire, in a world structured to confine desire, is a tension we live daily. We must understand this tension so that we can become powerful through it — we must understand it so that it can tear our confinement apart. On the night of May 21st 1979, in what has come to be known as the White Night Riots, the queer community of San Francisco was outraged and wanted justice for the murder of Harvey Milk. The outraged queers went to city hall where they smashed the windows and glass door of the building. The riotous crowd took to the streets, disrupting traffic, smashing storefronts and car windows, disabling buses and setting twelve San Francisco Police cruisers on fire. The rioting spread throughout the city as others joined in on the fun! This terrain, born in rupture, must challenge oppression in its entirety. This of course, means total negation of this world. We must become bodies in revolt. We need to delve into and indulge in power. We can learn the strength of our bodies in struggle for space for our desires. In desire we'll find the power to destroy not only what destroys us, but also those who aspire to turn us into a gay mimicry of that which destroys us. We must be in conflict with regimes of the normal. This means to be at war with everything. If we desire a world without restraint, we must tear this one to the ground.

counter interp: the affirmative does not need to defend a hypothetical policy, the affirmative can defend the resolution as springboard for larger epistemological discussion that make debate more accessible and educational.

net benefits:

1. Challenging status quo forms of top-down education - we are bottom up

