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Queer Negativity and Utopianism in Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence

A Thesis in English

by

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April 2015

This essay is an attempt to synthesize two seemingly opposing positions in recent queer theory through readings of two British modernist literary texts. The two positions are the "anti-social turn" and queer utopianism. The former position is associated with the psychoanalytically inflected work of Leo Bersani and Lee Edelman and is concerned with the rejection of heteronormative sociality. I identify theorists such as José Esteban Muñoz, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner as more closely aligned with queer utopianism, which seeks to engage in a queer worldmaking project. The first section of this essay is a summary and a critical engagement with these theorists in addition to being an introduction to the later sections in which I present readings of the literary texts. The second section is devoted to a reading of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. The third and final section is a reading of D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. I argue that both texts, in certain queer moments, not only reject a repressively heteronormative social world, but also gesture utopically towards the potential for queerer ways of life.

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Literary Modernism and the "Anti-Social Turn" in Queer Theory

> Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis*; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital *l*s and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop.
>
> Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*

> At his or her best, the homosexual is a failed subject, one that needs its identity to be cloned, or inaccurately replicated, outside of it. This is the strength, not the weakness, of homosexuality, for a nihilistic civilization has been built on the foundation of a (factitious) inviolable subject.
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> Leo Bersani, "A Conversation with Leo Bersani"

I open with two provocative quotations about the relationship between queerness and heteronormative sociality[1]. The first is a statement of militant queer oppositionality to what Lee Edelman critiques as "the whole network of Symbolic relations" which makes heterosexuality the norm through a culturally dominant fantasy of heteroreproductive futurity built around the figure of the Child. Since a child guarantees a future, and queer sexualities are nonreproductive, queerness has no future. The political

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[1] For this essay, I use the definition of "heteronormativity" provided by Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant in their article "Sex in Public": "institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent–that is, organized as a sexuality–but also privileged" (548). I use the term more or less interchangeably with "heterosexism," though the former term, for me, carries stronger connotations of establishing a regulative norm than the latter, which I read as more broad.

implication of this queer temporality[2] is a paradoxical refusal of politics itself, which always relies on some vision of a more promising future.

The second quotation, while more subdued in tone, is just as radically critical of the same social structures. And while Bersani reads "the homosexual" as a failed subject (i.e. one that has failed to live up to the norms of straight society), this is a failure he celebrates. Such a failure is a "strength" precisely because it presents a utopian escape from a culture which is built on a myth of the "inviolable subject." For Bersani, the gay male subject represents the "violation" of that purportedly inviolable subject not only because of a failure to reproduce the logics of heteronormativity, but also through the bodily "violation" of passive anal sex[3] ("Rectum" 29), the act which Bersani suggests may lie behind the most virulent and even violent homophobic fantasies ("Rectum" 17-18). But in addition to a violent rupture with hetero-sociality, Bersani finds the potential in what he calls "the homosexual" to "imagine the possibility of nonidentarian community" ("Conversation" 183). The concept of such a form of community comes from his theorization of homosexuality as a possible model for "relations of sameness, of homo-relations" (*Homos* 7). The utopian goal of Bersani's reimagining of sociality is to

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[2] My understanding of queer temporality is informed not only by Edelman's *No Future*, but by Judith Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* and José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*. In Halberstam's text, queer temporality refers to "uses of time…[that] develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (1). For Halberstam, examples of such queer temporalities include the lives of gay men shortened by AIDS (2) and other marginal lives that refuse "heteronormative time/space constructs" (10) that construct our experiences of time in such a way as to value maturity, longevity, and life narratives centered around marriage and reproduction (1-6).

[3] Edelman makes similar observations about the fantasmatic violation of male bodies in his "Tearooms and Sympathy"

"lead us to a salutary devalorizing of difference–or, more exactly, to a notion of difference not as a trauma to be overcome…but rather as a nonthreatening supplement to sameness" (*Homos* 7).

Edelman and Bersani, in their anti-assimilationist theorizations, move beyond the familiar, redemptive goals of liberal politics such as social equality and tolerance. Perhaps this is what makes the two epigraphs above so striking. They insist on the radical opposition of queerness to a heteronormative social order. This rigorous oppositionality may be the reason they have been associated with what has been called "the anti-social turn" or "the anti-social thesis" in recent queer theory (Tuhkanen 280). But instead of reading them simply as, to quote Bersani from a recent interview the "the bad guys" (Tuhkanen 280) of queer theory, I suggest that we should read their work as more continuous with queer theory's general goal of a critique of heteronormativity.

What their work reveals, I think, two interesting and productive tensions within the queer theory and the modernist texts I read in this essay, both of which are found in Bersani's work by the critic David Kurnick. The first is what he calls "the defining tension in Bersani's writing between the tragic and the utopian" ("Carnal Ironies" 123). In the quotation above, the tragic mode is exemplified by Bersani's capitulation to the association in heterosexist discourse of homosexuality with failure. I would further characterize the way this mode operates in queer theory as "negative," because Edelman and Bersani (and other theorists and texts I consider here) are interested not just in tragic failures but also in stark refusal. The utopian mode is exemplified by the possibility this failure presents for reimagining the social. And even though Edelman is more committed

to denying the possibility of a queer utopia than Bersani (because a utopia means a future), I read both theorists' work as participating in the utopian mode.

The second tension Kurnick establishes is between queerness as form and its specific, identitarian content ("Embarrassment" 58-59). The former pertains to an understanding of queerness such as Michael Warner's, according to which what is queer is defined by "resistance to regimes of the normal" (Warner, qtd. in Jagose 106). The latter refers to the content it primarily refers to, that is gay or lesbian sexualities, and other nonheteronormative sexualities. Form and content are inextricably linked here, but there is certainly a tension between them. For example, today it is possible to imagine a gay or lesbian identity that does not perform the resistance Warner calls for. With the gradual assimilation to heteronormative life modes by queer communities (for example, with the recent push in the United States for the legalization of same-sex marriage), the existence of what Lisa Duggan has called homonormativity[4] becomes possible. Identities such as these are unquestionably queer, but only in the more specific, content-based sense of the term. However, a queer theoretical approach can never simply cast off the inescapably identitarian implications of the term queer. As Kurnick puts it, referring to the title of Bersani's text *Homos*, in which he fleshes out his highly abstract theory of homo-ness as relations of sameness, "No awareness of the replicating patterns structuring existence will save the garden-variety homo from a bloody nose on the playground, or worse" ("Embarrassment" 59). The impulse of some queer theory towards abstraction can take focus off of the lived identities that give it its name.

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[4] See Eve Watson, "Queering Psychoanalysis/Psychoanalyzing Queer," *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 7 (2009): 114-39.

Queerness as pure form can certainly be problematic. If queerness only means resisting norms, does this divorce queerness from any sexual specificity? Does it make queerness so capacious as to open up the space for a "straight queer" identity, as Calvin Thomas suggests (170)? Both of these concerns are valid, and I will return below to debates around Edelman and Bersani's work within queer theory, but I think they can be resolved by keeping in mind Kurnick's form/content distinction. Queerness as content is sexually specific, but queerness as form carries more far-reaching theoretical and social implications[5]. It is because of these implications that I think we should value queerness-as-form as it is theorized by Edelman, Bersani and others. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick famously claims, "an understanding of virtually any aspect of Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition" (1). If we are to take this claim seriously, a shift of focus from queerness-as-content to queerness-as-form seems appropriate. Sedgwick clearly means for us to understand much more than just what we conventionally refer to and segment off as homosexuality with the kind of analysis she favors. An approach that focuses solely on queerness-as-content (or on intersections between it and its formal counterpart) will be impoverished by its inability

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[5] Kurnick's form/content distinction echoes and aligns with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's consideration of "universalizing" versus "minoritizing" accounts of gay identity in *Epistemology of the Closet* (27). The former, as I understand it, carries with it the possibility of a radical critique of heteronormativity. The latter might seem more suited to a liberal, minority rights-based politics. However, I agree with Sedgwick, as I hope this section makes clear, on the importance of "underwriting continuously the legitimacy of both accounts" (27).

to show the unique value of a queer interpretive lens in cultural analysis: to critique regimes of the normal, sexual or otherwise.

This essay aims to read two modernist texts through such a lens, one that is heavily inflected by the two productive tensions I discuss above. As far as I am aware, there has been very little or no work in queer studies reading these particular texts with the frameworks developed by Edelman and Bersani. I argue that Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* both contain significant moments that are crucially structured by the opposition between the tragic/negative and the utopian, and they all queer texts in the formal sense. They all have queer content as well, but I consider them primarily in terms of form.

I focus in *Mrs. Dalloway* on the characters of Clarissa and Septimus Warren Smith. Both are deeply affected by queer relationships. I read the moment of the middle-aged Clarissa reflecting on the memory of a kiss she shared with her friend Sally when she was younger as embodying the negative/utopian tension. Not only does it constitute a rupture with her sense of self and with heteronormative sociality, but it also creates a queer world of possibility that runs counter to the world she inhabits in the present. Septimus' inarticulable intimacy with his fellow soldier Evans haunts him and prevents his assimilation back into marriage and normative sociality.

Lawrence's novel takes up Bersani's queer utopian call for "new relational modes" ("Fr-oucault" 134). The novel is an exploration of the possibilities for intimacy outside of a heteronormative context. One intimacy in particular, that between Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich explores same-sex love quite explicitly, while the novel also

considers at times a kind of queer heterosexuality. The novel's tragic ending, I argue, is tragic not just because it is Gerald's death, but because it dramatizes a failed attempt at social reinvention.

My goal in turning to these modernist texts closely follows that of another critic (whose work in queer theory explicitly emphasizes the utopian over the negative), José Esteban Muñoz. Muñoz. In his *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz characterizes his approach as "a backward glance that enacts a future vision" (4). He analyzes "a historically specific nexus of cultural production before, around and slightly after the Stonewall rebellion of 1969" (*Cruising* 3). My project may not initially appear to have the same authoritative weight for queer studies as one that focuses on such a significant queer historical moment. But I share Muñoz's goal of turning backwards towards a culturally and historically specific moment for the purpose of engaging in a contemporary theoretical and political struggles. Further, I would argue that modernism is an equally useful discourse for theorists like Muñoz or Edelman as it is preoccupied with precisely the same tensions as contemporary queer theory. As Esther Sánchez-Pardo observes:

> In the field of cultural production, many modernist texts are riven with the horror of the war and haunted by the unprecedented specter of anxiety neurosis, the effects of shell shock, manic depression, and melancholia. Elements of anxiety, fear, and aggression pervade the dynamics of modernist texts. Nonetheless, in the midst of this devastation, different modernisms counterattacked with a belief in movement, change, mutability, and transformation. (10)

Sánchez-Pardo first observes that modernism is shocked by the trauma of World War I and its perceived threat to the stability of the social order. However it is precisely this perceived instability that opens up the space for queer utopian possibility, for a vision of a world altogether different from that of heteronormativity and its punishing norms. The anxiety felt over the loss of a stable social order fuels the creative impulse to imagine other possibilities. It is because of the crucial importance of this anxiety for modernism that I seek to embrace the tragic/negative approaches that Muñoz rejects as "failures of the imagination" (*Cruising* 18) and mere "romances of the negative" (*Cruising* 1). These anxieties are particularly visible in Woolf and Lawrence. Woolf famously stated in 1924, "On or about December 1910 human nature changed" (qtd. in Sánchez-Pardo 195). Lawrence opens *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with the proclamation, "Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes" (5). We cannot be sure that either author was definitively reacting to World War I, but even if they are not, their sentiments are characteristic of modernism's sense of a broken and radically changed world.[6] In the sense that modernism characterizes the world as both broken *and* radically different, it has a sense not only of tragedy but of possible social renewal. This renewal is suggested by Lawrence's "new little hopes" and echoed by Muñoz's much

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[6] This sentiment is particularly strong in Beckett. His texts often portray broken, meaningless worlds deprived of any sense of hope. Beckett's concern with negativity resonates more with critics like Edelman and Bersani than it does with Muñoz's utopianism. However, texts like *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* explore possibilities for strange or even queer same-sex couplings in Vladimir and Estragon and Clov and Hamm. In this sense, Beckett makes queer worlds even as he dramatizes a thoroughly broken social order.

more optimistic theorizations such as the suggestion that "queerness is primarily about futurity and hope" (11). In articulating his approach, Muñoz interestingly shares Lawrence's sense of a broken social order in the present: "Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*" (Muñoz 1). Of course, part of what makes the here and now a quagmire for Muñoz is its stifling heteronormativity. Lawrence himself is held regressive views on gender and sexuality,[7] but it is not my intention here to in any way "reclaim" him as queer, but rather to read certain moments in his text as embodying a negative and a utopian queer impulse, usually in a formal sense.

There has been debate between the utopian and "antisocial" approaches in queer theory,[8] but I hope to focus on moments in the literature that seem to embrace both sides at once.[9] I look at moments of queer possibility within the texts rather than on interpreting the narrative as a whole. I think I have done this in part to stress the potential in these moments to envision another world separate from the narrative logics of the

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[7] Howard J. Booth argues in "D.H. Lawrence and Male Homosexual Desire" that, contrary to what Lawrence biographer Mark Kinkead-Weekes asserts, "His attitude to homosexual desire remained generally negative" throughout his life (87). This negative attitude manifested itself strongly following what was, for Lawrence, a disturbing encounter with John Maynard Keynes in 1915. Lawrence claimed the encounter filled him with "the most dreadful sense of repulsiveness" (93).

[8] See Caserio, Robert L., Lee Edelman, Judith Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, and Tim Dean. "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory." *PMLA* 121.3 (2006): 819-28.

[9] The only project I am aware of that also self-consciously embraces both of these positions is Tison Pugh's "'There lived in the land of Oz two queerly made men': Queer Utopianism and Antisocial Eroticism in L. Frank Baum's Oz Series."

novels' social worlds. These very logics make queerness, in a certain sense, impossible, and condemn the queer possibilities explored to tragic, hopeless fates. They are the logics of the dominant heteronormative social order that still mark queerness and queer sexualities as abject, failed imitations, as perverse instances of arrested development towards a mature heterosexuality. One final implicit goal of my project is to establish a sort of genealogy between this tension as it can be seen in debates among queer theorists *and* where it can be seen to originate: in modernist texts like Woolf's and Lawrence's. As Sánchez-Pardo has argued, "we can indisputably trace the poststructuralist impulse to dismantle the dichotomous approach to gender to the modernist critique of normative notions of masculinity and femininity" (2). My project focuses more on queer theory's negative/utopian tension than it does on its critique of normative genders, but these two attributes of queer theory are similar insofar as they both critique heteronormativity. Sánchez-Pardo suggests that a significant move made by queer theory originates in modernism. My claim is similar: not only does the theory provides a lens with which I read the literature; the literature serves as an origin point for the theoretical tension between the utopian and the negative.

In what remains of this section, I will deepen my consideration of the two productive tensions in queer theory that I have identified. I hope that delving more into the theory here will not seem superfluous, but instead will help further establish the theoretical framework within which I consider the literature.

The most concise and straightforward expression of queer theory's tragic/negative mode might come from Leo Bersani's 1995 text, *Homos*: "Perhaps inherent in gay desire

is a revolutionary inaptitude for heteroized sociality. This of course means sociality as we know it" (7). For Bersani, there is a potential in queerness for a reimagining of social relations outside of what he calls "heteroized sociality."[10] Bersani's characterization of gay desire here is also strikingly negative: it is not simply the case that gay desire is revolutionary, but rather that it has a powerful "inaptitude" for "sociality as we know it" which gives it the potential for this revolutionary quality. It is this negative relation to sociality as we presently know it in its heteronormative form that has earned Bersani's work and that which it has influenced the designation "anti-social."

But why does Bersani see gay desire as potentially anti-social and revolutionary, and as a possible site of utopian social transformation? To begin to answer this question, the fact that it is only *potentially* revolutionary is significant for Bersani. Far from arguing that gay sexuality is always and everywhere subversive, Bersani is attentive to how "the ways in which *having sex* politicizes can be highly problematic. How, for example, does a gay man's erotic joy in the penis inflect, or endanger, what he might like think of as his insubordinate relation to the paternal phallus?" (*Homos* 6). In his essay, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Bersani remarks that "to want sex with another man is not exactly a credential for political radicalism" (10). He goes on to speculate that "Right-wing politics can, for example, emerge quite easily from a sentimentalizing of the armed forces or of blue-collar workers, a sentimentalizing which can itself prolong and sublimate a marked sexual preference for sailors and telephone linemen" (*Homos* 12).

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[10] By this latter term, I take Bersani to mean social relations as they are structured and influenced by the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm, a heteronormative social order.

Bersani consistently acknowledges that not only do the erotic inclinations of gay men not *necessarily* predispose them towards any socially transformative political radicalism, but also that these inclinations buttress the potentiality within the gay male subject for reactionary politics. Attraction to precisely those patriarchal conceptions of masculine identity that, one would hope, a reimagined, nonheterosexist vision of sociality would discard, is simply a reality of gay male sexuality as it presently exists. That sexuality, Bersani reminds us, is far from being as unproblematically liberatory as my epigraph from *Homos* may initially suggest. As a consequence of the dominance of "the male and female identities proposed by a patriarchal and sexist culture," it follows that "a sexual desire for men can't be merely a kind of culturally neutral attraction to a Platonic Idea of the male body; the object of that desire necessarily includes a socially determined and socially pervasive definition of what it means to be a man" (Bersani 15). Gay men do not escape, or necessarily oppose, the regressive sexual politics of the dominant culture merely by being marginalized subjects. Rather, because they are not separable from that culture, they are just as likely to internalize and/or desire particular culturally determined notions of masculinity. Bersani reflects in *Homos*, "Even if we are straight or gay at birth, we still have to learn to desire particular men and women, and not to desire others; the *economy* of our sexual drives is a cultural achievement" (64). This shaping of our desires by culture is part of what gives sexuality, for Bersani, its politically unpredictable potentialities. There may or may not be an innate component to sexual inclination, but the socially constructed gender roles towards which culture inevitably steers desire makes

gay male desire in particular susceptible to the risk of an erotically charged conservatism. In fact, Bersani goes even further and argues that:

> An authentic gay male political identity therefore implies a struggle not only against definitions of maleness and of homosexuality as they are reiterated and imposed in a heterosexist social discourse, but also against those very same definitions so seductively and so faithfully reflected by those (in large part culturally invented and elaborated) male bodies that we carry within us as renewable sources of excitement. ("Rectum" 15)

For Bersani, an "authentic gay male political identity" grapples with the consequences of erotic desire for precisely that which is most glorified by the dominant heterosexist discourse of gender, that is its notion of maleness.

In looking for an answer to the question of what Bersani would believe to be an "authentic gay male political identity" we might examine how he theorizes an undoing and remaking of sociality through gay desire. It is perhaps in his notion of "self-shattering"[11] that Bersani's work most effectively operates in both the tragic/negative and utopian modes at once. For Bersani, this psychoanalytically derived concept has a certain ethical value. To understand this ethics of self-shattering, I turn to Bersani's work *The Culture of Redemption*. Bersani's devalues what he calls "the authoritative self" because of his objection to "the sacrosanct value of selfhood" (3-4). It is this value, for Bersani, "that may account for human beings' extraordinary willingness to kill in order to protect

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[11] Mari Ruti has closely associated self-shattering with queer theory's "anti-social thesis" and defined it as an "annihilation that calls into question the very possibility of coherent subjectivity" (113)

the seriousness of their statements. The self is a practical convenience; promoted to the status of an ethical ideal, it is a sanction for violence" (4). To put this claim another way, the overinflated ego can have violent consequences. By contrast, when the self is deployed only practically, there can be no deadly seriousness with which to take one's own assertions. The undoing of the authoritative self, then, can lead to a kind of nonviolence, as has been pointed out by the critic Calvin Thomas (175). In this way, self-shattering leads to a kind of radical social transformation, it imagines a social world not structured by violent assertions of selfhood.

For an example of how gay desire might affect this kind of social transformation, we might turn to his reflection in *Homos* on the then-current political issue of allowing gays to openly serve in the military. Bersani observes that it was not so much the threat of gays serving in the military that was perceived as potentially undermining the institution's stability, but specifically the threat of gays serving *openly*. Bersani observes, "perhaps the most serious danger in gay Marines being open about their gayness is that they might begin, like some of their gay civilian brothers, to play at being Marines" (*Homos* 17). Out of the closet, the gay soldier might theatrically play with the erotically appealing image of masculinity as it is imagined by a heterosexist, patriarchal society through the military itself. Through this process, "What passes for the real thing self-destructs from within its theatricalized replication" (*Homos* 18). The theatricalized version of the soldier as it is played with by the openly gay serviceman shatters what was supposed to be an "authoritative self," that is, the soldier that both recognizes and embodies a certain kind of violently enforced authority. This self is discarded in

theatrical eroticization. In the end, Bersani claims, the gay soldier will have learned "the invaluable lesson that *identity is not serious* (as if what he is imitating never existed before it was imitated)" (*Homos* 18). Here is one moment in Bersani's work in which he is reimagining sociality. This anticipatory moment in Bersani paradoxically looks to a sociality without the self, one in which the self is merely a "practical convenience" and has freed itself, to some degree, from the "oppressive appeal of a murderous *jouissance*" ("Fr-oucault" 137). In the context in which Bersani uses this latter phrase, he is referring to the psychoanalytic notion of the "drive to destroy" ("Fr-oucault" 134), that is, the death drive[12], and its implications for, and compelling explanation of, "murderous [political] projects" ("Fr-oucault 137). The self, when no longer taken seriously or regarded as militantly authoritative, in Bersani's terminology when it is shattered, can no longer serve as an effective vehicle for such projects. It has been stripped of the seriousness of the inflated ego.

Bersani's way of phrasing his contribution to the utopian mode in queer theory is the invention of "new relational modes" ("Fr-oucault" 134), a phrase he takes from an interview with Foucault, in which Foucault suggests that "gays might invent less oppressive lifestyles…no longer structured by fixed positions of dominance and submission" ("Fr-oucault" 134). Bersani's interest in Foucault's idea here is inspired by something all of the queer theorists I will be discussing share: an interest in the privileged

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[12] I use this psychoanalytic term first in Freud's sense as I understand it, that is, as a basic instinct towards aggression and self-destruction, but more importantly in the sense that Edelman and Bersani often use it in: the application of such an instinct to a broader, social perspective. In this way, the death drive has less of a naturalistic or biological connotation (as it does in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) and instead points to social failures to make coherent meaning.

position queerness might have in reimagining social relations. Foucault seems to have in mind queerness in its identitarian, content-based sense, referring as he does to "gays." At the same time though, Foucault (and by extension Bersani) seem to hope for a unification of queerness-as-form and queerness-as-content. Foucault expresses a desire for the anti-normative potential in queerness to be realized in actual queer subjects.

Lee Edelman's 2005 *No Future* is a critique of a heteronormative fantasy built on the figure of the Child: a fantasy he terms "reproductive futurism." This cultural fantasy underpins any vision of political futurity, making resistance an impossible undertaking (because to do so would entail yet another such vision) and coercing any politics that aspires to coherence into submission. Edelman writes, "For politics, however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child" (2-3). Here Edelman suggests that politics itself as we presently conceive of it through the fantasmatic lens of reproductive futurism is inherently conservative and perhaps heteronormative because of how it relies on that fantasy. Politics as he sees it is regressively affirmative and authenticating, never daring to tread in the realm of negativity Edelman embraces throughout his text. And insofar as the Child figuratively represents the future and whatever particular vision of a social order accompanies that figure's deployment, slogans such as "'We're fighting for the children. Whose side are you on?'" (Edelman 2) coercively disallow any opposition. They "only [permit] one side" (Edelman 2). Edelman here keenly observes the surreptitious force of

heteronormativity. He interprets the Child not merely as a symbol of family, domesticity, and heterosexual reproduction (though it surely has all of those associations for Edelman as well), but also as an aggressively political vehicle for the propagation of visions of futurity.

Edelman locates queerness (as form, not only as content) in opposition to reproductive futurism. He writes: "queerness names the side of those *not* 'fighting for the children,' the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism" (Edelman 3). He continues, "queerness…figures…the place of the social order's death drive: a place, to be sure, of abjection expressed in the stigma, sometimes fatal, that follows from reading that figure literally" (Edelman 3). Edelman makes the interesting move here of what Bersani might call "embracing, at least provisionally, a homophobic representation of homosexuality" ("Rectum" 15). In other words, Edelman's embrace of what I have referred to as the tragic/negative mode in queer theory is a certain complicity with the figural representations of queer sexuality often employed to condemn it. Both share the notion that there is something inimical to the social order in queerness itself.

It is worth pointing out that Edelman's putting queerness in opposition to a cultural fantasy as monolithic as reproductive futurism is complicated and problematic. Edelman's is a self-consciously "impossible project of a queer oppositionality that would oppose itself to the structural determinants of politics as such, which is also to say, that would oppose itself to the logic of opposition" (4). Such a paradoxical project offers a radical alternative to politics as we presently understand it, but one might also question

whether Edelman's investment in oppositionality, and thus in the conservative logic of politics as it is, is also, to some extent, an investment in futurism itself. Edelman is perhaps working within the utopian mode insofar as he chooses to undertake such a project, which implicitly imagines a future readership. In the infamous section of his polemic in which he declares "Fuck the social order…fuck Laws both with capital *l*s and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations" (Edelman 29), he does not go so far as to say "fuck theory" or "fuck queer critique." He seems to believe in the positive value of queer theory to the extent that it is worth undertaking his "impossible project." Such a project is animated by a utopian impulse insofar as it attempts to make a queer world within the text of *No Future* itself.

On the other hand, Edelman does acknowledge that his is, on some level, an "impossible project" and that the paradoxical position he assigns to queerness also "suggests a refusal–the appropriately perverse refusal that characterizes queer theory–of every substantialization of identity" (4). What would make Edelman's project queer, then, would be its refusal of a certain amount of coherence that would allow it to be read as "utopian," or as anything other than radically negative. Projects like Edelman's and Bersani's might seem to focus more on the relational and social implications of queerness, but Edelman relates that focus here to familiar theorizations of queerness that critique identity. An example would be David Halperin's claim that queer is "'an identity without an essence'" (qtd. in Jagose 96). In the same way that queerness disrupts identity, it also, for Edelman, "figure[s] the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form" (4).

The queer figure that Edelman opposes to reproductive futurism's all-important Child is the villainous, death-driven figure of the "sinthomosexual." Edelman creates this neologism as a portmanteau of "sinthome,"[13] and "homosexual." To begin to unpack all of this, Edelman writes on the relation of queerness to the death drive, "As the death drive dissolves those congealments of identity that permit us to know and survive as ourselves, so the queer must insist on disturbing, on queering, social organization as such–on disturbing, therefore, and on queering *ourselves* and our investment in such organization" (17). It is thus the relentless negativity and the violent intractability of the death drive that Edelman associates with queerness. It would seem that what Edelman most values in queerness is not its potential for inventing new relational modes, but rather its death drive-like rejection of any social form whatsoever. Edelman's reading of queerness suggests that the queer only disturbs, disrupts, fucks with the social order. If the death drive is understood, in one sense, by Freud as "the greatest impediment to civilization" (110), queerness in an Edelmanian sense shares this association in that it disrupts the identities necessary for the continuation of what Freud refers to as "civilization." Thus, queerness "figure[s] the undoing of civil society" as "the death drive of the dominant order" (17). Edelman's queerness is identical to the cause of the anxieties that Freud and the modernists had about the fragmentation and destabilization of the social order.

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[13] Edelman uses this Lacanian term for "symptom" to signify a denial of fantasy and meaning, and to illustrate the ways in which figures of queerness become "the site[s] at which meaning comes undone" (35).

Edelman's critique of identity and embrace of negativity is the radical potential, closely aligned with the notion of the death drive, which he finds in queerness. And queerness finds its most potent figural representation in the sinthomosexual. This queer figure is often represented by "machinelike men…who stand outside the 'natural' order of sexual reproduction" (Edelman 165). It is important to point out that the sinthomosexual need not be homosexual in any literal sense. Queerness, for Edelman (and by extension, sinthomosexuality), is radically anti-identitarian, and thus while there is something queer about representations of both homosexuality and sinthomosexuality, there is nothing sexually specific about the latter, at least insofar as such specificity implies a specific sexual identity. Thus the sinthomosexuals identified by Edelman include Voldemort from J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (172), Roy Batty from Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (100-101), Scrooge and Captain Hook (21). Edelman's intent is not to "out" any of these characters, but rather to articulate their (queer) figural relationship to the fundamentally heteronormative fantasy of reproductive futurism. This latter fantasy relies on the figure of the sinthomosexual by projecting its own death drive onto it, making the sinthomosexual the perpetual villainous threat to the Child and the fantasy of futurity it underpins.

Bersani and Edelman share several theoretical goals and preoccupations. While Edelman is committed to Lacanian theory and Bersani is not[14], both use psychoanalytic

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[14] In fact, he confesses in the same interview to a simple lack of comprehension of Lacan and Lacanian theory: "I would never write anything on Lacan apart from simply mentioning this or that idea. First of all, I don't understand a lot of what I read, and I'm always astonished because I discover that so many people whom–to put it in a very

theory to theorize heterosexism and homophobia. Both are also interested in the death drive and assign it a close relationship to sexuality and specifically to queer sexuality. And finally, both theorists operate predominately in the tragic/negative mode their rejection of a heterosexist social order and are interested primarily in queerness-as-form. It is easy to read them as allied in their theoretical approaches and critical goals.

Some of the theorists I engage in this essay have significantly different approaches from Edelman's and Bersani's. While these differences can appear pronounced, I will try to emphasize what all of these queer theorists have in common before summarizing the debate between them. First, I will consider Muñoz's notion of queer futurity. Then I will turn to Judith Halberstam's notion of queer failure. Third, I examine Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's idea of queer world making. Finally, I will close this section by considering these theoretical approaches in light of Sedgwick's distinction between paranoid and reparative reading.

Muñoz wholeheartedly embraces what I have been referring to as the utopian mode in queer theory. He responds not only to what he refers to as the "anti-relationality" of theorists like Edelman ("Antisocial" 825) but "today's hamstrung, pragmatic gay agenda." It is the shortsightedness of the latter's focus on marriage, assimilation, "social recognition and financial advantage" (*Cruising* 20) that brings Muñoz to assert that "queerness is not quite here; it is, in the language of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, a potentiality" (*Cruising* 21). Put another way, "we are not quite queer yet…what we will really know as queerness, does not yet exist" (*Cruising* 22). What is

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conceited way–I think of as less intelligent than I am write books about Lacan." (Tuhkanen 287)

remarkable about Muñoz's utopian concept of queer futurity is that, like Edelman and Bersani's theorizations of queerness, it is primarily concerned with queerness-as-form. The interchangeability of the term "queer" with "utopia" suggests that, for Muñoz, the desire for utopia is already a queer desire, a desire for a different, nonheterosexist world. If "queer" in Muñoz's sense pertained merely to a gay, lesbian, and otherwise identitarian content, then it would not be possible to claim that queerness is not yet here, that it is a futurity. Gay and lesbian identities are clearly already here. Muñoz does indeed illustrate his notion of queer futurity with readings of queer cultural texts such as a poem by Frank O'Hara and a queer play by Amiri Baraka. Further, he is committed to an identitarian notion of queerness as "a collective, an emergent group" (*Cruising* 3) because he is also committed to Ernst Bloch's notion of "concrete utopias" as opposed to "abstract utopias" (*Cruising* 3). Muñoz writes, "Abstract utopias falter for Bloch because they are untethered from any historical consciousness. Concrete utopias are relational to historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized or potential" (*Cruising* 3). Here Muñoz has in mind the queer collectivity that emerged into political consciousness around the time of the Stonewall riots. As I mention above, my project is similarly tethered to a specific historical moment, that in which literary modernism arose. While there is no emerging queer collectivity during this period of the same magnitude as that which came out of the time of Stonewall, these modernist texts have a similar queer potentiality. Their queerness is mostly formal. They do not enthusiastically embrace a gay or lesbian identity as we understand such identities today. However, they do imagine new possibilities for sociality in light of the tragic and unlivable social realities of their

present. Insofar as they are utopian, they would probably fit Bloch's definition of a concrete utopianism.

Judith Halberstam's notion of queer failure gives a similar privilege to the form rather than the content of queerness. In her introduction to *The Queer Art of Failure* Halberstam makes few explicit references to gay and lesbian identities, but she does claim, "Failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well" (3). Halberstam suggests that embracing failure can help us to overcome the logics of success and failure that are dominant in a heteronormative, capitalist culture and explore "alternative ways of knowing and being" (*Failure* 24). By failing to assimilate into heteronormative culture, queerness points to an alternative world. This argument is more or less the same one made by Bersani about queerness and failure. But Halberstam does put forward a radically expansive potential queer community, elsewhere identifying other "failed" subjects as potentially queer, including "sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers, and the unemployed" (*Queer Time* 9). This suggestion reveals a conception of queerness that is not so far from the rest of the theorists I have considered so far in its formalism.

Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, in their essay "Sex in Public," conceptualize queer culture as "a world-making project" (558) working counter to heteronormativity. They suggest that "world" in this context "differs from community or group because it necessarily includes more people than can be identified," (Berlant and Warner 558). Queer world-making is "by definition *unrealizable* as community or identity" (Berlant and Warner 558) and both "sex and theory," for Berlant and Warner, qualify as "queer

social practices" (548). Their sense of queer world-making is, first of all, utopian in that it imagines a world outside of the dominant heteronormative culture. Such a world would be, in Muñoz's sense, utopian and not yet here. Further, their project pertains mostly to queerness-as-form rather than an identity.

Despite the commitment to the formal aspects of queerness I have been trying to emphasize in the above theorists, Halberstam and Muñoz lapse into identitarian criticisms of Edelman and Bersani. Halberstam takes Bersani and Edelman to task for focusing exclusively on what she refers to as a "gay male archive" of texts by writers such as Genet, Gide and Proust ("The Anti-Social Turn" 152). In contrast, Halberstam favors an anti-social archive that includes popular texts such as the animated film *Finding Nemo* ("The Anti-Social Turn" 152) and "a lesbian style rather than a gay style" (*Failure* 110). In opposition to the "white utopias" she claims Bersani and Edelman imagine (*Failure* 150), Halberstam favors antisocial writers of "anticolonial despair" ("The Anti-Social Turn" 152). For Halberstam, the problem with the antisocial turn is not with the theory itself but with its privileging of certain identities (often gay white male) and canons (elitist) over others.

Muñoz echoes these criticisms in his response to Edelman's argument in *No Future*. In Edelman's critique of the figure of the Child, he imagines a child, Muñoz suggests, "that is indeed always already white", ignoring the ways in which race is inseparable from deployments of reproductive futurism (*Cruising* 94-95). Muñoz observes that "[t]he future is only the stuff of some kids. Racialized kids, queer kids, are not the sovereign princes of futurity" (95). Thus the figural Child Edelman imagines is,

according to Muñoz, "always already white" (95). Muñoz's critique is compelling, as it makes Edelman's argument against futurity look like it comes from a place of privilege that can afford to critique futurity. This place would be Edelman's and Bersani's "middle-class white gay male positionality" (*Cruising* 95). It is thus, for Muñoz and Halberstam, the very assurance of a future safeguarded by material and identity-based privilege that enables an anti-futurity polemic such as Edelman's.

Despite how compelling this criticism is, I find it ultimately unconvincing because it relies on the same kind of identity politics queer theory (or at the very least, queer theory as it is formulated by Bersani and Edelman) aims to eschew. Edelman, as Muñoz acknowledges, anticipates criticisms of his project as hopelessly shaped by a privileged white gay male perspective. The "identarian terms" (Edelman 157) in which these arguments are presented are antithetical to queerness itself, which "can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one" (Edelman 17). For Edelman, "queerness undoes the identities through which we experience ourselves as subjects, insisting on the Real of a jouissance that social reality and the futurism on which it relies have already foreclosed" (24-25). Like Bersani, Edelman finds that the radical potential in queerness and in queer sexualities is in the self-shattering jouissance that subverts identity itself. Even if Bersani is more committed to a vision of futurity with his interest in the project of imagining "new relational modes," the new form of community he imagines is, as mentioned above, crucially "nonidentarian." The identarian criticisms of Muñoz and Halberstam, then, are too invested in a notion of an inviolable and authoritative self, a

coherent and stable subject, to radically break with what Berani calls "heteroized sociality." In other words, they are insufficiently queer.

Muñoz, however, responds to Edelman's anticipation by accusing the latter of espousing a "white gay male crypto-identity politics" (95). The accusations of identitarianism clearly go both ways. I hope to have shown that Muñoz and Halberstam are ultimately more invested in identity politics than Bersani and Edelman. However, it seems evident that all of these theorists try to avoid the charge of "mere identity politics." This should indicate that the discourse of queer theory is such that identitarianism (and the notion of identity itself) is looked upon with suspicion and perhaps all four of these theorists are, on some level, in tacit agreement about the need for a queer critique of identity.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick makes a distinction between "paranoid and reparative reading" (123). In the context of what has been called the "antisocial turn," it might be useful to think of Edelmanian/Bersanian "antisocial" theories as more akin to paranoid reading and Muñoz's utopianism as closer to a reparative reading practice. Sedgwick associates the former with Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion (124) and with critical tendencies in queer studies to show "how homophobia and heterosexism work" (126). Sedgwick argues that this mode of criticism should not be privileged above all others and that it ought to be "viewed as one kind of cognitive/affective theoretical practice among other, alternative kinds" (126). One such alternative practice calls for reparative readings which, Sedgwick writes, "are about pleasure" and "are frankly ameliorative" (144). Quite opposite from the paranoid approach, which is all about minimizing unpleasant

surprise through unveiling oppressive structures (Sedgwick 144-146), with a reparative reading "it can seem realistic and necessary to experience surprise" (Sedgwick 146). And, Sedgwick emphasizes, these surprises, these encounters with the new, "can…be good" (146). Reparative reading comes as a corrective to overemphasis on paranoid criticism that seeks to reveal heteronormativity and heterosexism where it is hidden. Instead of critical unveiling, it emphasizes moments of beauty or pleasure to be found in the text.

Edelman's rejection of any project involving a vision of political futurity may be read as paranoid in Sedgwick's sense. In an anticipatory critical attempt not to be duped by heteronormativity and made complicit with reproductive futurism, Edelman would reject even Muñoz's thoroughly queer utopian project. The kind of utopianism and queer world-making I find in the projects of Muñoz and Berlant and Warner may be thought of as reparative readings. Sedgwick does not believe that there is no overlap between these two modes of criticism. Indeed, she writes, "other ways of knowing, ways less oriented around suspicion…are actually being practiced, often by the same [paranoid] theorists and as part of the same projects" (144). Perhaps both modes have their uses. In a queer context, both modes of criticism have the potential to expand possibilities for queer existence. One heightens our awareness of oppressive and limiting social systems. The other turns our gaze to towards the new, towards futurity and possibility.

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Queer Social Failure and Social Renewal in Mrs. Dalloway

> In the atmosphere of anxiety, insecurity, and transformation of the period between the wars, the ontological dilemma posed by different modernisms is the cost of losing metaphysical assurances. It results in an urgent battle between the public sphere and the private domain. The beginnings of the twentieth century make us increasingly aware of the social and political ramifications of this struggle. Lacking a foundation in universals, we are squarely placed within history, and the issues of power at stake in modernism reside in the cultural struggle between tradition and resistance to established norms.
>
> Esther Sánchez-Pardo, *Cultures of the Death Drive: Melanie Klein and Modernist Melancholia*

> But to go deeper, beneath what people said…what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? Oh, it was very queer.
>
> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, like the queer theory considered in the previous section, is deeply inflected by a tension between tragic/negative and utopian modes. Through its distorted and distinctly queer temporality, the novel eschews heteronormative life narratives in favor of the queer futurities imagined by Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith. The novel is also engaged with the undoing of the self, as Clarissa is unable and unwilling to define herself. Septimus is similarly in a state of instability, unable to make sense of his own experience after coming home from the War.

In the character of Septimus, the novel also explores a kind of queer social failure in that he is unable to reconcile himself with the society as he is haunted by visions of his dead friend, Evans. The novel's investments in the tragic/negative mode and the utopian mode should not, however, be viewed as contradictory. As Joshua J. Weiner and Damon Young have observed, "if an askew relation to the normative terms of sexuality occasions a certain negative relation to the social, this means it also precipitates a certain reinvention of the social…a reinvention that is sometimes invested under the sign of transgression, sometimes of utopia. Queer is at once disabled and inventive sociality" (226). In pursuing this simultaneously forward-looking and antisocial (and Bersanian) take on the antisocial thesis, I will also explore the ways in which the novel tries to remake or renew the social. In moments of unspoken dialogue between characters, in daydreams and imaginative acts that carry them across space and time, and in characters' interactions with the nonhuman, *Mrs. Dalloway* imagines new modes of relationality. Not all of these imaginative efforts are explicitly queer (although some unquestionably are), but I will argue that the novel is invested in a project of reinventing the social in a way that overlaps with, and is drawing on the same energies as the theorists and critics associated with the antisocial turn in queer theory.

Mrs. Dalloway opens with a striking temporal distortion that imagines a possible queer future even as is dwells in the past. At first, the fifty-two year-old Clarissa is planning her party, reflecting that she will "buy the flowers herself," and the next moment, as she exits her house, she is "a girl of eighteen" "plung[ing] at Bourton into the open air" (Woolf 3). I would suggest that Clarissa's memories of Bourton are associated

chiefly, for her, with Sally Seton and "the most exquisite moment of her life" when Sally "kissed her on the lips" (Woolf 35). After all, Clarissa describes everything else happening in her memories as "only a background for Sally" (Woolf 35). One way to read the novel's sudden shifts in time is as simple flashbacks: present-day Clarissa steps out of her house, remembers what it was like to be young again, and becomes lost in a daydream about her summer home. Kate Haffey has suggested that such a reading, when it is supplemented by an interpretation of Clarissa's "development…[into] a mature heterosexual adult" (139), tends to divide the temporality of the novel, in far too unproblematic a fashion, into "two distinct time periods: the present day of her party in 1923 and the summer she spent at her family's vacation home in Bourton when she was eighteen years old" (138). Against this interpretation, Haffey offers a reading that finds "a queer kind of temporality at work" (138) in the novel, particularly in its depiction of moments such as the kiss between Clarissa and Sally that seem to "break through the temporal divides between past and present" (141). Thus, the novel's distinctly queer temporality enables Clarissa "to transcend the divide between her adolescent and adult selves" (Haffey 144). The novel shows the adolescent Clarissa very much alive and active within the adult Clarissa. The former's desires and experiences did not end in Bourton in 1889. Rather, they continue to play a significant role, in fact they continue to exist, in the everyday life of the Clarissa planning her party in June of 1923. Clarissa thus sees herself as "very young; at the same time unspeakably aged" (Woolf 8). The novel blurs the boundary that readers may intuitively make between adolescence and

adulthood. But more than that, the utopian desires of Clarissa's youth (that is, desires to share a world with Sally), persist in shaping present-day Clarissa's relation to futurity.

Haffey's reading is compelling, and I would like to build on it by exploring some of the political, social, and psychic implications of Clarissa's relationship to Sally and the "exquisite moment" that bears so much significance for Clarissa. But Haffey, it seems to me, does not give adequate attention to what Judith Halberstam identifies as one of the key aspects of queer temporality, namely that it "develop[s], at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (1). Such an oppositional position is taken up by *Mrs. Dalloway*, which deals throughout with the complications inherent in family, heterosexuality and reproduction. The novel examines the ways in which all three of these institutions, central to a heteronormative social order, either fall apart or fail to provide the fullness of meaning with which they are associated. We might read Clarissa as having "outgrown" her adolescent flirtations with lesbianism and grown into a "mature" heterosexual identity, exemplified by her marriage to Richard Dalloway. However, not only does the novel's queer temporality problematize this narrative of linear sexual development, but Clarissa's own reflections on her assimilation into a heteronormative social order reveal a lingering dissatisfaction with the course her life has taken since the "exquisite moment" at Bourton:

> But often now this body she wore…this body with all its capacities, seemed nothing–nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more

> having of children now, but only…this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway. (Woolf 10-11)

Clarissa provides a powerful critique of what Lee Edelman might call "reproductive futurism," that system of symbolic relations that at once normalizes heterosexuality and associates the promise of futurity with the figure of the Child (2). Clarissa thinks first of her body and possibly, particularly when she comments on there being "no more having children," of her faded fertility. She feels a certain distance from her own body, which she merely "wears," perhaps because she no longer sees in it the potential to produce a child. Thus, following Edelman's argument, Clarissa finds it difficult to envision a future for herself, to imagine what potentiality her life has left now that she has already achieved what the linear narrative of heteronormative development has decreed to be her purpose in life: to marry and reproduce. Clarissa's imagines herself at the end of this narrative, "invisible," her very individuality effaced by her marriage to Richard and her taking of his name in place of hers. Even the novel's title, *Mrs. Dalloway* rather than *Clarissa*, despite the latter's status as already taken, further establishes at the significance of Clarissa's marriage and the secondary role it puts her in in relation to her husband.

Clarissa feels the need to explain to herself the moments shared with Sally as something other than sexual desire, precisely because such an acknowledgement would confound, and perhaps destroy her sense of self. The desires she seeks to repress illustrate Leo Bersani's conception of "sex as self-abolition" (*Is the Rectum a Grave* 25). Clarissa dismisses the possibility of her daughter's same-sex desires as "a phase…such as all girls go through" (Woolf 11). She refers to her feelings for Sally as having been

"completely disinterested" (Woolf 34). These explanations serve to turn Clarissa's attention away from the kiss she shared with Sally, from the moment during which, "The whole world might have turned upside down" (Woolf 35). We might read this last passage as referring specifically to *Clarissa's* world, to her own self-perception in addition to her perception of the external world. In this way, the repression of her desire prevents the possibility of a certain self-shattering. Her identity as the "perfect hostess" (Woolf 62) is preserved.

While this reading would interpret, with Bersani and Edelman, Clarissa's desire as the undoing of her investment in heterosociality, we might also read her fantasy of the "exquisite moment" as a productive expansion of social possibility. In her discussion of sexual fantasy and queer sociality, Juana María Rodríguez writes, "The sexual practices and fantasies of our perverse imaginations create a place and time of elsewhere, a utopian nexus of critique and potentiality, available to anyone" (339). Drawing on Rodríguez's approach, we might read Clarissa's desire for Sally as not only threatening to destroy her world, but as beginning to imagine a radically new world. I see the reading I am proposing here as in a way analogous to José Esteban Muñoz's reading of Frank O'Hara's poem "Having a Coke With You." Muñoz writes, "This poem tells us of a quotidian act, having a Coke with somebody, that signifies a vast lifeworld of queer relationality, an encrypted sociality, and a utopian potentiality" (6). Such a world of queer relationality and utopian potentiality is also imagined by *Mrs. Dalloway*, specifically by Clarissa in her moments of fantasy. Simply by designating the kiss with Sally as the "most exquisite moment" of Clarissa's life, the novel invests that moment

and the rest of Clarissa's fantasies about Bourton with a tremendous utopian energy that imagines another world. This imagining is also characterized by futurity, even as it dwells on the past.

Clarissa's desires are clearly future-oriented and utopian in another scene she remembers from Bourton:

> There they sat, hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written, though not sent out. The ideas were Sally's, of course–but very soon she was just as excited–read Plato in bed before breakfast; read Morris; read Shelley by the hour. (Woolf 33)

Here Clarissa and Sally feel connected through their determination to change, to re-make and reform the world they inhabit. Their utopian longing, I would argue, cannot be separated from the queer bond the two of them share. Insofar as Muñoz's formal notion of queerness means a near *equation* of queer desires and utopian desires, any same-sex desire is desire for another world, and any utopian desires are in a sense queer. Clarissa's desire for Sally is also a desire for another world, a queer utopianism. Muñoz finds in O'Hara's poem "a relational field where men could love each other outside the institutions of heterosexuality and share a world through the act of drinking a beverage with each other" (9). In the same way, Woolf's text imagines a world in which two young women might share a world through conversation, literature, and political aspiration. Such a world is characterized, as is the case with Muñoz's utopianism, by

potentiality, by being "always in the horizon" (11) and able to be visualized but not quite present. The queerness of Sally and Clarissa's relationship makes it inarticulable in the present, but it also allows it to gesture to a possible future. The world that the two of them make is not unlike the kind of "world making project" that Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner see as inherent to queer culture (558). Further, Berlant and Warner's notion of "counterintimacy" (562) seems useful for explicating the queerness of Clarissa and Sally's relationship. Queer counterintimacies work against heteronormativity, which is supported by institutions of heterosexual culture such as marriage (Berlant and Warner 562). Berlant and Warner observe, "Queer culture, by contrast, has almost no institutional matrix for its counterintimacies" and thus relies on "improvisation" (562). The nature of Clarissa and Sally's relationship is ambiguous and not easily definable. It follows that "they spoke of marriage always as a catastrophe" (Woolf 34). Clarissa and Sally scorn the conventional forms of intimacy that support heteronormativity.

It is worth reiterating that the backdrop of Clarissa's plunges into her own memories, and into the instability of her own selfhood, is thoroughly social: the preparation of her party. Further, Clarissa identifies herself with a surface-level sociality tending towards self-effacement and making others happy: "How much she wanted it– that people should look pleased as she came in…half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people think this or that" (Woolf 10). For Clarissa, appearances and the impressions she makes on others is paramount. She contrasts her own image-consciousness with Richard's authenticity, his ability to "[do] things for themselves" (Woolf 10). Clarissa, on the other hand, only acts with others in mind. Peter

refers to this impulse of Clarissa's as her "atheist's religion of doing good for the sake of goodness" (Woolf 78). He imagines Clarissa thinking, "As we are a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship…as the whole thing is a bad joke, let us, at any rate, do our part; mitigate the sufferings of our fellow-prisoners…decorate the dungeon with flowers" (Woolf 77). Thus the gesture of throwing a party takes on, for Clarissa and perhaps for the novel, a larger, perhaps philosophical or political significance. Clarissa throws her party as a sort of palliative counter to enormous human suffering. Further, while she is undoubtedly a pessimist here, Clarissa does not seem to view this suffering as endemic to some abstract, ahistorical "human condition." Rather, she is aware, if dimly, of the historically specific nature of the suffering she hopes to alleviate in her modest way. In this way, she reflects on Richard's discussion of the struggles of the Armenians, "she could feel nothing for the Albanians, or was it the Armenians? but she loved her roses (didn't that help the Armenians?)" (Woolf 120). It seems likely that we are meant to read this sentiment ironically, that we should respond to it knowing that obviously Clarissa's roses and her party cannot possibly "help the Armenians." However, we might also read this passage as making an intimate connection between the social events of daily life and the larger social world that they are inextricably a part of. It would be absurd to think of Clarissa's party as a response to the Armenian genocide, yet it is also impossible not to, insofar as Clarissa and her party are just as much a part of history, and take place in the same world, as that event. And it is Clarissa's intent, conscious of the suffering present in the world, to alleviate that suffering as best she can. Adorno, who writes, "After Auschwitz, our feelings resist any claim of the positivity of existence as sanctimonious,

as wronging the victims" (*Negative Dialectics* 361), would strongly object to such thinking. While he is addressing a post-World War II rather than a post-World War I world, Adorno is similarly trying to register the deep sociocultural impact of a massive catastrophe that demonstrates a certain kind of social failure. Adorno, who famously suggested that "after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems" (*Negative Dialectics* 362) and elsewhere writes, "There is nothing innocuous left…Even the blossoming tree lies the moment its bloom is seen without the shadow of terror" (*Minima Moralia* 25), would find the idea that a party can make up for the suffering of millions gravely wrongheaded. Clarissa's party, from this Adornian perspective, is obscene rather than palliative. It ought to be regarded as guiltily and cruelly indifferent to the suffering created by World War I. The question of the relationship between Clarissa's party and the war is one that preoccupies the novel and bears further reflection.

The figure that most obviously represents the persistence of the past horrors of the war in the novel's present is that of the shell-shocked soldier, Septimus Warren Smith. Septimus' suicide becomes a radical gesture of queer negativity insofar as it refuses the present, heteronormative social order, becoming a "withdrawal from relationality itself" (Bersani, *Homos* 7). The novel makes a "critique of heteronormativity's 'pose of being natural' which restricts the possibility of individual expansion and playfulness and marginalizes those, who fail to conform" (Schulz 134). Septimus' refusal or inability to conform so irks Sir William Bradshaw that the latter, and the social order he comes to represent, pushes Septimus to his suicide. Septimus' "alleged madness is perceived as a violation against symbolic ordering and thus needs to be checked and corrected" (Schulz

134). Thus Septimus' queerness is not only a result of his possible desire for his fellow soldier, Evans, but perhaps more significantly it comes from the novel using Septimus to manifest its "resistance to regimes of the normal" (Warner, qtd. in Jagose 106). It is this thoroughgoing resistance that results in Septimus' suicide, his ultimate gesture of refusal.

Insofar as Septimus also represents the horrific consequences of the broader social failure of World War I, one passage seems to be in dialogue with Clarissa's meditation on roses "helping the Armenians." Septimus muses on Brewer, his boss, and imagines him "at the office, with his waxed moustache, coral tie-pin, white slip, and pleasurable emotions–all coldness and clamminess within,–his geraniums ruined in the war" (Woolf 89). The geraniums are flowers just like those Clarissa purchases in the beginning of the novel for her party that is to bring people together to do a small part in alleviating human suffering. Here, the flowers are literally (in a way that is not made clear) destroyed by the war. The implication, in the context of the novel's symbolism, seems to be that, contrary to what Clarissa may think, the roses are not "enough" (Woolf 122) to bring about any meaningful relief of suffering in light of the war. In addition, for Septimus, the experience of the war has made it impossible to see Brewer's emotions as genuine; they merely conceal the "coldness and clamminess within" just as Septimus himself "could not feel" (Woolf 86) following his return from service.

Septimus, while he may easily be read simply as insane, is given a certain compellingly cynical, if wildly extreme worldview as a result of his experience, a worldview in which the figure of the child plays an interesting role. Septimus thinks to himself: "One cannot bring children into a world like this. One cannot perpetuate

suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that" (Woolf 89). For Septimus, the war has drastically altered the world, which once contained "an England that consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square" (Woolf 86), in other words an idealized nation that is, for Septimus, worth fighting and dying for. Now however, Septimus has completely rejected, as we have seen Clarissa do elsewhere, the logic of reproductive futurism which inevitably informs (so Edelman would argue) any utopian vision such as the one that motivates Septimus to enlist in the first place. Following his service however, Septimus rejects the figure of "The Child…[which] marks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity…that is central to the compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism" (Edelman 21). To push this reading a little further, Septimus' rejection of such a narrative might also be seen in his revulsion towards heterosexual sex, which Septimus finds precedent for in Shakespeare: "Love between a man and a woman was repulsive to Shakespeare. The business of copulation was filth to him before the end. But, Rezia said, she must have children. They had been married five years" (Woolf 89). Septimus is made deeply uneasy by the notion of reproduction, of bringing children into the world and, by extension, creating a future which he sees as likely to be just as painful and traumatic as his own life has been. Thus we might read Septimus, through his queer negativity, as embodying a kind of antisocial thesis himself.

However, as we have seen, Woolf's novel is not entirely committed to the tragic/negative mode. To put this another way, the novel does not devote all of its energy

to Edelmanian negativity, which would neglect the secondary aspect of Bersani's articulation of the antisocial thesis: that of imagining new relational modes. Moments in the novel, as we have seen with Clarissa's reverie centered on the memory of Sally Seton at Bourton, gesture towards a reimagined or renewed queer sociality, one which, as Muñoz would have it, "is always in the horizon" (11). As Muñoz argues:

> [Q]ueerness is primarily about futurity and hope. 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. (11)

Muñoz's conception of queerness is such that a rejection of political futurity à la Edelman is inconceivable. Edelman though would likely agree on the question of queerness' "ontological [in]certitude." His project of "queer oppositionality…to the structural determinants of politics as such…suggests a refusal…of every substantialization of identity" (Edelman 4). But although Edelman and Muñoz seem to be in agreement on the definitional uncertainty of queer, they proceed in opposite directions from this starting point. For Muñoz, queerness' inherent indeterminacy also makes it definitively horizontal. To be queer is to be in a state of perpetual becoming.

Clarissa herself seems to share a certain queer refusal of a fixed and stable identity: "She would not say of any one in the world now that they were this or were that…She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside looking on…she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that" (Woolf 8-9). Clarissa's refusal of

a fixed identity here is clear. She will not define who or what she is, and she even thinks of herself as both present in the moment and detached, looking at things from afar. And Clarissa, as we have seen, seems to share Muñoz's sense of hope and concern with the future, which she believes she can do her part to reimagine.

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Women in Love and the Problem of Queer Utopia

> "Lawrence understands that a sexual relation ultimately cannot exist…even as he pushes for one"
>
> Frances L. Restuccia, *Amorous Acts: Lacanian Ethics in Modernism, Film, and Queer Theory*
>
> "Many contemporary critics dismiss negative or dark representations entirely, arguing that the depiction of same-sex love as impossible, tragic, and doomed to failure is purely ideological. Recent cultural histories attest to a far wider range of experience across the century. Despite such evidence, however, it has been difficult to dispel the affective power of these representations"
>
> Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*

D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* takes up the utopian challenge posed by Leo Bersani that "[t]he possibility of inventing new forms of intimacy and perhaps even new modes of pleasure must, I believe, take into account that intractable resistance to life that Freud called the death drive" ("Fr-oucault" 137). The opposition between these two forces is a central preoccupation of the novel's explorations of intimacy and desire. The famous wrestling scene between Birkin and Gerald is not only a moment of queer world making, but an aggressively (and erotically) charged struggle between the two characters. In claiming the novel contains certain queer moments, I agree with the critic Erwin Rosinberg that the novel is energized by "a distinctly queer sense of hope" that struggles

to imagine nonheteronormative relationality (1-3). However, I think the novel's queerness and its relationship to heteronormativity is more complicated than Rosinberg suggests. While it certainly tries to reimagine sociality through the intimate relationship between Birkin and Ursula, it also makes the heteronormative move of associating heterosexual desire with animals and the natural world, thus seeking to naturalize and privilege hetero-relationality. In other words, Lawrence's text cannot by any means be read as an unequivocally queer novel. There is a strongly heteronormative current to the text as well. In the "Class-Room" chapter, for example, the figure of the Child as decidedly queer in its anarchic and perverse potentiality. This queer understanding of the figure of the Child takes much more from Halberstam as opposed to Edelman. However, the novel seems to reject this queer potentiality of this moment. Finally, I dwell on the novel's tragic ending, in which Birkin laments the impossibility of his establishing a queer relationship with Gerald.

The most prominent queer voice in the novel is Birkin's. One key moment of critique is in the "Man to Man" chapter. The narrator relates Birkin's thoughts:

> The old way of love seemed a dreadful bondage, a sort of conscription. What it was in him he did not know, but the thought of love, marriage, and children, and a life lived together, in the horrible privacy of domestic and connubial satisfaction, was repulsive. He wanted something clearer, more open, cooler, as it were. The hot narrow intimacy between man and wife was abhorrent. The way they shut their doors, these married people, and shut themselves in to their own exclusive alliance with each other, even in

> love, disgusted him. It was a whole community of mistrustful couples insulated in private houses or private rooms, always in couples, and no further life, no further immediate, no disinterested relationship admitted: a kaleidoscope of couples, disjointed, separatist, meaningless entities of married couples. (Lawrence 198)

Birkin here engages in a queer utopian critique of heteronormativity. More specific targets of this critique include the figure of the Child, the couple form, and a public/private split. I will begin to unpack the queerness of this passage using a number of different critical approaches. First, Birkin is critical of "the old way of love," suggesting in a possibly Muñozian fashion that something new, a queerer future is possible. This "old way of love," which seems to basically refer to normative heterosexual monogamy is also described as "a sort of conscription." In this way, we might read Birkin as critiquing Adrienne Rich's "compulsory heterosexuality" (131), that is, heterosexuality as a cultural form so dominant that to Birkin his relation to it seems to be one of coercion, of forced assimilation to an established norm rather than a freely occurring desire. Birkin then expresses distaste for marriage and for, in an Edelmanian moment, having children. The rejection of the figure of the Child, as Edelman makes clear (30-31), is a queer gesture. Birkin seems to imagine a queer future unmarked by reproductive futurism. Birkin's critique is utopian, but not heteronormative. Edelman, of course, would argue that no such critique is possible, that positing a future means relying on the fantasy of reproductive futurism, but here I think the novel gives us a way to think about a queer future that rejects the kind of futurism Edelman takes issue with.

Birkin's attention then turns to the "horrible privacy" of domestic hetero-monogamy. Here, the resonances with Berlant and Warner's "Sex in Public" are notable. Berlant and Warner refer to the privatization of intimate relations:

> Intimate life is the endlessly cited *elsewhere* of political public discourse, a promised haven that distracts citizens from the unequal conditions of their political and economic lives, consoles them for the damaged humanity of mass society, and shames them for any divergence between their lives and the intimate sphere that is alleged to be simple personhood. (553)

Berlant and Warner see the privatization of hetero-intimacy, and the universalizing implications of this privatization (it is in the pseudo-utopian bliss of the private sphere that we achieve "simple personhood") as distracting from social critique. This privatization has a redemptive logic that Bersani would be equally critical of: it is private intimacy that redeems the broken social world and shields it from critique. The "exclusive alliance" established by heterosexual couples in marriage becomes, for Birkin, a hindrance to believing that another world is possible. Birkin desires to engage in what Berlant and Warner refer to as queer world-making. His critique of the monogamous couple resonates alongside Berlant and Warner's comments: "Making a queer world has required the development of kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation" (558). Birkin explicitly rejects the couple form, and imagines conventional couples "insulated in private houses or private rooms." This heteronormative spatiality precludes the

possibility of queer world-making. And as Birkin says to Gerald later in the chapter, it is indeed the creation of a new world that he is after. After suggesting that Gerald's sister is "a queer child…a special nature" to whom "you must give a special world," Gerald responds, "Yes, but where's your special world?" (Lawrence 204-205). Birkin then says, "Make it. Instead of chopping yourself down to fit the world, chop the world down to fit yourself. As a matter of fact, two exceptional people make another world. You and I, we make another, separate world…Do you *want* to be normal or ordinary? It's a lie." (Lawrence 205). Here Birkin proposes to Gerald a kind of counterintimacy, in Berlant and Warner's sense (562). He invites him to reject the heteronormative world with its fixation on privacy, monogamy, and the couple form and to make a queer world between them. Birkin's invitation is queer not only in its rejection of the "normal or ordinary," but also in the undercurrent of homoeroticism in this scene. In this way, the scene becomes a correspondence of queerness-as-form and the queer content of same-sex desire. Birkin shares his queer utopian longings with Ursula as well, but the relationship with Gerald is of course that much more queer because of its homoerotic undertones.

Despite the utopianism of the above scene, an earlier one in the novel is regrettably and definitively heteronormative. An argument between Birkin and Ursula about the nature of love and intimacy is interrupted as the two witness an interaction between two cats. First the male cat walks "statelily" up to her (Lawrence 147). Then the female cat "crouched before him and pressed herself on the ground in humility" (Lawrence 147). Some flirtatious teasing occurs, as the male "pretended to take no notice of her" (Lawrence 147). Finally the scene intensifies: "In a lovely springing leap, like a

wind, the Mino was upon her, and had boxed her twice, very definitely, with a white, delicate fist. She sank and slid back, unquestioning" (Lawrence 148). The narrative voice in this scene describes and naturalizes an aggressive and violent male dominance over women. The female cat is passive and humble, submitting to her male mate, and the male is described as stately and powerful. Ursula and Birkin, after witnessing this mating ritual, proceed to resolve their argument, eventually agreeing that they love each other and that they will "let love be enough" (Lawrence 153). In reading this scene, I turn briefly to Halberstam's interpretation of a *New York Times* column. In the column, a wife describes her frustration with her husband's behavior and decides to draw upon her experience working at Sea World to understand her husband and "train" him to correct his habits (Halberstam 34-35). This column, Halberstam observes, "contributes to the ongoing manic project of the renaturalization of heterosexuality and the stabilization of relations between men and women" (35). Ursula and Birkin observe the cats mating and find their own place as a heterosexual couple naturalized as the couple form itself is made to appear "natural." This heteronormative moment in the novel seems, though, to have utopian intent. The brokenness and destabilization of sociality is repaired through an encounter with nature, which is presumed by the novel to have its own stable social order. Thus the tragic state of the heterosexual couple is overcome and a harmonious future becomes possible through a return to the "natural" state of things. Such a vision of futurity would be readily critiqued by Edelman as "impregnating heterosexuality, as it were, with the future of signification by conferring upon it the cultural burden of signifying futurity" (13). Ursula and Birkin identify with the "naturalness" of hetero-

reproduction as they find it in nature, which guarantees a normative future because of the stability and fecundity of the perceived natural order. Birkin defends the actions of the male cat to Ursula, saying "'he is justified. He is not a bully. He is only insisting to the poor stray that she shall acknowledge him as a sort of fate, her own fate: because you can see she is fluffy and promiscuous as the wind. I am with him entirely. He wants superfine stability'" (Lawrence 149). The natural order as Birkin understands it provides stability to the couple form as it exists in the human social world, which the novel here also posits as tragically separate from an uncorrupted heteronormative "nature." The Edelmanian threat of an antisocial queerness is neutralized through a conservative return to a natural, animal-like social order.[15]

The figure of the Child is present in the above scene as the underpinning of a fantasy of reproductive futurism that the novel finds in animals for the purpose of re-establishing the "naturalness" of the couple form. But in another moment in the novel, the Child is figured, against Edelman's understanding, as queer. In the "Class-Room" chapter, Hermione challenges Birkin, asking him whether or not he thought "the children are better, richer, happier, for all this knowledge; do you really think they are? Or is it better to leave them untouched, spontaneous. Hadn't they better be animals, simple animals, crude, violent, *anything*, rather than this self-consciousness, this incapacity to be spontaneous" (Lawrence 37). Here Hermione suggests that the knowledge-producing

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[15] Another possible queer reading of this scene might insist on the queerness of animal relationality and thus on its utopian impulse as necessarily queer even though heterosexual. Halberstam begins to theorize this potential queerness by calling our attention to "transsexual fish, hermaphroditic hyenas, nonmonogamous birds, and homosexual lizards" (39). However, such a reading would require a fuller theorization not undertaken by Halberstam and beyond the scope of this project.

institution of the school stifles children's queer potentiality. Their anti-normative unpredictability is lost as they are educated and taught how to think in a restrictive, limiting ways. Hermione's sense of the queerness of children is echoed by Halberstam: "Children are not coupled, they are not romantic, they do not have a religious morality, they are not afraid of death or failure, they are collective creatures, they are in a constant state of rebellion against their parents, and they are not the masters of their domain" (47). If we accept Halberstam's and Hermione's characterizations of the figure of the Child, children look more like the polymorphously perverse harbingers of a Muñozian queer future than the heteronormative one Edelman theorizes. Even though the children Hermione observes will inevitably grow up and be assimilated into normative sociality, Hermione's statement opens up a small window into a potential queer future.

The above scene is also relevant to the devaluing of knowing in favor of being by the queer theorists this project has focused on. Bersani, in a recent interview, recalls telling his students, "'Wouldn't it be wonderful if universities did not exist in order to produce knowledge?...What if universities were like communities of being rather than factories of knowledge?'" ("Rigorously" 296). These speculations find their way into a queer context in Halberstam's work. Halberstam posits a potential queer reading of forgetfulness, a failure (by the standards of the dominant, heteronormative culture) to retain and wield knowledge authoritatively, Halberstam writes, "For women and queer people, forgetfulness can be a useful tool for jamming the smooth operations of the normal and the ordinary" (70). The oppressive cultural norms that stifle both women and queer ways of life might be productively forgotten. In this way, it is not knowledge that

brings freedom through power, as Bersani's authoritative culture of redemption might have it, but rather forgetting becomes a liberatory practice. Through her reading of a kind of queerly productive forgetting, Halberstam challenges the normative valuation of knowledge over forgetfulness. She continues, "queer lives exploit some potential for a *difference in form* that lies dormant in queer collectivity not as an essential attribute of sexual otherness, but as a possibility embedded in the break from heterosexual life narratives" (Halberstam 70). It is precisely this interest in the difference in form queerness represents that seems to underlie Bersani and Edelman's anti-assimilationism. Insofar as the antisocial turn rejects "heteroized sociality" (*Homos* 7), it is rejecting queer assimilation to dominant "heterosexual life narratives." To escape the possibility of such assimilation, Halberstam suggests, "We may want to forget family and forget lineage and forget tradition in order to start from a new place, not the place where the old engenders the new, where the old makes a place for the new, but where the new begins afresh, unfettered by memory, tradition and usable pasts" (70). Forgetting, then, might be a queer method of sloughing off heteronormativity. Instead of striving for the domesticity of marriage and replicating old relational modes, queers might simply forget them and in the process begin to imagine newer ways of being in the world that owe less to those they have inherited from the dominant culture.

Halberstam's queer relation to knowledge, a negative one that celebrates unknowing and forgetfulness over knowledge and memory, resonates with Bersani's critique of what he identifies in Foucault as "the will to know." This impulse, on Bersani's reading of Foucault, is the animating force behind discourses of knowledge and

subjectivity in the West since Descartes and is closely aligned with the exercise of oppressive power which attempts to "appropriate the world" rather than "correspond to, and with, the world's essentially hospitable being" ("The Will to Know" 154-157). The latter is a reconfiguration of relationality that Bersani hopes might replace the Cartesian mode of relationality in which a "knowing subject" appropriates the external world through its exercise of power over it and generation of knowledge about it ("The Will to Know" 162). Thus, Cartesian epistemology and its remaining influence are, for Bersani, an obstacle to the queer futurity promised by his utopian call for new relational modes.

The homoerotic wrestling scene between Birkin and Gerald in the "Gladiatorial" chapter is described by Rosinberg as "the novel's ultimate utopian moment" (12) in an article that finds such moments scattered throughout the text.[16] I would like to argue in support for this reading, which finds it operating in what I have called the utopian mode, but also highlight the antisocial, aggressive, and ultimately tragic nature of the scene. After the actual wrestling between the pair occurs, Birkin "put out his hand to steady himself. It touched the hand of Gerald, that was lying out on the floor" (272). This is the closest we get in Lawrence's novel to an open, physical expression of same-sex love. The moment though, as Rosinberg's reading emphasizes, is brought to our attention as just that: a momentary lapse of the repressive social order that is followed by a "transition to 'normal consciousness'" (18). The moment between them opens up a world outside of heteronormative sociality, true to Berlant and Warner's notion of a "counterintimacy"

[16] My own project is not unlike Rosinberg's in that it examines various moments in Woolf and Lawrence that contain utopian potential, but my project differs significantly with its simultaneous embrace of moments of negation and shattering.

(562). Towards the end of the chapter Gerald says to Birkin. "I don't believe I've ever felt as much *love* for a woman, as I have for you" and asks him "Now do you think I shall ever feel that for a woman?" (Lawrence 275-276). Gerald struggles to express himself here, saying to Birkin, "You understand what I mean?...I mean that–that–I can't express what it is, but I know it" (Lawrence 275). The present is a Muñozian "prison house" (1) for Gerald. In it, he cannot give meaning and full expression to what he feels for Birkin and he looks to the future wondering if he will ever have such feelings in a heterosexual context. Obviously I want to suggest that the moment shared by Birkin and Gerald in this chapter is utopian in that it makes a queer world and suggests such a world as a possible future. But at the same time there is something tragic about Gerald's inability to find the words to express himself. The desire he feels is not merely one that "dare not speak its name," but it is one that Gerald is unable to find the words to even speak about it with because the dominance of heteronormativity makes such desires inexpressible. Along with this tragic aspect of the wrestling scene, there is of course the fact that it is a scene of physical conflict. I share the impulse to read the scene as one of repressed same-sex longing that can only find its expression in a socially acceptable form of physical intimacy. However, such a reading forgets that there is clearly an aggressive aspect to the scene as well. Birkin "seemed to penetrate into Gerald's more solid, more diffuse bulk, to interfuse his body through the body of the other, as if to bring it subtly into subjection, always seizing with some rapid necromantic foreknowledge every motion of the other flesh" (Lawrence 270). This passage not only invokes eroticism with Birkin "penetrating" Gerald and their bodies "interfusing" to become one, but also aggression.

Birkin brings Gerald "into subjection" through physical force. Such a scene might bring us to reflect on Bersani's interest in all that is "anticommunal, antiegalitarian, antinurturing, [and] antiloving" in sexuality ("Rectum" 22). The utopian reading might locate a proto-queer community in the intimacy shared between Gerald and Birkin, but a reading through a Bersanian lens reminds us of the possibility that "fucking [does not have] anything to do with community or love" ("Rectum" 22) gives us a much different perspective on this moment in the novel. Their desire for each other, though not consummated sexually, is expressed through a Bersanian aggression. This reading would complicate a critical attempt to redeem the Birkin-Gerald relationship as loving and gesturing towards queer utopia. Further, the use of the word "necromantic" in the above scene associates Birkin and Gerald's desire with something deathly, an association that Edelman's theorization of queerness as figuring "the place of the social order's death drive" (3) can elucidate. The scene between Birkin and Gerald would then become a scene of the death of heteronormative sociality, an inassimilable and inexpressible act that undoes the dominance of the social order.

Despite Birkin's utopianism, the ending of *Women in Love* is markedly tragic. After Gerald's death, Birkin laments, insisting that love between the two could have prevented the tragedy, "'He should have loved me…I offered him'" (483). The conversation that follows between Ursula and Birkin is striking in how it represents a confluence of the novel's tragic and utopian energies:

> "Aren't I enough for you?" she asked.

> "No," he said. "You are enough for me, as far as a woman is concerned. You are all women to me. But I wanted a man friend, as eternal as you and I are eternal."
>
> "Why aren't I enough?" she said. "You are enough for me. I don't want anybody else but you. Why isn't it the same with you?"
>
> "Having you, I can live all my life without anybody else, any other sheer intimacy. But to make it complete, really happy, I wanted eternal union with a man too: another kind of love," he said.
>
> "I don't believe it," she said. "It's an obstinacy, a theory, a perversity."
>
> "Well–" he said.
>
> "You can't have two kinds of love. Why should you!"
>
> "It seems as if I can't," he said. "Yet I wanted it."
>
> "You can't have it, because it's false, impossible," she said.
>
> "I don't believe that," he answered. (484-485)

Birkin acknowledges a kind of permanent intimacy with Ursula, one that seems invested with its own utopian energy. But at the same time the way he articulates his queer desire for Gerald suggests that his intimacy with Ursula would not be sufficient to realize his utopian vision. The novel ends tragically, precluding the possibility of any further relationship between Birkin and Gerald. In this sense, the text seems to agree with Ursula that such a relationship is "false, impossible." Here, of course, as Love would point out, same-sex desire seems to figure the failure desire itself. However, the novel does not seem entirely satisfied with foreclosing the possibility of queer world-making.

Birkin, who gives voice to the novel's wildest utopian theorizations, refuses to accept this figural relationship between queerness and failure, perversity, and impossible desire. The novel itself ends, and so ends the possibility for readers of Lawrence's novel to see a queer world unfold in its pages. But Birkin's final gesture of refusal, of disbelief in the heteronormative ideology that Ursula espouses keeps alive a potential futurity, the potential for a queer world to be made.

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Epilogue

The antisocial thesis "seeks to defend forms of queer rebelliousness against the quest for respectability that characterizes much of liberal gay and lesbian politics these days. In its most radical forms, the antisocial thesis celebrates queer eros as a site of the kind of self-shattering or annihilation that calls into question the very possibility of coherent subjectivity" (Ruti 113). What interests me in this position is its critical take on the mainstream push for lesbian and gay rights. It seems to me that Edelman and Bersani's work, like much of queer theory, is interested in thinking about queerness and the politics of sexuality beyond the liberal goals of the contemporary lesbian and gay rights movement. I think these goals are entirely just and achieving them is a political necessity, but queer theory, to me, presents an opportunity for taking a broader perspective and trying to think in more radical and speculative terms.

I choose to use the literary texts I do in this essay because they both present queer desires that are stifled by repressive social worlds. In a broader sense, working with modernism is ideal for intervening in this critical debate within queer theory. As Esther Sanchez-Pardo observes, "Lacking a foundation in universals, we are squarely placed within history, and the issues of power at stake in modernism reside in the cultural struggle between tradition and resistance to established norms" (10). This anti-normative aspect of modernism allies it with queer theory's goals. The sense of instability in the social order that preoccupies artistic modernism is one I also find in queer theory. Often this instability is embraced as it presents the possibility of subverting norms and building a queerer world.

The marking of queerness as failed, abject, and future-less according to the narrative logics of these texts is embraced by a critic such as Edelman for its powerful rejection of sociality as we know it. On the other hand, a critic like Muñoz would embrace these moments as invested with utopian possibility, as gesturing towards a future queerness that is yet to come. My project endeavors to take both approaches.

Judith Halberstam has suggested that the debate around the antisocial thesis is primarily about canons. Different critics focus on different texts that they argue embody the queer aesthetic they champion. Halberstam herself focuses on pop culture in *The Queer Art of Failure*, writing about the queerness of punk rock and children's animation. Muñoz looks mostly at artists based in New York in the era around Stonewall. Edelman writes about Hitchcock and Victorian literature. Bersani favors Jean Genet and Marcel Proust. In a sense, my own contribution to this field would then be that of suggesting British modernist texts as a potential canon alongside these. The texts I select are particularly useful because there is are elements in them not only of the repressive narrative logics that give queerness its Edelmanian negativity, but also because we can see in them the beginnings of the sense of queer utopian hope that can be seen more clearly in the Stonewall-era gay artists that Muñoz reads.

To conclude, I think there are a number of potential new directions I could take this project in. For one, my embrace of both sides of the negative/utopian debate could possibly be used to read other literary texts entirely. My project is not the only one take

this approach, though I have only found one other study that does.[17] As I have argued, modernist texts are particularly well-suited for my particular critical approach, so it may be the case that there are other modernist literary texts that could be put in dialogue with these two strands of contemporary queer theory. There may also be more contemporary texts that would be suited to such an approach, but finding and reading those texts will be a job for future scholarship.

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[17] Tison Pugh's ""There Lived in the Land of Oz Two Queerly Made Men": Queer Utopianism and Antisocial Eroticism in L. Frank Baum's Oz Series."

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