

DISPOSSESSION AND FUTURELESSNESS: AT THE CONFLUENCE OF MARXISM AND QUEER THEORY

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Abstract

The following thesis focuses on reading Lee Edelman's concept of futurelessness against the backdrop of Marxist theory. It explores the possibilities for reframing queer negativity, which Edelman understands as an ahistorical condition of possibility of the social as such, in historical materialist terms as negativity inherent in the logic of capital accumulation. It signals the way in which David Harvey's notion of dispossession can be recast as an account of that negativity. More specifically, through an engagement with György Lukács's understanding of reification's subjective moment, combined with regulationist analysis of the historical, objective social structures within which capital accumulation can take place, Edelman's *sinthomosexual* is reconceptualized as a *skillhomosexual* to whom futurelessness is never individually but rather always collectively ascribed, within a specific social formation brought into being through epistemological, skilled labor of determining counter-hegemonic use-values to subjects and objects produced within capitalist totality. Through combining Edelman's death-drive with Butler's melancholy we will propose rethinking these negative subjectifications in terms of Harvey's spatio-temporal fixes; as instances of capital extending to the level of the body by fixing it as variable capital. Additionally, this thesis will delineate the political significance of rereading negativity in queer Marxist terms within the contemporary neoliberal crisis in which death-drivenness is increasingly exposed as located within capital's internal logic, rather than within the historical as such.

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No Capital / No Future

The historical mission of the bourgeoisie is accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake (Marx, *Capital*, vol. I: 742).

The falling sparrows of Hitchcock's film [...] decline, in their present progressive coming, in the constancy of the jouissance as which they now come out, *to be not to come*, in Shakespeare's words, since coming becomes their being (Edelman, *No Future*: 133).

Coming becomes their being, writes Lee Edelman of Hitchcock's *Birds* in his book *No Future* that marked what would soon become referred to as the negative turn in queer theory. Against any allegiance to reason, logic, coherence, universality or meaning in general, the birds are in Edelman's exposition entrusted with performing the same burden of figurality that heteronormative culture ascribes to homosexuality – they show themselves for no purpose but for the showing itself and appear as figures reeking of death that know no affirmation and no future. The possibility of the social, premised on a transcendence of particularity for achievement of *greater good*, can only be achieved if the inherent impossibility of such universality is negated, unequivocally and perpetually, so long as there is a social to be affirmed. The resolution of a constitutive wound at the very heart of sociality and identity, as its most treasurable currency, must be deferred to an always ostensibly reachable, but never actually reached, point of a final resolution – that inexistent place of future that professedly awaits all of those who profess it.

For Edelman, who is coming from a Lacanian/Žižekian tradition, the trouble with the social runs deeper than the trouble with gender, as proposed by deconstructivist critics. The ultimate end-point of intelligibility in the order of the social transcends its historically specific articulations such as gender and into an ahistorical Real, grounding that historical as a viable mode of existence to begin with. Specifically for Edelman, it is ultimately the future, rather than gender, that must be corporeally reenacted if the subject is to be allowed in the camp of the properly living. Only death is promised to those who fail to embody the future; to those who do not, with their very bodily existence, affirm the advance of society on its undeterrable path to progress; a progress ultimately waged for the sake of progress itself and always against those who expose it in its self-referentiality - against those who refuse to *protect the children*, figured as embodiments of a better future to come. Edelman 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 (ibid: 3).

Edelman thus firmly binds queer theory to negativity and to the death drive and grounds the task of queer critique in exposing the utter impossibility of future, future that always performs political functions of the present and future that has no existence outside of its infinite enunciations. *No Future* thus becomes an unreserved embrace of futurelessness and a manifesto to all of those who find themselves in the same predicament as Hitchcock's *Birds* – those whose being is reduced to their continuous and meaningless *coming*. It is thus the engine of an impossible futurity which, in the final instance, enables the possibility of the historical. It is because there is a future in which to defer the impossibility of meaning that history as meaning can arise. Therefore, a *no future* is at the same time a *no history*.

Edelman's entire predicament of futurelessness is condensed in a description of a bodily condition ascribed to queers: *coming becomes their being*. In other words, the queer is the one affected with the drive to a death-like, empty repetition depleted of any meaningful existence which the future secures. For the queer, coming, appearing, senselessly, inhumanely and with no meaningful purpose, is the only mode of being.

'Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets! Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake'. That is how Marx (ibid) described a specifically capitalist mode of existence: a modality of *being* in the world which encompasses and transcends both the capitalist and the proletarian. Marx continues:

If to classical economy, the proletarian is but a machine for the production of surplus-value; on the other hand, the capitalist is in its eyes only a machine for the conversion of this surplus-value into additional capital (Marx, ibid: 742).

Edelman's self-referentiality of future is in Marx's exposition performed precisely by the self-referentiality of capital. The machine-like, empty repetition of capital accumulation, depleted of any meaning but the senseless 'passion for accumulation' (Malthus, 1. c. in Marx, ibid), is precisely the kind of representation of queer desire in heteronormative, meaning-oriented culture which Edelman tries to delineate in his work:

Queerness exposes sexuality's inevitable coloration by the drive: its insistence on repetition, its stubborn denial of teleology, its resistance to determinations of meaning [...], and above all, its rejection of spiritualization through marriage to reproductive futurism (Edelman: 27).

But the history, whose main stumbling block becomes the impossibility of meaning which drives it towards an endless and death-driven repetition of sameness in the guise of difference, is not, for Marx, history as such, as it is for Lacanian Edelman, but a history which begins with capitalism, as a mode of production in which everything that *is* becomes subjected to the sameness of exchange-value and prompted to a senseless repetition of capital accumulation. Future, for Edelman, performs the same function that capital performs for Marx – reproducing the social in its emptiness under the guise of substance¹; and whether the name of that substance is articulated under the banner of conservatism or liberalism, its sameness remains constant – for both of these two seemingly incommensurable thinkers.

Neither future, nor capital exist outside of their perpetual deferrals; both must continue to be repetitiously produced if the social itself is to continue being reproduced. And if queerness, for Edelman, exposes sexuality's inevitable and meaningless repetition, then Marxism exposes history of capitalism as equally so meaningless – a history of wavering flags and posters whose ultimate purpose is to obscure the real and unrelenting social antagonism. And while Marx's and Edelman's definitions of the content of that antagonism cannot be further apart from one another, they both share what Kevin Floyd (2009) has called *an aspiration to totality* in his book *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism*.

There he argues that the separation between proletarian and queer stand-points is itself a historical effect of capital's incessant fragmentation of the social field. To the extent that both of these critical praxis share a commitment to know the totality of their own genesis, which they recognize as being continuously mystified, and in so far as capital names that totality, queer

¹ 'Futurism generates generational succession, temporality, and narrative sequence, not toward the end of enabling change, but, instead, of perpetuating sameness, of turning back time to assure repetition' (Edelman: 60).

theory is, for Floyd, not tied to the death drive, as it is for Edelman, but actually to Marxism. Queer perspective is always already Marxist, Floyd argues, and makes it his task to read some of the seminal works of queer theory (primarily Michel Foucault's and Judith Butler's) against the backdrop of Marxist pieces; most notably György Lukács's work *History of Class Consciousness* and some of the main works from regulation school.

So what we have here is an internal diversification within queer theory; one strand, most notably represented by Edelman, draws from Lacanian psychoanalysis and grounds queerness on the far outside of history and society as such. The other is a deconstructive approach, pioneered by Butler, which emphasizes the historical constructedness of every outside, profoundly skeptical of claims to a possibility of any ahistorical frame of reference. And then there is the Marxist strand to which this thesis is aligned.

In the American context, we can trace the emergence of capital-aware queer theory to as early as 2000 when Rosemary Hennessy in her, in many respects game-changing, book *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* laid out a powerful critique of contemporary proliferation of queer theory in American academia whose main claims Hennessy viewed as aligned, rather than opposed, to the neoliberal restructuring of the centers of knowledge production, and global society more generally. Two years later Miranda Joseph published her *Against the Romance of Community* where she tried to bring Marx's understanding of labor on the same plane as Butler's performativity. The first comprehensive exposition on all the main tendencies within queer theory and pertinent Marxian thought came with Floyd's *Reification of Desire* and was complemented by Cinizia Arruzza's (2015) most recent article *Gender as Social Temporality: Butler (and Marx)* where she points to strong resonances that Marx's conceptualization of capital accumulation has with Butler's theory of gender performativity.

Where this thesis enters the debate is to demonstrate that even though queer Marxism, on its queer end, is primarily focused on the deconstructivist project, which seems to be more open for a Marxist reading considering its emphasis on the historical, some of the developments within the anti-social turn in queer theory can actually be productive for the queer Marxist project. On the most general level, the negativity which this strand identifies at the heart of history strongly resonates with Marxist understandings of history; although not of history as such, but the history which begins with instantiation of capitalist social relations. In that sense, the general argument that we would propose is *not* that the negative or death driven qualities which Edelman locates in the logic of sexuality merely derive from the negativity that organizes the logic of capital accumulation, which then somehow spills over into the sexual, but that the sexual itself is the effect (or an extension) of the negativity inherent in capital. This extending of capital, and sexuality as the effect of that extending, we will simultaneously try to think with Lukács's concept of reification and David Harvey's notion of extended reproduction, while the negativity in the logic of accumulation we will capture with Harvey's concept of dispossession. One of the main tasks of this thesis is demonstrating that such resonances between queer negativity and Marxism overflow analogical boundaries on many important points. What follows is thus an endeavor to recast Edelman's work, most notably his main notion of futurelessness, in queer Marxist terms.

This will be done through four distinct analytical procedures, corresponding to four separate chapters around which this thesis is organized. In the first chapter we will mainly be working with psychoanalytical framing of future and its critique from the deconstructivist camp. In that sense, the first chapter will lay out Edelman's argument and trace its Lacanian and Žižekian origins, and then intervene into that edifice through recourse to Butler's proposal of a

constitutive outside against the Lacanian Real as an outside proper and her reading of Louis Althusser's (1971) *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. In this chapter we will demonstrate that future, as understood by Edelman, does not stand outside of history as its condition of possibility, but in fact has a history of its own. Therefore we will be engaged in opening the notion of future to *a* history, but at this point without specifying its content. Then in the second half of the chapter we will engage Edelman's Lacanian reading of Hitchcock's movie *The Birds* and try to provide for its Butlerian reading in a way that combines elements of both of these two thinkers. We will trace both the psychoanalytical and the deconstructivist arguments to Freud's notion of *acting out*, through which we will propose a reframing of Butler's heterosexual matrix in a way that takes into account the effect futurity has on the construction of sexuality.

In the second chapter we will introduce Floyd's engagement with Lukács's concept of reification as an introduction into the historical materialist account of how subjective moments of negativity, expressed in terms of Edelman's death drive and Butler's melancholy, can be read against the objective history of capitalism's turbulences at the end of the 19th and throughout the 20th century. Then in the third chapter we will try to capture this objective history in terms proposed by regulation school through the notions of regime of accumulation and mode of regulation. In the last part of this chapter we will prepare the ground for the final chapter by introducing productive ways of thinking about Marx's notion of commodity fetishism together with Butler's heterosexual matrix.

Finally in the last chapter we will shift our attention to Harvey's dialectical understanding of capital accumulation in order to propose recasting Butler's notion of heterosexual matrix in terms of spatio-temporal fix which Harvey's employs to account for the ways in which capitalism resolves its inherent propensity for crisis. We will propose that if queerness in its futurelessness

is, for Edelman, the name of an irreducible element which exposes the inherent logic of sexuality, then dispossession, is for Harvey, what exposes the inherent logic of capital accumulation. We will thus bring futurelessness and dispossession, as concepts coming from queer theory and Marxism, respectively, within the framework of queer Marxism.

We will conclude by an outline of the present crisis in which capitalism finds itself and try to delineate the potentialities for critical response which emerge at the site of capital's increasing instabilities, in terms of queer Marxism.

1. Does Future Have a History: Queerness as a Site of Reproduction in Edelman and Butler

1.1. The Death Drive of Social Reproduction: The Child, the Queer and the Real

The main gesture of Lee Edelman's work consists in laying out what he believes to be a formative bond between the psychoanalytical notion of the death drive and queer theory more generally. He argues against any adopting of futurity by queer people as every notion of the future is inherently embedded in what he terms *reproductive futurism*, against which queerness will always be positioned. In this sense, the death drive is understood as 'the inarticulable surplus that dismantles the subject from within. [It] names what the queer, in the order of the social, is called forth to figure: the negativity opposed to every form of social viability' (2004: 9).

Significantly, Edelman situates queerness at the level of the body. For him, queerness is 'never a matter of being or becoming, but rather, of embodying the remainder of the Real internal to the Symbolic order' (2004: 25). In his formulation, reproductive futurism transhistorically structures every discourse by the way of postponing subject's access to *jouissance* indefinitely, in this way obscuring the innateness of the impossibility of subject's full realization within the Symbolic. The Real of this impossibility consists in the fact that the Symbolic order is grounded in the unexchangeable sign, the reminder that the order's foundation is in something other than itself which serves as its antithesis, permanently threatening to expose the impossibility of the Symbolic as such and thus deliver the subject to the unthinkability of the Real – an operation captured by the notion of the death drive to which queer theory is, for Edelman, necessarily bound.

This formal unexchangeable element, which enables the subject's entry to the Symbolic order, is what Lacan terms the *sinthome* (Lacan, 1975 in Edelman, 2004: 35). The *sinthome* is not itself symbolizable, it is the isolated and unpaired sign which at the same time fixes the subject to meaning and threatens to expose the arbitrary relationship of this fixation. What becomes crucial here for Edelman is the shape that this potential exposure could acquire. With Žižek he argues that if the *sinthome* would come to be laid bare as nothing but a formality devoided of any meaning, in this way severing the subject's link to reality by exposing this link as a meaningless knot, this would result in deadly consequences described as a 'pure autism, a psychic suicide, surrender to the death drive even to the total destruction of the symbolic universe' (Žižek, 1989 in Edelman, *ibid*: 38). This is how the *sinthome* becomes both what is necessary for the survival of the subject, to the extent it names the element through which it 'choose[s] something instead of nothing' (Lacan, 1975 in Edelman, *ibid*: 37), and what permanently threatens to occasion its surrender to the death drive. The *sinthome* is thus the negativity which has no positive meaning but signals the presence of meaning as such and in this way fixes the subject to the sociality which he experiences as reality. If this *sinthome* were to be exposed as negativity that it really is, this fixation would be destabilized, and the subject's existence as subject, called into question.

The strategy by which this threat of activating the death drive is resolved is what Edelman names *reproductive futurism*, an endless postponing of any final resolution into the future, which will never come, the future that is continuously projected onto the figure of the Child which serves as a guarantor of the viability of future and, by extension, of the Symbolic order. In this context, queerness is embodied in the *sinthomosexual*², a queer body that is called to materialize 'the threat to the subject's faith that its proper home is in meaning' (*ibid*: 39). Since the viability

² Sinthomosexual is Edelman's portmanteau word consisting of the word *sinthome* and *homosexual*.

of meaning is, for Edelman, always grounded in the deferral of its full realization into the future, the sinthomosexual becomes an embodiment of futurelessness, and hence his figural burden of various allusions to decrepitude, decay, and ultimately, as Edelman proposes – the condition of always desiring death.

More specifically, he proposes that sinthomosexual embodies the threat to reproductive futurism which he defines in a Lacanian terminology as the strategy that allows for the perpetual illusion of the possibility of filling out the place of the Other's gaze, that is, the forever blind eyes of the 'third gaze' – ego ideal - the impassive gaze that is supposed to register the subject's activity within the symbolic network. This guarantor of identity is not, argues Žižek (Žižek in Butler et al. 2000:117), an object internal to the subject, but 'the reminder of contingent externality that persists within every move of internalization/idealization, and subverts the clear line between inner and outer'. This reminder, the Lacanian Real, is the originary trauma that constitutes the subject and as such is immaterial.

Within the Lacanian edifice, the subject's material practices, its corporeal styles or citations, to use a more Butlerian terminology, always precede the Symbolic. This temporal inferiority of the Symbolic is accounted for by Lacan, argues Žižek, within the notion of retroactive temporality of meaning; 'of signified as the circular effect of the signifier's chain, [whereby] meaning always comes *later*, [and] that the notion of *always-already there* is the true imaginary illusion-misrecognition' (Žižek in Butler et al. 2000: 118). In this sense, Edelman's notion of reproductive futurism names precisely this constitutive faith in the future realization of meaning; the faith in the subject whose ego-ideal will finally materialize itself as the body *of* the subject and realize the subject's self-identity. The perpetual inability of the materialization of

this phantasmatic fullness of meaning is equally so perpetually postponed, and in this endless chain of postponement the Symbolic order achieves its relative stabilization.

For Edelman, it is the figure of the Child that does the labor of this stabilization by serving as a repository of the unavoidable figurality of the ego-ideal. But in order to successfully carry out this labor of social reproduction, the Child must forever remain an embodied figurality, the allegory for the self-identical subject, which promises the viability of future in which this imagined self-identity of the Child will expand its reach to the point of including the adult subject itself. This is what, for Edelman, explains the Child's allusions to innocence, always figured as a complete lack of desire and the endless investment in the Child that must be protected from the possibility of 'find[ing] enjoyment that would nullify [its] figural value' (Edelman: 21).

Of course, because this figurality of the Child is an investment of the subject whose fullness is forever impossible, a predicament not only encompassing children and adults alike, but producing this distinction in the first place, the Child only manages to continue to perform its task by 'passing its imagined prospect of future on to the Children of [its] own' (Edelman: 19). The material instability of this operation, the impossibility of extending the promise of future realization to any embodied subject in particular, opens up, for Edelman, the inevitable structural position of queerness. To the extent that this unacknowledged meaninglessness of relentless mechanical piling up of new series of bodies that will serve as future incarnated can only stay unacknowledged if some bodies carry out the burden of a different type of figurality – futurelessness – queerness for Edelman remains a structural position within the Symbolic that has to be filled in by someone. It is the sinthomosexual on whom the negativity of the sinthome is projected so that the mechanicity of reproduction of the Symbolic, the true negativity that

conditions the subject's access to it in the first place, would remain obscured. It is thus through ritually revealing the sinthomosexual as a futureless negativity that the force of the death drive is held at bay.

It is here where the relationship between figurality and sinthomosexuality becomes crucial for Edelman. Because of this illusory faith in the possibility of the internalized Other's gaze to confer the subject with the ultimate reassurance in its identity, the Symbolic continuously produces the proliferation of various figures which function as traces of the fact that this life-conferring gaze is in fact internalized, materially inexistent and as such ultimately blind – that it refers to no embodied entity in particular.

This is resolved, according to Edelman, only in so far as some bodies carry the burden of this figurality – if this figurality manages to get itself embodied in some materiality. Queer people, for Edelman, provide the bodies for carrying the material burden of this figurality inherent to the Symbolic. In other words, if the promise of the future, necessary for the subject's sinthome to remain disavowed, is embodied in the Child as a figure, then the emptiness internal to all figurality, which pushes it towards its ultimate dissolution, must itself be projected onto some bodies that will sustain the faith that the dissolution of the Child is not simultaneously the dissolution of the future and, by extension, of meaning or, more precisely, of life as meaning. It is the sinthomosexual's body which must appear as delivering death to the Child, so that the death drive, as the internal logic of the Symbolic, would not have to. This is how Edelman ends up proposing that it is precisely the site of the body where the Symbolic manages to carry out the labor of its own reproduction, so to say. For Edelman, futurelessness is thus a bodily condition.

1.2. Futures That Matter: Reframing Psychoanalytical Real as Constitutive Outside

The trouble here for Butler is that the *sinthome*, which ties the subject to meaning and animates the necessary production of future in Edelman, cannot but be always already material itself. In the chapter on Althusser's theory of interpellation in her book 'Psychic Life of Power' (1997, 106-31), Butler argues against the ideality of the Lacanian Real by claiming that the foreclosure which constitutes the subject is itself a culturally instantiated and thus a performative and material practice which cannot be confined under any ideal and stable signifier, the Lacanian Real notwithstanding. So it is through the material practice of performative repetition that matter, for Butler, comes to matter, and the absence of a certain disavowed, or even constitutive, bar within this corporeal series of repetition does not, for Butler, signal the ideality of this foreclosure, but functions as its constitutive outside which as such cannot be insulated from the materiality of corporeal citational practices under the designation of the Real. Butler argues:

The interval by which any repetition takes place does not, strictly speaking, *appear*; it is, as it were, the absence by which the phenomenal is articulated. But this non-appearance or absence is not for that reason an *ideality*, for it is bound to the articulation as its constitutive and absent necessity (Butler, 1997: 127).

In her polemic with Žižek, Butler (Butler in Butler et al. 2000: 152-5) argues that this constitutive and disavowed foreclosure, not only cannot be itself foreclosed from the social in the Lacanian form of lack, but that this bar constitutive of the subject exists instead as power, always historically produced, and thus historically specific, and taken up by the subject in the form of norms experienced at the level of the unconscious. The analysis of this psychic reality, Butler continues, cannot be conducted in a way that 'presumes the autonomy of that sphere unless it is

willing to naturalize the forms of social power that produce the effect of that autonomy' (ibid: 154). Here Butler comes very close to Kevin Floyd's notion of reification of psychoanalysis, which we will explore in the next chapter, and in a way distances herself from such an endeavor. Moreover, not so far off from Floyd in this respect, she argues:

Power emerges in and as the formation of the subject: to separate the subject-generating function of foreclosure from the realm of productive power is to disavow the way in which social meanings become interpreted as part of the very action of unconscious psychic processes (Butler in Butler et al. 2000: 154).

Furthermore, she argues that, while Žižek (and here Žižek/Lacan/Edelman can be used interchangeably) claims that this traumatic foreclosure constitutive of the subject (the Real) is material, to the extent it is internal to the Symbolic, this conclusion does not follow from his analysis, as it is not itself 'composed of social relations but functions as a limit-point to sociality' (ibid: 152). She, in contrast, argues that the content of that limit-point is always historically specific and cannot be closed off from the social by the theoretical move of its confinement under the symbolic designation of 'the Real'.

Because of this discrepancy between the frameworks in which Butler and Edelman operate, their conceptualizations of the body, and its relationship to queerness, differ significantly. For the purposes of the argument we are trying to make here, it is important to elaborate further on this divergence.

While Edelman's queer body is compelled to carry the burden of the figurality of the ego ideal, its corporeal styles (to use a more Butlerian discourse) are thus read as emptied of meaning, as purely mechanical, as embodying the Lacanian lack, and, by extension, as not only having no

viable future, but as being futurelessness incarnated. The repetition of these corporeal styles, which for Edelman appear to ‘cite’ (to go to Butler again) the lack, are in fact citing to the extent all bodies effectively do, but their citations are being read as unthinkable – because the Symbolic is the ultimate end-point of thinkability. For Butler, however, queer people’s citations, or in her terminology those who form the constitutive outside of the domain of the subject, expose not the Lacanian Real, as the traumatic kernel of the Symbolic, but the citationality as such, that is, they appear to cite from the chain of citationality, and in this way, threatening to expose the presence of this chain of signifiers from which all bodies essentially cite, but only appear as iterations of some imaginary individual authenticity. What is being cited, for Butler, is the norm – the norm that enters the subject’s unconscious as a fantasy, but the two are not mutually reducible. As Butler explains, ‘the fantasy makes use of the norm, but does not create it’ (2000: 154). It is this mutual implicatedness of the norm as power operating in the field of the social, and fantasy, as the subject’s creative engagement with the norm operating on the level of psychic life, that ultimately produces the possibility of subverting the norm.

Unlike the sinthomosexual’s body as a unilateral materialization of the attempt to repel the death drive lurking on the fringes of social viability, Butler’s body is the site at which the norm and the fantasy merge. The body which cites the norm in a way that risks this body’s abjection to the zone of social unintelligibility can also work to expand the horizon of social viability, and this is, for Butler, the proper realm of politics. In this way, Butler’s queer body is, unlike Edelman’s, much more open to moldings of the social, and, as we will see in the final chapter, to its recasting as variable capital (the body as capital) which is always in the process of skilling and de-skilling.

The main divergence between Butler and Edelman in this respect pertains to the issue of how to conceptualize the content of the norm which the subject embodies. While for Edelman reproductive futurism names the content of heteronormativity whose operation is bound up in simultaneously producing the faith in the possibility of the subject to fill out the spectral position of the ego-ideal in the future, and abjecting the sinthomosexual who steals the viability of such a future and as such serves as a material repository for the prospect of futurelessness, for Butler the content of the norm from which some bodies deviate is not itself closed off from history, as Edelman's invocation of the sinthome would suggest, but is materially produced through repetition in time. Heteronormativity for Butler consists not in the Real of sexual difference, as is the case for Edelman, but in the heterosexual matrix as a historically instantiated imperative performatively consolidated through repetition of the sexual difference as a norm at the site of the body whose appearance of fixity is the effect of that repetition.

If the content of the norm is thus performatively instantiated and historically specific, and if bodies are the vehicle for the never self-identical reproduction of the norm, then the content of the norm can be read, as Butler suggests in her reading of Althusser, as a skill. Following Althusser's specification of reproduction of social relations as reproduction of social skills, Butler argues that 'performing skills laboriously works the subject into its status as a social being' (1997: 119). Butler continues: 'to master a set of skills is not simply to accept a set of skills, but to reproduce them in and as one's own activity' (ibid). In the course of repeating this performance, which can be thus read as skilled social labor, the belief is retroactively generated that this repetition is the result of one's own subjectivity and this belief becomes the bedrock of one's subjectivity to the extent that the mastery of skills conditions subjection: 'the more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved' (ibid: 116). So in that sense, it is not

some immaterial sinthome, as Edelman would have it, that fixes the subject to meaning, but subject's fixation to meaning is itself the historically specific content of a set of skills.

The anticipation that after a certain skill is performed, meaning will be generated retroactively is what Edelman, qua Lacan, calls *the retroactive temporality of meaning* which animates Edelman's notion of reproductive futurism. It thus follows that futurelessness is not predicated upon disavowal of the sinthome, but upon materially performed set of social skills, the content of which depends, as we will see in the following chapters, not only, as Butler maintains, on historicity, which in her work signals merely the passage of abstract time, but on the specific content of that historicity - history.

1.3. The Birds is Coming: Heterosexual Melancholy and the Terror of Futurity in Alfred Hitchcock's 'The Birds'

In the previous subchapters we have seen how we can use Butler's deconstructivist critique of Lacan and Žižek as a productive intervention into Edelman's conceptualization of queerness as incarnation of futurelessness. In this subchapter we will again be working with this play between deconstructivism and psychoanalysis in order to bring Edelman's understanding of future(lessness) to bear on Butler's concept of the heterosexual matrix. This move will open the way for our next chapter in which we will engage Kevin Floyd's historical materialist (re)reading of Butler's heterosexual matrix, and allow us to apply the same method to Edelman's concept of futurity itself. Here we will proceed by recourse to Edelman's (2004: 118-54) analysis of Hitchcock's film 'The Birds' (1963) where we will look at the intersection of Edelman's concept of futurelessness and the death drive with Butler's understanding of melancholy and gender put

forward in her early works; originally developed in the book ‘Gender Trouble’ (1990) and then reframed in the chapter ‘Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification’ in her later book ‘Psychic Life of Power (1997: 132-50).

In his analysis of ‘The Birds’ Edelman begins by a recourse to Robin Wood’s analysis of Hitchcock’s work where he argues that the birds ‘are a concrete embodiment of the arbitrary and the unpredictable, of whatever makes human life and human relations precarious, a reminder of the fragility and instability that cannot be ignored or evaded and, beyond that, of the possibility that life is meaningless and absurd’ (Wood, 1989 in Edelman, 2004: 119-20). In Edelman’s analysis, this argument is recast into more explicitly Lacanian register whereas the amassed and dispersed monstrosity of Hitchcock’s birds literalize the terror of the body’s pre-oedipal dissolution and attest to the dread of ‘the violent undoing of meaning, the loss of identity and coherence’ (Edelman: 132).

More specifically, Edelman’s forceful innovation into Wood’s analysis is that the central labor of any narrative which tackles the prospect of meaninglessness is contained in endowing this prospect with some particular shape that allows for its textual instantiation. For Edelman it is thus the bringing the specificity of the dread of meaninglessness into being, and the subsequent content of this endeavor, that should be the central focus of the analysis of Hitchcock’s film. He argues: ‘By deploying [...] a given figure, such as, in this instance, the birds, as the signifier intended to materialize the general *possibility that life is meaningless*, the text necessarily gestures toward a *specific* threat to meaning and suggests particular strategies by which one might manage to ward it off’ (ibid: 120). It is thus the particular content of labor of giving meaning to meaninglessness that is the bedrock of Edelman’s analysis of Hitchcock’s movie and his central argument about queer theory’s unbreakable bond to the death drive, more generally.

It is precisely this dread of the dissolution of meaning that is captured by the promotional slogan for the movie, formulated by Hitchcock himself, ‘The Birds is coming’. The dissolution of the grammatical subject in the slogan, argues Edelman (ibid: 133), anticipates the anxiety surrounding its potential dissolution within the circuit of social reproduction more broadly. What allows for the reproduction of social life, for Edelman, is thus precisely its ability to continuously find an outlet which will embody and contain, or contain *by* embodying, the sameness of repetition which constitutes the intrinsic logic of social reproduction. Sinthomosexuality, for Edelman, names precisely such a containment/embodiment. Therefore, the stabilization of social reproduction by containment of negativity could therefore be understood as the reproductive labor done by queer people and epitomized by the birds in Hitchcock’s movie. Going back to the slogan, it could thus be said that by severing the grammatical agreement between subject and predicate, the slogan provisionally contains the possibility of such severing in all the rest of syntactic ordering, in the same way that the birds in the movie contain, with their very embodied existence, such a dreadful prospect from the life outside the movie screen.

In the same way that the birds of ‘The Birds’ materialize the meaning of meaninglessness, and by the same token, of futurelessness, the meaning of homosexuality in the heteronormative culture is, for Edelman, decided according to the same logic in which birds come to mean meaninglessness in the movie. The movie thus epitomizes the heteronormative culture to the extent that Hitchcock’s birds carry the burden of sinthomosexuality on the screen, while queer people continue carrying it outside of it. ‘The Birds’ thus contains the larger heteronormative culture in an embryonic form. The nature of this operation is, I believe, best captured by Edelman’s analysis of an opening scene of the film that we will now focus on.

1.3.1. From Past Disavowal to Future Avowal: Freud's Concept of Acting Out in Edelman and Butler

In this opening sequence of 'The Birds' (see Figure 1) we see Tippi Hedren, as the movie's protagonist Melanie Daniels, walking down the San Francisco avenue when she is suddenly interpellated to turn back by a wolf-whistle directed to her. Melanie turns around, already prepared to castigate the unwarranted sexual advance, only to discover the improbable direction from the which the call was sent – an approximately eleven years old boy 'posing' as an adult heterosexual man; the proper active location of the heterosexual libidinal economy. Seeing this unlikely source of the call, Melanie's face instantly changes from exasperation to endearment. Immediately afterwards, the viewer hears the permutation of the boy's whistle into an ominous shriek of an unknown, or at least unseen, source. Melanie looks up in order to identify where the shriek is coming from and the camera cuts to an insert shot of the sky inundated with bird flocks, the sight of which instantly fills Melanie's face with angst.

The analytical value of the scene, for Edelman, derives from its potential to literalize the driving mechanism of both the movie in its entirety, and the general argument he makes in 'No Future'. Faced with the whistle of the desiring child, who is able to successfully embody reproductive futurism only in so far as it is figured as lacking desire, Melanie, and with her the audience, is simultaneously faced with the truly troubling prospect of the Child whose figurality has been compromised, even if just for a split second (this is the second in which Melanie's face changes from exasperation to endearment). This compromisation is in fact placed at the movie's very beginning so that it would ignite the narrative engine of the film which is comprised in the cinematization of the labor of warding off this threat by materializing it in a different source.



Figure 1. Sequence from ‘The Birds’³

Terrified by the child who desires, but immediately forced, under what Edelman calls the compulsory ‘fascism of the baby’s face’ (ibid: 75, 151), to foreclose such a possibility and to thus recognize in it only the *imitation* of desire, Melanie is compelled to look for the source of her unease elsewhere. Luckily for Melanie, Hitchcock calls into being the birds, which announce with their shrieks the looming arrival of the sinthomosexuals who will embody the threat to meaning caused by the boy who instead of meaning the future (instead of meaning the *meaning*), potentially revealed heterosexuality’s own implication in the death drive.

The compulsory foreclosure of the prospect of the Child as a body with its own directionality of desire, rather than as a mere externalized embodiment of an otherwise

³ Source: Edelman, 2004: 126-8

internalized expectation of a future synthesis of the ego with its ego-ideal, is what for Edelman constitutes the primary *modus operandi* of reproductive futurism and opens up the structural position of queerness within the Symbolic. In this matrix, the boy who wolf-whistles can only become intelligible as a boy who imitates ‘real’ wolf-whistling, and at the site of the boy’s ‘imitational’ performance a gap is opened which the sinthomosexual is called forth to fill in order to preserve the disrupted belief in the future.

We would argue that Melanie’s investment in reading the boy’s whistle as *imitative* (might we even say as *parodic*), corresponds to what Butler (1997: 145) understands by the heterosexist investment in reading drag performances as ‘imitative’ of ideal gender norms. It could thus be said that drag, for Butler, serves as a repository which will contain this imitativeness inherent in all performances and obscure the imitative nature of gender itself (of gender performativity). Therefore, the belief in the imitative nature of drag femininity serves as a repository for foreclosing the possibility that all femininity is always already an imitation, in the same way in which sinthomosexuals for Edelman serve as a repository for foreclosing the possibility that all desire (desire as such) is only an effect of the symbolic prohibition of *jouissance*, doomed to an endless circulation around the death drive.

Both Butler’s and Edelman’s formulations could partially be understood as taking cue from Lacan’s reconceptualization of Freud’s notion of ‘acting out’. For Freud, acting out consists in compulsive repetition of certain corporeal actions by the means of which past events that are repressed from memory are unconsciously brought into the present (Evans, 1996: 2). Lacan’s intervention into Freud’s exposition is comprised in bringing to light the intersubjective nature of the manner by which repressed memories can be brought to consciousness. In other words, only by addressing it to an Other, through verbal articulation, can a memory be properly avowed.

Evans elucidates on Lacan's concept of acting out: 'when the Other has become 'deaf' [to this verbal articulation], the subject cannot convey a message to him in words, and is forced to express the message in [corporeal] actions' (ibid: 3).

In her conceptualization of the heterosexual matrix, Butler (1990; 1997) in fact argues that this *deafness* of the Other can be thought of as deriving from the taboo on homosexuality, which is for her a condition of possibility for the incest taboo which, in the proper Lacanian framework, directs the subject towards a resolution of the oedipal conflict and allows him/her to assume a sexual position as a 'man' or a 'woman'. Conversely, the taboo on homosexuality precedes the incest taboo, constitutive of subjectivation, and as such compels the Other to block the subject's attempts at articulating the grief for the lost homosexual object of love. As a consequence, this loss is disavowed and incorporated on the subject's body in and as his/hers ego. This is, for Butler, the process by which gender identification within what she calls the *heterosexual matrix* becomes a psychic form of preserving the lost object of homosexual attachment through its melancholic incorporation. Heterosexual melancholy, as an unfinished process of grieving the loss of homosexual object choice, in this way becomes constitutive of gender incorporation/identification within the heterosexual matrix. A heterosexual woman gives up her homosexual object choice, but incorporates its characteristics *onto* and *as* her own ego and thus becomes a woman she is compelled to claim of 'never having loved and never having lost' (Butler, 1997: 140). Butler claims: '[...] heterosexual identity is purchased through a melancholic incorporation of the love that it disavows [...] that love, that attachment becomes subject to a double disavowal (ibid).

In a wider cultural context, in which the prohibition on homosexuality is prevalent, the Other is bound to repetitiously *turn a deaf ear* to the attempts at verbally mourning the loss of a

homosexual object choice, which compels the subject to an equally so repetitious *acting out* of the lost object's characteristics. This type of acting out, in the form of what Butler terms *heterosexual melancholy*, is in fact what for Butler constitutes gender: 'gender itself might be understood in part as the 'acting out' of unresolved [unmourned] grief' (1997: 146). From this vantage, homosexuality becomes a kind of a *building block* of heterosexuality as its repudiated and thus constitutive outside. Butler elaborates:

In this scenario, renunciation [of homosexual object choice] requires the very homosexuality that it condemns, not as its external object, but as its own most treasured source of sustenance (1997: 143).

Lacan's notion of *acting out*, in which the subject is engaged in corporeal actions as a way of bringing the past into the present for the Other to *decipher* it, informs Edelman's theoretical edifice in a somewhat different manner than it does Butler's. While Butler emphasizes the driving force behind such acting out as initiated by the taboo on homosexuality, and the subsequent disavowal of homosexual object of attachment which this taboo propels, Edelman focuses on the subject's expectation that this acting out (gender performance, for Butler) will lead to the Other's proper *deciphering* of it in the future, since it continually fails to result in the desired effect in the actual moment of its enactment. In other words, because it is impossible for the Other to decipher the message of *acting out*, the Symbolic inherently tends towards the production of a phantasmatic future in which the Other will presumably succeed in this essentially impossible task that he is entrusted with.

It could thus be said that Edelman's *reproductive futurism* names precisely this faith of the subject that its corporeal repetition, the content of which is for Butler primarily defined by the

exteriorization of the prohibited and therefore lost object choice in the form of gender performances, will eventually find its way to the message recipient to whom it is unconsciously addressed. The trauma of the everlasting failure of the Other to successfully *decrypt* the impetus of that repetition, which would bestow its existence with meaning for which it essentially craves, produces the need for turning the present failure of the actualization of meaning into its imagined future success. In this formulation, the Child stands as an incarnation of the promise of future actualization of meaning, denied to the subject in the present.

From the point of view of this intersection of Butler's and Edelman's engagement of the notion of acting out, it could be argued that Melanie's change of face from initial exasperation to endearment, upon realizing that the wolf-whistle comes from a Child and not from an adult man, is an attestation to her attempt of remaining fixated to the Symbolic by continuing to invest in the Child as a figure which promises the resolution of her heterosexual melancholy in the future. When the boy interrupts her womanly street walk down the San Francisco avenue, a walk that is in Butler's formulation an instance of heterosexual femininity accomplished through *acting* the street walk *out*, in that way bringing to the present the disavowed object of her homosexual attachment, Melanie responds to the boy's interpellation with endearment. This avowed endearment is in fact constituted by the disavowed attachment to her lost object of homosexual love, whose promise of a future avowal is embodied in the figure of the Child which the boy literalizes. By choosing to see in the boy the guarantee that in the future her womanly street walk will be registered by the Other as an attempt of holding a funeral for her lost and disavowed homosexual object choice that it really is, Melanie averts the prospect of acknowledging the utter impossibility of her *acting out* to ever be properly received by the Other.

In this way, what Butler means by heterosexual melancholy as a *past refusal* of grief and the incorporation of loss, is in Edelman's formulation turned into a kind of a false *future acceptance*, conditioned by the availability of bodies that will materialize the falseness of this promise of future as futurelessness incarnated. In other words, the funeral of the doubly disavowed homosexual object choice, which Melanie's gait acts out as a form of 'miming the death it cannot mourn', as Butler (1997: 142) puts it, has to find, in Edelman's edifice, an outlet where this *miming of death* will be recognized as such. The birds gathering above the scene where Melanie is acting out her lost object's funeral provide precisely such an outlet in which this death will be embodied, but this time not as (in the form of) *acting out*, which is always intended for the Other to witness it, but as a *sinthome*. As Lacan argues, 'the symptom'⁴, unlike acting out, does not call for interpretation, it is not a call to the Other, but a pure jouissance addressed to no one' (Lacan, 1962-3 in Evans, 1996: 191). In this way Lacan posits his conceptualization of the sinthome in an oppositional relation to acting out - not as a ciphered message intended for Other's deciphering, but as a 'signifying formulation beyond analysis, a kernel of enjoyment immune to the efficacy of the symbolic' (Evans, *ibid*).

Edelman's innovation into Lacan's conceptualization is that the sinthome can only continue to successfully perform its function of holding the death drive at bay in so far as the death drive itself, which insists on the eternal absence of the Other who would, through Melanie's faith in its presence, affirm her acting out, is projected onto a different entity. The birds provide such an embodiment of the death drive by the virtue of simultaneously being present at the scene of Melanie's acting out and manifestly not registering it, in this way hinting to the presence of

⁴ Lacan's conceptual change from the term *symptom* as a signifier to its later non-linguistic recasting as a 'trace of the particular modality of the subject's jouissance' (Evans, 1996: 191) anticipates a later terminological change from *symptom* to *sinthome*.

‘something that remains unaccounted for in the accounts we give of ourselves’ (Edelman: 86). By presenting themselves at the site of Melanie’s investment in the Child as a figure of a future realization of identity between what is accounted for, and what is not (for Butler this is Melanie’s gait itself and the repudiated homosexuality that animates it, respectively), but at the same time overtly expressing their radical indifference to both Melanie’s gait and its disavowed impetus, the birds interrupt any notion of futurity and expose it in its emptiness. This indifference of the birds, and by the same token, of the sinthome itself, the prospect of whose detangling they materialize, is what Edelman alludes to when he wittily remarks that the birds ‘don’t give a flying fuck [about human love birds and their products]’ (ibid: 132).

Following Žižek’s formulation that the sinthome ‘is literally our only substance’ (Žižek, 1989 in Edelman, ibid: 36), Edelman elaborates that the sinthome ‘brings the subject into being [but only] at the cost of a necessary blindness to this determination by the sinthome’ (Edelman, ibid: 36). This blindness of the subject, Edelman equates with Paul Verhaeghe’s and Frédéric Declercq’s (2002 in Edelman, 2004: 37) notion of the subject’s ‘believing in its sinthome, as opposed to identifying with it’. In other words, the subject (mis)treats its sinthome as if it is located in the order of the Symbolic, in this way as something to place its faith on, as opposed to its proper function which is enabling the subject to ‘take on [...] distinctive shape’ (Žižek, 1989 in Edelman, ibid: 37) and ‘assur[ing] [its] access to a *recognizable* world’ (Edelman, ibid). Edelman’s mandate to queer people to embrace the negativity to which they are already bound anyway, rather than fighting against it, consists precisely in the nature of sinthomosexual’s bond to his sinthome, to his identification with it, as opposed to placing his faith in its meaning. Edelman’s sinthomosexual thus fully follows Žižek’s (1992) command to ‘enjoy [his] symptom’.

1.3.2. Oedipal Trouble: Performativity of the Fragmented Body in Butler's 'Lesbian Phallus'

This is the point at which sinthomosexuality's potentially complementary relationship to melancholically incorporated homosexuality, that we have been engaged in delineating so far, finds itself on an unstable territory. This instability pertains to the contested issue of how to conceptualize the phallus. In so far as sinthomosexual's detachment from meaning is premised upon a specific notion whereby the stability of meaning, from which Edelman's sinthomosexual is able to unhitch, is achieved by the phallus, as a privileged signifier in Lacan's edifice, the sinthomosexual is available for a deconstructivist criticism elaborated by Butler in her chapter on the 'Lesbian Phallus' in her book 'Bodies That Matter' (1993). We will now outline the contours of Butler's criticism of Lacan in a way that allows for alleviating Edelman's sinthomosexual from its phallocentric and, subsequently, through Floyd's historicization of Butler, Fordist burden.

The sinthome's function to 'assure the subject's access to a recognizable world and allow it to take on a distinctive shape' is in Edelman's (ibid) formulation bound to Lacan's understanding of the fragmented body⁵, elaborated in his essay 'The Mirror Stage' (1949 in Butler, 1993: 57-91) and complemented with a later essay 'The Signification of the Phallus' (1958 in Butler, ibid). Evans (1996: 67) elaborates Lacan's argument as follows: in the mirror stage the infant, who still lacks motor coordination, sees its reflection in the mirror as a whole. This causes the perception of its own body as fragmented. This feeling of fragmentation leads to a profound feeling of anxiety which triggers the infant's urge to identify with the specular image

⁵ We will here be adopting Evan's (1996: 67) translation of Lacan's term [le corps morcelé]. Butler translates it as 'the body in pieces' (1993: 75).

and this identification is what, for Lacan, constitutes *ego*. In this way ego is constituted around the bodily mirror image, but this image is itself of an anticipatory nature and as such permanently founded on unstable grounds. Evans elucidates, ‘the anticipation of a synthetic ego is henceforth constantly threatened by the memory of this sense of fragmentation’ (ibid).

This anticipation of the synthesis of the ego with its ego-ideal, as we have seen, animates Edelman’s understanding of reproductive futurism where the subject wards off the threat of this memory by finding refuge in the figure of the Child which materializes the viability of this essentially unfounded anticipation. Melanie’s encounter with the boy, whose wolf-whistle signaled the desire which destabilizes the boy’s figural value as the guarantor of her future synthesis with her ego-ideal, incited the memory of a fragmented body. This memory is then conveniently alleviated by the carefully staged appearance of the birds that displaced her sense of fragmentation by appearing to her (or in a politically more explicit formulation – *for* her) as fragmented and partial themselves.

The phallus comes into play when we consider that Melanie, in Edelman’s Lacanian edifice, could only have gained her sense of a *recognizable* world, and then sustain this sense through her investment in the Child, through achieving the differentiation of her ego from its Other and, by extension, from external objects in the world. This differentiation, through which the perception of the body as fragmented is partially eradicated, the unity of the body protracted (however precariously), and access to the world of objects allowed, is achieved through the positioning of the subject within the Symbolic domain of language. The trouble for Butler is that this positioning in language, which allows for the preservation of the integrity of the body, is, in Lacan’s exposition, achieved only under a sexually marked name, the marker which is in return sustained by the phallus as the *master signifier*.

Butler (1993: 80) identifies a certain disavowed tautology which implicitly informs Lacan's conceptualization of the phallus to which she refers as the 'performativity of the phallus'. To the extent that the phallus becomes the symbolic principle by which the subject is able to be posited within language and by which the totality of the body and the external objects in the world become epistemologically available, this Lacanian narrative is premised upon the obscured self-referential function which the phallus performs. Let us now briefly summarize Lacan's understanding of the phallus before we engage in Butler's deconstructive intervention.

For Lacan, as we have seen, the infant in the mirror stage achieves the sense of the totality of its own body through identification with its specular projection which then becomes the ego-ideal which serves to maintain the sense of this totality. But this totality is still placed within the order of the Imaginary – the world of visual images. In order to gain access to the Symbolic, the world of language, another rite of passage awaits the infant – resolution of the oedipal conflict. The story goes like this: the infant realizes that the Mother desires him/her and is thus lacking. The child imagines to itself be the object of her desire which will fulfill this lack – the child strives to *be* the phallus for the mother. The incest taboo here works through the Name-of-the-Father which conditions the entry into the Symbolic only under the provision that the child gives up its attempts of being the phallus for the mother and understands that this prohibition is symbolic and that so is the phallus. In this way the phallus is henceforth installed as the stabilizer of the signifying chain.

Butler argues that phallus is already implicitly operative in Lacan's description of the fragmented body before the mirror stage and serves as a condition of possibility for allowing its privileged status within the Symbolic in the later essay 'This Signification of the Phallus' (ibid). She argues:

Although *The Mirror Stage* attempts to narrate how a body comes to have a sense of its own totality for the first time, the very description of a body before the mirror as being in parts or pieces takes as its own precondition an already established sense of a whole or integral morphology (1993: 82).

This sense is, for Butler, implicitly informed by Lacan's description of the status of the phallus as a guarantor of meaning within the resolution of the oedipal conflict. In other words, Lacan's notion of the fragmented body already in itself contains the notion of a body whose wholeness is guaranteed by the phallus and as such serves as the constitutive outside of what it means, specifically for Lacan, for the body to be fragmented. The pre-oedipal wholeness achieved through the identification with the specular image, in Lacan's account, is already informed by Lacan's theoretical privileging of the role of the phallus in the incest taboo, which poses to come posteriori to inaugurate the subject into Symbolic at the expense of repudiation of the maternal body. By posing as post-Imaginary (post-specular), Butler argues, the phallus conceals its own genealogy: 'the phallus governs the description of its own genesis and, accordingly, wards off a genealogy that might confer on it a derivative or projected character' (ibid).

This is how Butler is able to claim that the taboo on homosexuality, already contained in the incest taboo, is what becomes constitutive of gender identification, as opposed to the repudiation of the maternal body which performs this function in Lacan. In so far as the oedipal narrative already assumes the heterosexual nature of desire, which prohibits the specific object of desire, but not its direction, it can only follow that the prohibition on incest is already premised upon the prohibition on homosexuality. Within the heterosexual matrix, an object of desire thus becomes melancholically incorporated and subjected to a double disavowal: never having loved

(the taboo on homosexuality), and never having lost (the incest taboo). Butler argues in ‘Gender Trouble’:

[...] if the melancholic answer to the loss of the same-sexed objects is to incorporate and, indeed, to become that object through the construction of the ego ideal, then gender identity appears primarily to be the internalization of a prohibition that proves to be formative of identity (1999: 81).

The merging of the ego with ego-ideal, whereas the latter is formed on the basis of the incest taboo (as opposed to the taboo on homosexuality in Butler’s formulation), as we have seen, informs Edelman’s concept of reproductive futurism and finds its embodiment in the figure of the Child. In Butler’s conceptualization, however, the productive capacity of the taboo on homosexuality which informs the content of the image which the infant internalizes as its ego-ideal, is firmly placed upon a specific epistemological regime which Butler takes as the aim of her deconstructive endeavor, throughout her oeuvre.

More specifically, Butler (ibid: 78) further claims, following Lacan himself, that signification is the condition of knowability (recognizability, for Edelman) which means that the image, in this context the image of the unified body, ‘can [only] be sustained by the sign (the imaginary within the terms of the symbolic)’. This means that the objects in the world only become perceivable, or in Edelman’s terms, only become a *recognizable* part of the world, within a certain epistemological regime. The unified specular image which the infant sees and identifies with in order to avert anxiety over its ‘wayward motility or disaggregated sexuality not yet restrained by the boundaries of individuation’ (ibid: 75), is precisely such a perceivable object available only through signification. Conversely, the content of a disunified image which the

infant seeks to ward off is thus, for Butler, implicitly informed by Lacan's epistemological allegiance to the psychoanalytical body whose unity is sustained by the phallus.

If, then, the image of the wholeness of the body is in Lacanian register, as Butler maintains, sustained by the phallus which performs, already in the account of the Imaginary realm, a disavowed synecdochal function in which it comes to stand for the whole of the body (ibid: 79), then where are we to look for the historical origins of the content of this image of the body's wholeness? What is the historical condition of possibility for the epistemological *recognizability* of this image which is later to become incorporated as the infant's ego-ideal whose future annexation with the ego the subject will henceforth be vainly awaiting? Or to rephrase the question: if this specular image is, as Butler reminds, 'at a radical epistemic distance from the subject' (ibid: 75), then what is the content of the *epistemological labor* which reduces this distance and allows for the functioning of Edelman's reproductive futurism?

This is how Butler sets the stage for Floyd's (2009) later intervention towards which we are now approaching. In 'Gender Trouble' she criticizes the oedipal narrative: 'instating itself as the principle of logical continuity in a narrative of causal relations which take psychic facts as its point of departure, this configuration of the law forecloses the possibility for a more radical genealogy into the cultural origins of sexuality and power relations' (1999: 82). Moreover, in her polemic with Žižek, Butler restates: 'the formal character of this originary, pre-social sexual difference in its ostensible emptiness is *accomplished* precisely through the reification by which a certain idealized and necessary dimorphism takes hold' (Butler in Butler et al. 2000: 145). We will now turn our attention to exploring the Marxist genealogy of the concept of reification and the way Kevin Floyd engages with this notion in order to propose a historical materialist reading of Butler's heterosexual matrix.

2. Historical Questions, Melancholic Answers: Reframing Futurelessness in Queer Marxist Terms

2.1. Introductory Remarks on Reification: György Lukács and the Psychic Life of Class

This notion of reification is precisely Kevin Floyd's (2009) entry point into the debate, elaborated in his book 'Reification of Desire'. He traces the genealogy of the concept back to the Hungarian Marxist philosopher György Lukács, outlined in his collection of essays under the title 'History of Class Consciousness' (1923). Floyd takes as his main task reframing heteronormativity within the conceptual framework of reification and reads it against the backdrop of various articulations of the processes of normalization within queer theory.

On the most general level, Lukács's notion of reification refers to both the process of capital's fragmentation of the totality of the social and its capacity to misrepresent these isolated fragments as autonomous in their internal dynamics. This misrepresentation is achieved through commodity exchange whereas social labor gets individuated and placed under the denominator of formal equivalence on the one hand, and reification of knowledge on the other, which involves imposing a range of atomized knowledges upon the social life, in this way doing the work of normalizing this individuation across the social field. In the final instance, then, what is being normalized by these knowledges is the misapprehension of social relations as disattached from the totality of which they form part.

For Floyd, one of the crucial aspects of this reification of knowledge is psychoanalysis whereas sexual dispositif has been dislodged from the mesh of the social, and given internal logic of its own. As Butler claims in a similar manner in ‘Gender Trouble’:

Told from the point of view which takes the prohibitive law to be the founding moment of the narrative, the law both produces sexuality in the form of *dispositions* and appears disingenuously at a later point in time to transform these ostensibly *natural* dispositions into culturally acceptable structures of exogamic kinship (Butler, 1999: 82).

This productive capacity of psychoanalysis was, for Floyd, the condition of possibility for new forms of critical praxis seeking to know not only this internal logic, but much more importantly, the mesh from which it was delineated in the first place, through reification.

This allows Floyd to argue that the critique of heteronormativity can be understood as a continuation of Marxist critical praxis, as both share what he calls an ‘aspiration to totality’. Far from a ‘view from nowhere’, this aspiration is always socially and historically situated in its endeavor to deconstruct the fragments in order to know the totality from which they were constructed. Deconstructing the heterosexual/homosexual binary, queer theory points to their mutual implicatedness, in this way striving to grapple a larger totality of which both fragments of sexual subjectivity form part. The dynamics of capital’s infinite fractural potential can then only be understood within a conceptual movement from the most abstract to the ever more concrete, and only through the sum of these concretizations can the internally differentiated social totality be accounted for.

In this sense, argues Floyd, queer vantage is always already Marxist. Their disjuncture is in fact itself a product of reification, whereas Marxist and queer standpoint emerge from different stages of capital's internal differentiation. While Marxism emerged at a historical moment where the dissolution of feudal relations gave rise to the differentiation between capital and labor, queer theory emerged at the site of yet further social differentiation in which movement of capital drives labor away from the family as a unit of production and into the city, in this way further individuating previous social formations and allowing for new partitioning of social locations into hetero and homosexual.

This partitioning of subjectivity into heterosexual and homosexual, understood not as individual positions but as particular social locations from which the social can be known, was thus a result of changes in two crucial aspect of reification's objective moment. First, it was enabled by changes in further atomization of social labor within the family unit, which was itself a product of an earlier atomization of the commons. Second, this partitioning was subjected to an even more ubiquitous process of normalization through the proliferation of sexual knowledge, either understood as reification of sexual knowledge in Marxist terms, or as deployment of sexuality in Foucauldian terms. Both conceptualizations, argues Floyd, refer to the same historical unfoldings. In this sense, reading Foucault back into the discourse of reification allows us to have a better sense of the pervasiveness of reification's objective moment, as it penetrates not only into various social formations and previously non-capitalist strata, but also through the surface of the body itself, disciplining it, as it were, into norms required for always changing prerequisites for capital accumulation. This is how Floyd recasts Foucault's understanding of normalization of bodies by knowledges in a Lukácsian discourse of reification:

[...] reification refers to a subject-object dynamic specific to capitalist social relations by which social labor epistemologically objectifies bodily properties and capacities, and by which those objectifications in turn discipline, regulate, instrumentalize those bodies themselves, normalizing them as deskilled laborers or as sexual subjects, for example (Floyd, 2009: 74).

Floyd then extends this reification/normalization dialectics to Butler's early works on gender and proposes reexamining her notion of gender performativity as mediated by the social endeavor to manage capital's structural contradictions at the turn of the 20th century. The stabilization of contradictory tendencies within the overall circuitry of accumulation was achieved within the Fordist regime in the United States from the end of the Second World War until the early 1970s and it is in this spatio-temporal context where he locates the instance of sexual subjectivation at the moment of epistemological consumption, enabled by the processes of deskilling the laboring body, where the crucial commodity that is being consumed is for Floyd primarily psychoanalysis.

This Floydian subject is then interpellated through the commodification of sexual knowledge, a condition made possible by the deskilling of the laboring body achieved in the previous era of Taylorism. Hailed at the moment of consumption, then, this subject's corporeal repetitions are regulated by what Butler terms regulatory norms that govern the chain of citationality while these norms are, as Floyd clarifies, one component of the mode of regulation of social consumption in an era where mass consumption of consumer goods becomes the backbone of capital accumulation.

For Floyd, universalized homoeroticism fully emerged within the Fordist closed production-consumption circuit oriented towards long-term surplus extraction and its failure to confine the desire to the embodied gender difference in light of its necessary exteriorization of masculinity to the sphere of commodity exchange in the Taylorist era, where the body could be deployed as a strategy of accumulation. This is then the historical context in which, for Floyd, the Butlerian heterosexual matrix emerges. Anxieties surrounding the potential failure of the male body to successfully approximate the extrapolated masculinity that by now already circulates the sphere of exchange created the prohibition on homosexual object choice as a condition for melancholia (Butler, 1993; 1997 in Floyd, 2009). Thus, from a queer Marxist point of view, argues Floyd, before the loss could be melancholic, it first had to be epistemological and historical.

In Floyd's formulation, not only is this constitutive foreclosure, whose disavowal propels the subject to perform gender as an effect of melancholia, materially produced through repetition of skills through time, as Butler proposes against Lacan's understanding of the ideal of the *sinthome*, but the content of those skills is articulated within the notion of social labor. The distinction between skill, or in Butler's terminology a performance or/as citation, and social labor corresponds to Pierre Macherey's (2015) interpretation⁶ of the difference between Marx's employment of *Arbeitskraft* and *Arbeitsvermögen* whereby the former refers to a worker's labor-power embedded in his individual existence and the latter to skilled labor whose content is socially molded according to a given historically specific, exteriorized norm.⁷

⁶ <https://viewpointmag.com/2015/10/31/the-productive-subject/>

⁷ Consider Marx's understanding of social (collective) labor and how such collective labor requires an exterior norm. In the fourth part of the Volume I of *Capital*, under the Chapter on Co-operation, Marx argues: 'All directly social or communal labour on a large scale requires, to a greater or lesser degree, a directing authority, in order to secure the harmonious co-operation of the activities of individuals, and to perform the general functions that have their

This is a crucial distinction which enables exploitation of labor power within the system of wage labor. The innovation of capitalism is the historical precedence of this distinction in which the worker, upon entering a labor contract, is paid for his *Arbeitskraft*, but what is actually used up in the labor process is *Arbeitsvermögen* which is labor-power subjected to common norms:

Once he has entered into the system of wage-labor, the worker, without even realizing it, has ceased to be the person he is, with his individually constituted *Arbeitskraft*; truly subjected, he has become the executor of an operation that surpasses the limits of his own existence (Macherey, 2015).

This operation is what for Macherey constitutes *social labor* defined by a set of skills performed under conditions whose content is determined according to some epistemological regime of organization of labor. In this sense, the worker is both subjected and subjectivated by a repetitious performing of a set of skills normalized under a specific epistemological regime ‘according to principles that condition its optimal use’ (ibid). Such is the conceptualization of the double move of exteriorization and normalization that informs Floyd’s theoretical base for thinking Marxism and queer theory simultaneously.

origin in the motion of the total productive organism, as distinguished from the motion of its separate organs. A single violin player is his own conductor: an orchestra requires a separate one. The work of directing, superintending and adjusting becomes one of the functions of capital, from the moment that the labour under capital's control becomes co-operative. As a specific function of capital, the directing function acquires its own special characteristics. The driving motive and determining purpose of capitalist production is the self-valorization of capital to the greatest possible extent, i.e. the greatest possible production of surplus-value, hence the greatest possible exploitation of labour-power by the capitalist’ (1976: 448-9).

2.2. From Spermatic to Homoerotic Economy: Desiring Body between Taylorist Deskillling and Fordist Reskilling

Floyd (2009: 83-119) describes the shift from Victorian era manhood to performative masculinity which gained its complete form within the closed mass production – mass consumption circuit developed by Fordism. This type of Fordist masculinity was enabled by the turn of the century partitioning of the laboring body advanced by Taylorism. The pre-Taylorist, 19th century physiological epistemology understood manhood within the terms of a closed spermatic economy, which was the economy of desire, while womanhood was conceptualized as an exclusively passive, desireless and reproductive economy. ‘Manhood referred to an *inner quality*, a capacity for independence, morality, and self-mastery that adult men were expected to have achieved’ (ibid: 87). Floyd explains the Victorian manhood/womanhood and the 20th century masculinity/femininity opposition as follows:

Whereas the spermatic economy of manhood and the reproductive or nurturing economy of womanhood made men and women so irreducibly different that no standard of comparison between them was possible, masculinity and femininity are defined wholly in relation to each other, bound together, as Butler would have it, in the very opposition between their accepted and prohibited objects of desire (ibid: 88).

In the beginning of the 20th century, Floyd continues, the male worker’s body is employed as a part of the larger strategy of fostering the production through the deskillling of the laboring body within the Taylorist factory regime. This was achieved by partitioning of knowledges and skills as a way of achieving efficiency of the production process through isolation and

professionalization of bodily micropractices. This isolation and exteriorization of masculinity raised the historically unprecedented prospect of the potential divergence between active desire and the male body and made ‘the corporeal origin and direction of desire, desire’s *orientation*, relatively autonomous vis-à-vis physiological gender distinction’ (ibid: 89).⁸

In this way, Floyd argues that it was the disassociation of masculinity from embodied gender distinction, necessary for new techniques of factory production, and its codification within Taylorist *Arbeitsvermögen*, which raised the prospect of generalized homoeroticism which could incriminate anyone who is seen touching or looking at another man, no matter how masculine in appearance or behavior (ibid: 89). This Taylorist deskilling, and its resultant homoerotic potential of what Sedgwick (1985) termed homosociality, was normalized at the verge of 20th century within the epistemological register of psychoanalysis.

This was, for Floyd, the condition of possibility for the later redeployment of this deskilled male worker to a form of masculinity that could be used for boosting its consumption, rather than production. In this way the male worker arrives in the Fordist era with an already exteriorized masculinity that can now be used for revving up the social consumption, in this way putting it in sync with the historically unparalleled possibilities of mass production of consumer goods achieved by the Taylorist disciplining of labor. The requirement of masculinity to bring itself into being through stylized corporeal movements is thus in the Fordist era turned into a strategy for socializing the population into a consumption norm required for maintenance of the newly established closed factory production – domestic consumption circuit.

⁸ In her book ‘Profit and Pleasure’ Rosemary Hennessy (2000: 97-103) lays out a similar historical account. She situates the emergence of sexual object choice as the defining feature of sexual identity, as opposed to Victorian era social logic of gender, within the larger historical shift from the satisfaction of needs in the sphere of production to the sphere of circulation. Floyd however links this account back to both Butler’s notion of the heterosexual matrix, and more closely to the parallel developments within the sphere of production and consumption.

2.3. Labor History of the Phallus: Reassembling the Body at the Site of Capital Accumulation

What we find here with Floyd is an account of the specific historical content serving as a condition of possibility for Butler's critique of Lacan whereas the phallus is excluded from an otherwise all-encompassing postulate in which signification conditions all knowability (in Lacan's account all, besides the phallus itself). For Butler, as we have already showed, the content of Lacan's purportedly pre-phallic fragmented body is in effect created in relation to an idea of the body whose integrity is safeguarded by the phallus. In a Floydian framework, however, Butler's argument about the historical contingency of the phallus is supplemented by the substance of that history. It therefore follows that the Lacanian idea of a unified body, constitutive of the idea of a fragmented body, as Butler maintains, is achieved as a result of Taylorist rationalization of labor which extrapolated this covertly phallic unity under the mark of a common norm.

In other words, the specific image of the fragmented body which the sinthomosexual embodies in Edelman's narrative appears to pertain to the supposedly pre-phallic notion of the infant's sense of its body with pre-individuated and disassembled sexuality and wayward motility. But it is precisely the symbolic (epistemological) availability of the phallus, and its symbolic castration through the incest taboo, which already conditions this ostensibly pre-phallic reminder of the body in pieces. In a Butlerian formulation, this *knowing* of the specific content of the image of the fragmented body, the memory of which the sinthomosexual incarnates, is in this way implicitly marked by the Lacanian understanding of what it means, specifically, for the body to be fragmented in the first place.

The Floydian interlude here would thus be that this understanding of the fragmented body, and by extension, of the specific, professedly pre-Symbolic, content of sinthomosexuality, is achieved by the reified knowledge of psychoanalysis, which comes after the disassociation of skill from the body in order to perform the labor of normalization (naturalization; and subsequently dehistoricization) of this image. Infant's wayward motility of the body, the precarity of whose resolution within the formation of ego-ideal the sinthomosexuals embody, is thus already marked by a specific exteriorization of skill from the body, according to the needs of a specific regime of accumulation. In other words, the way in which Edelman, qua Žižek, imagines the effect of succumbing to the death drive, as 'the total destruction of the symbolic universe' (Žižek, 1989 in Edelman, *ibid*: 38), is already marked by an understanding of this universe as preserved from destruction through the phallus as the master signifier.

In a Floydian vein, then, we will argue that, in so far as Edelman's account of both the sinthome, as a knot which ties the three Lacanian orders together, and by extension, the sinthomosexual, who embodies the reminder of its pre-Symbolic and pre-Imaginary - Real - existence, this account performs precisely such a normalizing function which allows for the non-intersectional investigation into [sint][homo]sexuality.⁹

In our previous discussion of the sinthome we claimed, through recourse to Butler's reading of Althusser, that because the Lacanian understanding of the pre-Symbolic is already constituted by the symbolic realm of psychoanalytical epistemic register, the sinthome should be

⁹ In this way our argument resonates with that of Muñoz who argued that Edelman's understanding of queer futurelessness is only possible from a white middle-class perspective. 'Edelman's framing accepts and reproduces this monolithic figure of the child that is indeed always already white', writes Muñoz, and continues: 'racialized kids, queer kids are not the sovereign princes of futurity. They are, in fact, under threat; so we have to continue to seek a not-yet where queer youths of color actually get to grow up (Muñoz, 2009: 95). Elsewhere he adds: '[...] I am referring to gay white male scholars who imagine sexuality as a discrete category that can be abstracted and isolated from other antagonisms in the social, which include race and gender' (*ibid*, 2006: 826).

reformulated as a specific content of social skills whose mastery brings the subject into a status of a social being and allows it to identify with its specular image. Building on that, we are now able to argue that Edelman's conception of the pre-Imaginary fragmented body which lacks motility should in fact be reframed as the body whose pre-specular fragmentation and the lack of motility, while indeed resolved through the construction of ego-ideal, is contingent on the content of that ideal which is always historically specific and determined by a set of social skills.

More specifically, Edelman's spectral position within the Symbolic, or what he refers to as the structural position of queerness, opened up by subject's fantasy of filling out the place of the Other's gaze and thereby achieving its self-identity, and the consequential necessity of producing bodies that will materialize the figural residue of this operation, is, as Butler argues, materially instantiated as a precondition for subject formation in the form of a disavowed, and thus absent and melancholic, loss. However, the procedure which creates this absence (loss as absence) is, as Floyd argues, contained within the notion of exteriorization of skill and its subjection to the normalizing labor of a concrete epistemological regime. In other words, if the subject's answer to the loss of same-sex object of attachment is melancholic, as Butler argues, this can only be so if the very question of directionality of desire was historically raised to begin with.

2.3.1. The Metaphysics of Wage: Recasting Edelman's Fragmented Body as Macherey's *Arbeitskraft*

This set of social skills is what Pierre Macherey (2015) captures with Marx's notion of *Arbeitsvermögen* – the power that produces. Opposed to this power that produces, as we have seen, is the productive power (*Arbeitskraft*) which is in fact a purely abstract notion, argues Macherey; a metaphysical concept referring to the productive power in general, which exists nowhere in the moment of its actual consumption within the labor process. Where it does exist, we would argue, is in Edelman's Lacanian conceptualization of the fragmented body which strives to identify with its specular image which, in Edelman's account, *poses* as *Arbeitskraft* (the pre-developed productive power) but is in actuality always already shaped by the *Arbeitsvermögen* (the power that produces); determined by the specific set of social skills externalized under a common norm; a maneuver which is, in return, normalized precisely through the reification of psychoanalysis, as Floyd maintains.

This externalization achieved under the Taylorist rationalization of labor, and later reified by psychoanalysis, has the same performative function which Butler ascribes to Lacan's phallus – to reconstruct the reality of the fragmented body, which it only claims to document. Macherey argues:

The [Taylorist] norm not only has a constative but a performative dimension. It serves not only to determine an average state, counted as *normal*, but itself becomes *normative*. In other words, the norm acts to transform the reality to which it applies, grasps it not as it is but as it could be if one were to develop its potential (ibid).

In the system of wage labor, argues Macherey, the worker is paid according to the metaphysical, materially inexistent, notion of productive power which he ostensibly has (*Arbeitskraft*), but what the capitalist effectively consumes from the worker is in fact much more valuable. It is the power that actually produces and whose potential has already been developed and thus rationalized (*Arbeitsvermögen*).

Similarly, Edelman describes the surrendering to the death drive as the *total destruction of the symbolic universe*, in this way posing as if only describing the pre-specular realm which the sinthomosexual is *called forth to figure*. What he is actually describing, however, is a realm in which the body is fragmented to the extent it lacks the identification with the ego-ideal, and the self-controllable motility this identification promises, surely, but whose specific content has already been defined within what Macherey calls power that produces (*Arbeitsvermögen*), and then reified under the process which Floyd, qua Lukács, calls reification of psychoanalysis.

In other words, Edelman's sinthomosexual is in fact constituted by a series of preceding processes which are obscured in his analysis: first, the body has been dispossessed of its productive power (*Arbeitskraft*), then this ideal of the rationally skilled body was incorporated by the subject via identification with the ego-ideal, and then finally, this entire procedure was reified by the psychoanalytical register which informs what in Edelman's exposition serves as a point of departure, rather than as a mere effect. The interruption of anticipation of an ego's synthesis with its ego-ideal is thus fundamentally complicated by the recognition that this ideal is already shaped by exteriorization of skill under the efforts of rationalization of labor. This indicates that the memory of the fragmented body which the sinthomosexual materializes is far from Real, as Edelman maintains, but is in fact inextricably bound to the process of capital accumulation in which it was emptied of its historical substance to begin with.

Every empty form, however, and in this case this is the supposedly strictly formal notion of productive power (*Arbeitskraft*), as power which is proclaimed to always already be there, is retroactively *filled in* with the content that produces whatever it is that ostensibly differentiates this power from the power that produces (*Arbeitsvermögen*).¹⁰ Productive power is thus never a purely empty form. The effective potential of productive power is realized in the course of the very process of rationalization of labor, which purports to merely define what it means for the power to be productive (what it means for labor to be rational), but which in fact, through this very defining, creates what it claims of only discovering.

Productivity is thus achieved through epistemological labor of documenting the differentiation between productive power and power that produces (or between skill as an empty concept, and skill in the moment of its use). This is what Macherey has in mind when he argues that the procedure of disassociation of skill is in fact ‘searching not above but below, always plumbing the depths of the unrealized, of the not yet fixed, where the idea of productivity takes on its full meaning (Macherey, 2015). The anticipation for the skill to achieve its full form is futile precisely because this *full* form is inexistent, always in the process of (re)defining, always variable, and thus permanently unattainable – or put in Edelman’s parlance – ‘No Future’.

Therefore, it is at the site of a specific instantiation of Marx’s difference between *Arbeitskraft* and *Arbeitsvermögen*, the power to labor and labor power (the abstract ability to produce and what is actually produced in the labor process), that we are to look for the origin of

¹⁰ Macherey’s argument about the illusory differentiation between *Arbeitskraft* and *Arbeitsvermögen* corresponds to Butler’s argument about the falsity of an understanding of sex/gender dichotomy in which sex is proclaimed to be a purely descriptive biological fact on which gender is discursively inscribed *posteriori*. In the same way that Macherey argues that there is no pre-developed, biologically or otherwise given, productive power, but that this concept is always already produced by the epistemological regime which claims of only describing it, Butler argues that there is no prediscursive sex that biological discourses merely describe, but that sex is itself the circular effect of those very discourses. Unlike Butler, however, Macherey points to the usefulness of this illusory ontology from the standpoint of capital accumulation.

the sinthome, which is, as Butler argues, always materially produced as a constitutive outside, as a defining element of citational practices that *do* appear, even if it never properly appears itself. As such, this sinthome is not only historically specific, as Butler maintains, but its content is determined by the idiosyncrasies of a specific regime of accumulation.

2.3.2. Plumbing the Depths of the Unrealized: Rethinking Sinthomosexual as Skillhomosexual

In a Butlerian vein, then, we could argue that this procedure of dispossession of skill always leaves a reminder of the content which allows it to present itself as empty and thus as *dispossessable*. Reading the sinthomosexual as embodying the reminder of pre-specular (pre-skilled) and thus pre-capitalist, fragmented body not only creates an illusion of externality between form and content (between *Arbeitskraft* and *Arbeitsvermögen*), but forecloses the possibility of an analysis which might elucidate on the nature of the process of abstracting the skill from the body and emptying it of its content. However, as Butler argues, any process of abstraction is ‘never fully free from the reminder of the content it refuses’ (Butler in Butler et al. 2000: 145). Conversely, this is precisely the reminder which Edelman’s sinthomosexual embodies – the reminder of the pre-phallic fragmented body whose disavowed phallic origin informs this content from which *it is never fully free*, as Butler maintains. Therefore, we would suggest, the sinthomosexual is better thought of as a kind of a *skillhomosexual*¹¹.

To the extent that we are rejecting Edelman’s phallocentric and transhistorical notion of the reminder of the fragmented body which the sinthomosexual materializes, we are now at the

¹¹ cf. Matthew Tinkcom's (2002) book 'Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema' where he follows a different conceptual route to explore the position of camp culture within the circuit of capital accumulation.

point at which we can contextualize this sense of pre-Imaginary fragmentation. This fragmented body is thus still understood as thwarted through an identification with the specular ideal, but the content of that ideal is, in opposition to Edelman's Lacanian edifice, comprised of the melancholic incorporation of the lost same-sexed object, as Butler elucidates. Moreover, this loss is, as Floyd powerfully interjects, prior to being melancholic, also historically inflicted and as such has to be thought within a larger historical framework. If what is lost is preserved through the construction of the ego ideal, and if the content of that ideal is collectively produced by the skilled epistemological labor which conditions the specific shape which the body will acquire in pursuance of a sense of wholeness, then our skillhomosexual finds himself in a substantially different predicament than his Edelmanian counterpart.

While the skillhomosexual could still be said to embody the reminder of an absence of this sense of wholeness, and thus to embody everything that is troubling about partiality and fragmentation, this absence is not an absence of some metaphysical notion of future, in which the memory of this fragmentation will be somehow permanently dispelled, as Edelman argues, but an absence of a historically specific set of skills (deskilling as an absence of skill) which produced a historically specific specular ideal through which heterosexual melancholy operates and which the subject aspires to overcome by achieving this ideal in the future. Future is here similarly unattainable, as it is for Edelman, but the reason of its unattainability fundamentally lies within the logic of capital accumulation which is dependent on the continuous rationalization(s!) of labor, permanent deskilling and reskilling of the laboring body, ceaseless interventions into the definition of what it means for the body not to be fragmented and to thus be normal, the never-ending *plumbing the depths of the unrealized*, as Macherey puts it. Formulated in a strictly Marxist terminology, *viability* of capital accumulation is dependent on the recurrent maintenance

of the *variability* of the body as variable capital, and it is this variability which makes the future equally so unattainable in the infinite variations of a future's epistemologically and collectively produced content.

There can be no future synthesis of the subject with its ego-ideal precisely because this specular ideal of the body's integrity is constantly in the process of epistemological reconfiguration. Once it appears as if the ideal has been approached, the skill grasped, and the future finally reached, the skill is yet again *put under the microscope*; re-rationalized, reevaluated and renormalized, and the body keeps on citing in hope of a different outcome which only the future can bring, even though it never does.

In other words, there is no future, because there is no end, achieved or even merely proclaimed, to the process of capital accumulation. Once the surplus has been extracted, it instantly needs to find an outlet for further investments, for new opportunities, and for new skills which will sustain the new round of surplus extraction. As capital is always on the alert for new horizons for surplus extraction, even as old ones are left to decay in the process, so too is the laboring body always available for new series of dispossessions, new *plumbings of the unrealized*, and this fragmentizing impact of capital on the body is what constitutes the constantly changing epistemic articulations of that body's wholeness.¹²

¹² While these articulations are indeed an instance of what Foucault describes as normalization of bodies by knowledge, Floyd emphasizes what Foucault's analysis effectively obscures – the collective, social and historical nature of production of these normalizing knowledges. Unlike Foucault, Floyd concentrates not so much on the productive capacity of these normalizing knowledges, of which Edelman's phallic and transhistorical understanding of the body's wholeness surely is a part of, as on the character of these knowledges as themselves products of skilled social labor. Floyd insists: 'But Foucault, for his part, is so concerned to emphasize the objective normalization of bodies by knowledge that he obscures the production - by agents, by historically situated laboring subjects - of this same knowledge. While Foucault's analysis certainly demystifies the objective operation of these knowledge regimes, it also reinforces the mystification of their status as social labor's highly mediated products' (ibid: 189).

3. Reskilling the Desinthomized: Thinking Matter within Circuits of Capital from Deconstructivist and Regulationist Perspectives

While it should be clear by now why it is thus the skillhomosexual, and not the sinthomosexual, that should be in our analytical focus, what remains somewhat of an open question is why it should to be *any* homosexual, and not, for instance, skillblack (or sinthoblack, in Edelman's exposition). Edelman is at pains to emphasize that queerness is an open position within the Symbolic which can be filled in by anyone, as long as it is filled in by someone, but in the end it is the homosexual who gets *sinthomized*, and not the queer (or the black, for that matter). If it is not to fall back onto some reactionary reduction of social to biological reproduction, Edelman's analysis must in fact maintain this never clearly defined distance between queerness as necessary, yet historically never pre-determined, position within the Symbolic on the one hand, and sinthomosexual as a historical instantiation of a specific determination of that position, on the other. The questions of how a historically relatively recent category of the homosexual came to fill in this ostensibly transhistorical position, in addition to when did this *filling in* occur and why, remain in Edelman's work open questions at best, and constitutively avoided ones at worst. In this sense, the need for historicization is intrinsic to Edelman's analysis, making the lack thereof even more surprising.

Having in mind our notion of the skillhomosexual, we will now turn to Floyd's argument about consumption as a primary site of subjectivation in the Fordist regime of accumulation, in order to provide a Marxist answer to Edelman's queer question about the relationship between sexual dissidence and futurelessness.

3.1. Setting the Terms: Regime of Accumulation and Mode of Regulation

As we have seen, the skill which the skillhomosexual puts to use (or better yet, the skill which puts him to use) could be understood in Floyd's terms as 'working of masculinity's constitutive homosexual weakness'. Floyd elaborates: 'skilled labor here persists as masculinity's content, as a performative and epistemological avowal of masculinity's constitutive homosexual outside' (ibid: 170). But if we are aiming for a historically concretized understanding of this avowal, then we might consider Floyd's argument that not only was the productive capacity of this skilled labor, performed by who we are here referring to as the skillhomosexual, comprised in working the masculinity's constitutive weakness, but also in a process of *working* within a larger matrix of weakness. What was being worked here was not only the constitutive outside of heterosexual masculinity, but also, on a much larger scale, the constitutive outside of a distinctively uniform Fordist circuit of production and consumption.

Drawing on regulation school and the French regulationist Michael Aglietta (1979) particularly, Floyd traces the instantiation of the Fordist consumption norm, and the position of the underground gay male social formation of the 1960s U.S. in relation to it, within the global politico-economic context of the shift from an extensive to an intensive regime of accumulation. We will now briefly consider some of the main regulationist arguments in order to position the development of this formation within the process of capital accumulation.

Floyd takes interest in the regulationist approach primarily, as he states (ibid: 55; 194), because it is better equipped than the concept of reification to recognize the capriciousness of capital flows, and the consequential necessity for the labor of tweaking the situation on the micro-level, including the level of the body itself, to fit the broader regime of accumulation. The

main hypothesis of regulation theory (Aglietta, 1979; Boyer, 1990; Lipietz, 1986) is that capital accumulation is inherently a volatile affair, and if it is to be sustained over a long period of time, it has to be complemented by a range of institutional and social efforts which will mold the entire social body in such a way as to accommodate the always changing prerequisites for surplus extraction. These efforts are what these economists term *mode of regulation*, while the macroeconomic and historically broader horizon of capital accumulation, to which these modes essentially cater, is what they term *regime of accumulation*.

Within this body of thought, these two types of regimes of accumulation, intensive and extensive, are defined primarily in the relation to two respective and broadly defined periods of capitalism's history of development. Capitalism of the industrial phase of the 19th century was able to ward off its crises through geographic expansion of production which would absorb the surpluses. In this extensive regime of accumulation, the imperialist technologies were thus crucial for mollifying the propensity for crisis. This is the period in which Floyd identifies the predominantly physiological epistemology of manhood as a closed spermatic system organized around inner qualities.

From the beginning of the 20th century onwards, the potential for crisis is absorbed no longer predominantly through spatial stretching of production to the periphery, but through its intensification in the center. This intensive regime of accumulation is marked by boosting of production through the Taylorist rationalization of labor, and it is in this context that Floyd locates his notion of exteriorization of masculinity which at this time became a circulatory, rather than an inward quality. Roughly from the beginning of the 20th century, the technology for deterring the accumulation crisis is thus less of an imperialist, and more of a consumptionist

nature. This means that a coordination of consumption with production became a central backbone of long-term stability of capitalism in the intensive regime of accumulation.

The trouble with the early 20th century Taylorist intensification of production was precisely its ineptitude of finding a tool for successful instantiation of this coordination. This is another way of saying that while the Taylorist disciplining of labor, achieved through disassociation of skill from the laboring body and its normalization through the introduction of a common work norm, indeed created an unprecedented increase of the production pace and boost in the volume of available consumer goods, its incapacity to produce the consumer-subjects for these, now mass produced, commodities became its debilitating stumbling block. Aglietta (1979: 351-79) thus interprets the Great Depression of the late twenties and thirties in terms of an unbalanced early development of an intensive regime of accumulation in which galvanized productive forces were confronted with the still low consumption rates, insufficient to absorb the rapidly revolutionized production potential – a confrontation with calamitous economic and social consequences. It was not until the instantiation of the Fordist mode of regulation of the intensive regime of accumulation, extending from the early fifties to the late sixties, that the coordination of consumption with production achieved a high enough degree of sophistication to sustain the viability of capital accumulation. In other words, the mass production was now paralleled with the equally so mass consumption. But how did this happen? How did the Fordist mode of regulation fix the deficiencies of the pre-Fordist, Taylorist mode of regulation in such a way as to prevent the crisis, such as the one from the thirties, and allow for the relatively smooth functioning of capital accumulation?

In so far as any capitalist mode of production is revolving around the extraction of surplus value on the part of the capitalist, the innovation of Taylorist mode of regulation, specifically,

was the shift from extraction of absolute surplus value towards the extraction of relative surplus value. In Marx's theory of value, surplus value refers to the value resulting from surplus labor which the worker spends in the production process in addition to the necessary labor time in which he has 'produced a quantity of value equivalent to that required for the maintenance of his *Arbeitskraft*' (Macherey, 2015). This is thus the value embedded in his wage. In the 19th century, before the Taylorist rationalization of labor, class struggle was waged primarily around the quantity of absolute surplus value extracted from the worker, which is the value obtained by increasing the amount of time spent working, as this was the only way in which the capitalist could increase the quantity of surplus value extracted from the labor process, in addition to lowering wages, both of which can only go thus far.

With the Taylorist rationalization of labor, however, another way of increasing the surplus value became available to the capitalist. This entailed the molding of the labor process in such a way as to enable the extraction of relative surplus value – which meant reducing the necessary labor time instead of extending the duration of the working day. Taylorist rationalization of labor was an intervention into the labor process in which the worker can be submitted to a common norm and in this way compelled to perform an ever more rationalized skill and thus earn his wage in an ever lesser amount of time. Where this Taylorist innovation was deficient, however, was in realizing two closely related preconditions required for this orientation towards relative surplus value within the production process to simultaneously result in the stabilization of the overall circuits of capital. The first is to provide a wage which would allow the worker to buy the amount of commodities now available through rationalization of the production process, and the second, to create broader social conditions in which the workers would *want* to buy them in the first place. In other words, this means that the use-value of the commodity had to be determined

according to the developments within the production process - a central failure of the Taylorist era which focused exclusively on establishing the production norm, and translating the new possibilities of this rationalization of production directly into exchange-values, making no efforts to tailor the consumption norm accordingly.

Where the Taylorist mode of regulation in beginning of the 20th century failed, the Fordist mode in the mid-20th century excelled. On the one hand, the wages were increased to a degree which allowed for the socialization of purchasing power, in which Keynesian welfare state intervened to patch up the wholes, and on the other, the newly emerging advertising industry performed the labor of inducing the demand necessary for the wage increases to make a full circle. This pairing of Keynesianism with consumerism was what constituted the primary *modus operandi* of the Fordist consensus.

Aglietta (ibid: 159-61) describes this mode of regulation with the notion of *functional aesthetic of Fordism*. He argues that this consensus could only have worked if consumption activity has been 'rendered uniform and fully subjected to the constraints of its items of equipment' (ibid: 161). The *aesthetic* of Fordism here refers to the overall makeup of the Fordist way of life, while the *functional* attribute denotes the complementarity of the consumption norm with the production process. Fordism was thus not merely a question of organizing this or that aspect of production-consumption circuit, but a question of establishing an entire *way of life*. The Fordist regulation was so pervasive that it indicated a striving towards a broad national uniformity of *living*, involving the household as an individuated consumption unit, sustained by unwaged domestic labor and organized around functional and relatively uniform interior commodities on the one hand, and the automobile as the primary 'means of transport compatible with the separation of home and workplace' (ibid: 159), on the other. This uniformity of

assembly line mass production and heterosexual household mass consumption constituted the primary locus of capital accumulation and was generalized throughout the social body.

This means that the *functionality* of the Fordist aesthetic of living was established in the ever tighter determination of use-value by the process of molding the social consumption according to the, by now ever more rationalized, production process. The abstraction of time previously achieved with the Taylorist rationalization of labor, in which time becomes ‘uniform, homogeneous, independent of events and indeed determining of those events’ (Postone, 1996 in Floyd, *ibid*: 52), was now expanded to the realm of consumption, disciplining not only the skilled labor performed within production, but also the skilled labor performed during leisure time.

Where Taylorism succeeded in extracting the skill from the body within the sphere of production, Fordism interposed to extend this extraction to the sphere of consumption, where the by now already normalized laboring subject could be further normalized as a consuming subject as well. The increase in the quantity of extracted relative surplus value from the *worker* within the realm of production is now complemented with the increase in the quantity of leisure time granted to the *subject* within the realm of consumption. But it is not just the quantitative nature of the time spent outside of production that matters here; it is also the qualitative, commodified aspect of this time that becomes crucial, as this is the time allowed to the *subject* under the provision that it is spent in the activity of consumption. This provision is to become enforced by pulling more and more activities of living to the realm of the market. The abstracted and standardized corporeal repetition in the factory, achieved under Taylorism, is now paired with the equally so standardized corporeal repetition in the home and in the market place. Normalization of social life thus started to operate, argues Floyd (*ibid*: 51), increasingly at the moment of consumption, rather than production.

3.2. Abstraction of Time and the Production of Personal Life: From Bodies that Labor to Bodies that Matter

Note in the above paragraph the metamorphosis of the *worker* into a *subject*. It is precisely this metamorphosis to which Floyd refers when he argues that Butlerian subject is engaged in a ‘performance of skilled labor at some structural distance [...] from the direct employment of labor by capital’ (ibid: 96). In Butler’s edifice, Floyd continues, the laboring subject becomes ‘severed from its own reproduction, severed from capital, severed from concrete social relations that constitute it’ (ibid). This severing, as Floyd calls it, in which the worker becomes a subject ‘operating in some kind of vacuum’ (ibid), is thus achieved by a historically specific instantiation of a consumption norm, within a specific mode of regulation of an intensive regime of accumulation. In other words, the increased importance of normalizing consumption activity for the purpose of stabilizing the intensive regime of capital accumulation in the mid-20th century, created the illusion of a vacuum (the illusion of exteriority of production and consumption) in which Butlerian subject will cite this newly achieved consumption norm, which Butler abstracts even further by calling it merely ‘regulatory norm’ (1993: 2). This norm is to be cited as part of the worker’s *personal life*, and not his *professional* one. It is the naturalization of this distinction between the time of production and the time of consumption, in which both have become abstract, that allowed for performing of skilled labor of consumption at *a distance from direct employment of labor by capital* and for the subject’s very personhood to become the content produced through that performing, or as Butler argues, for the ‘bodily ego to assume a gendered morphology’ (1997: 132).

Miranda Joseph makes a similar argument when she recasts Butler’s argument in Marxist terms by suggesting that one’s position in production should be understood as ‘one of the central

performances that is productive of gendered subjects' (2002: 34), whereas production is broadly understood to encompass all surplus-value generating activities, including consumption. The gendered subject and broader social formations are here understood as lacking any 'independent preexisting life but are fully immanent in (produced by and productive of) this productive activity' (ibid: 40). The increased emphasis placed on consumption within the intensive regime of accumulation disattached the performative subject from its direct employment by capital and in this newly established activity of socially regulated consumption, the worker is transformed into a subject. In this sense, it is thus through consumption that one's personal life is to become realized, and the market place becomes the proper locus in which the laboring body is to become culturally intelligible as a person/subject, or in Butlerian terminology, the locus in which the body assumes its provisional illusion of fixity and becomes 'qualified for life' (1993: 2). It is thus leisure time which begins to *pose* as the sphere of authenticity, as a sphere in which one is not citing, but merely expressing one's *inner truth*, while the activities in the production process remain to a much larger degree recognized as citational. As Floyd argues:

The managing of consumption within an emerging intensive regime of accumulation, the attempt to ensure that effective demand keeps pace with increase in productivity, is [...] a compensatory intervention mediating – normalizing, regulating, commodifying – *personal life* (ibid: 53; emphasis mine).

Deskilling as the disassociation of skill from the body through commodification and reification into Taylorist knowledge, argues Floyd, served as a precondition for the laboring body's reskilling through the reified knowledge of psychoanalysis. Both Taylorism, as a regime of scientific management of production process, and psychoanalysis, as knowledge of the subject in the 20th century, thus constitute a specific reification of time as a social relation – they both

put forward historically constructed delineation on time, in this way creating a specific social understanding of time. These temporalities, in return, and each within its own historical epoch and according to the needs of a specific regime of accumulation, mold the spatiality of the production process. One of the molding-intensive loci is precisely variable capital – that is - the body, always available for a series of destruction and reconstruction of skills, a process that is most intensive precisely in times of crisis, as we will explore more in depth in the final chapter.

Arruzza (2015) argues that gender in Butler and capital in Marx both constitute a similar process which materializes only as a result of repetition through time, i.e., that neither possesses an essence, but rather, that their appearance of essence is constituted retroactively as a sedimentation (in Butler) or accumulation (in Marx) of previous performative acts (in Butler) or dead labor (in Marx). It is here where Butler's chain of citationality corresponds to Marx's notion of capital accumulation in which capital repeats the appropriation of surplus-value as a condition of its own constitution. For Arruzza, both gender and capital are the result of reification of time as a social relation. She argues:

In Butler, the spatiality of gender, i.e., its inscription on the body, is nothing but constituted social temporality, in other words, social acts performed in the past. Likewise, for Marx past, objectified labour time opposes qua space the present time of living labour. Whereas Butler denies that gender is a fact, by insisting that gender is constantly constituted through the repetition of performative acts over time, Marx insists that capital is not a thing, but rather the process of self-valorization of value which implies the repetition of the appropriation of surplus value as well as the repetition of the circuits of capital and their unity (Arruzza, 2015: 39).

What is important for our purposes here is that this reification of time which produces capital/gender can only be successful to the extent it is accompanied by reification of knowledge; or what Floyd recasts as collective epistemological labor (of normalization). In this sense, it is worth recapitulating that bodies represent an embodiment of norms and that these are always put forward within some larger regime of truth – that is – within a larger and more or less systematical register of knowledge. Butler (Butler in Butler et al. 2000: 152) argues along similar lines when she claims that norms are not only embodied but this embodiment is itself constantly (re)subjected to assessments through various epistemological regimes, operating in the field of the social, which ‘subject normativity to an iterable temporality’.

It is thus time which gets reified as a specific social relation – that is, as temporality – within a specific epistemological regime. Arruzza and Floyd both argue that psychoanalysis commodified the knowledge of the self by subjecting it to an abstract temporality compatible with the commodity exchange whereby social labor (what Macherey terms *Arbeitsvermögen*) gets subsumed under the mark of exchange value producing the *effect* of formal equivalence, or the effect of an *Arbeitskraft*, in Macherey’s formulation. The proclaimed formality of this equivalence is then, for Macherey, used as an abstract measure within the system of wage labor, in which the value of labor is determined according to a false premise that the worker’s productivity (power that produces) is not collectively achieved, but is a product of utilizing some imagined human essence (productive power).

Floyd’s and Arruzza’s gestures in a way consist in extending this notion of strategic production of essence outside the strict confines of wage labor and into the realm of leisure time, not measured by the Taylorist factory clock, but by an equally abstract temporality proscribed by psychoanalysis. For Floyd, this abstract temporality recodifies sexual desire as a ‘temporality of

symptomatic repetition’¹³, turning desire into an appendage of this temporality which in return ‘becomes the fundamental means through which sexuality is articulated, comprehended, known’ (Floyd: 54).¹⁴

The Taylorist idea of rationalized production, achieved through the production of a reified notion of *Arbeitskraft*, is in this way complemented by the rationalized consumption within leisure time, achieved through reification of desire. In this way Butler’s understanding of an inscription of social temporality on the body is also an inscription of a historically specific type of abstract temporality, specific to late capitalism. Arruzza argues:

The ritualistic character of gender performance, this spatialization of an empty time that takes place in the forced repetition of stylizing acts, is mediated by the pervasiveness of abstract time given by the diffusion of the commodity form (2015: 48).

¹³ This symptomatic repetition corresponds to what Butler, in her chapter on the ‘Lesbian Phallus’ has called *the repetitive propulsiveness of sexuality* (see Butler, 1993: 62).

¹⁴ Consider here our previous discussion of *The Birds* in the context of Edelman’s and Butler’s engagement with Freud’s notion of *acting out* whereby compulsive repetition is symptomatic of a repressed memory which the subject unconsciously attempts to bring into the present. Butlerian account of Melanie’s acting out, which we there proposed, differs from Edelman’s in regard to the type of foreclosure which animates this acting out. For Butler the foreclosure can only ever be discursively imposed, as opposed to Edelman’s foreclosure proper, which allows for the emergence of discourse as such. However, both accounts remain confined within an understanding of *acting out* within an abstracted temporal framework. For Floyd and Arruzza, this acting out can never be *properly received by the Other* because it is enacted within an abstract sphere of exchange whereby one formally equivalent citation is confronted with yet another equivalent one, making it impossible to communicate the foreclosure, regardless of how its content is conceptualized (either as a repudiation of the maternal body within incest taboo in Lacan/Edelman, or a repudiation of same-sex object-choice within taboo on homosexuality in Butler). Interestingly, in his interpretation of the scene, Edelman (2004: 129-31) himself invokes Daniel Spoto’s (1983) account of how Hitchcock’s idea for the scene came from a commercial for a diet drink featuring no one other than Tippi Hedren herself. In Edelman’s exposition, the commercial operates by redeeming sexual energies within the figure of the Child, and channeling them into the diet drink that is being advertised. However, the effect of this commodity logic on the very nature in which those *energies* would be expressed (or *redeemed*) entirely escapes Edelman’s psychoanalytical register. In this sense, it could be argued that the implicit reason behind Edelman’s choosing of the film emblematic of the Fordist regime of accumulation to substantiate his central argument about the relationship between queer theory and the death drive, is by no means circumstantial, but in fact discreetly attests to the historically specific, yet disavowed, Fordist origins of his theoretical edifice.

3.3. Skillhomosexuality as Collective Performance, Consumption as Skilled Labor

Even though both the Taylorist and the Fordist types of an intensive regime of accumulation shared a commitment to a focus on the labor process oriented towards relative surplus-value (the value extracted through intensification of production by its rationalization), as opposed to the extensive regime of the 19th century oriented towards absolute surplus value (the value extracted by increasing the length of the working day), Fordism understood very well what its Taylorist predecessor failed to understand. It understood that the newly achieved availability of the time spent outside the factory has to be equally proportionately rationalized as the developments within the factory itself. This is how the *signification* of the world of rationally produced objects, through cultural production such as advertising, television programming and magazines, became as important as the very production of those objects, if not more, in this way transforming consumption into a surplus value generating labor in its own right. Joseph (2002: 41) argues precisely along those lines when she claims that ‘the labor of the consumer contributes the greater share of surplus value, an unlimited share since it is based on signification and not on human labor capacity within the twenty-four-hour day’.

Both this new world of mass produced commodities, and its often explicitly *regulated* signification for the purpose of inciting their consumption, become the focal points of Fordist regulation, and it is this newly established contours of regulation by mediation between mass production and mass consumption that Aglietta has in mind when he proposes that the functional aesthetic of Fordism ‘duplicated the real relationship between individuals and objects with an imaginary relationship’ (ibid: 161). This mediation of skilled labor through commodities was created primarily by advertising techniques, which were entrusted to discipline what escaped the regulatory stick of Taylorism. Not only did the worker’s *art (skill) of living* become externalized,

but the very process of interpellation was abstracted to the sphere of commodity circulation¹⁵ which will here on out become disassociated and performed by an external power and mediated by commodity logic. Aglietta insists:

The process of social recognition was externalized and fetishized. Individuals were not initially interpellated as subjects by one another, in accordance with their social position: they were interpellated by an external power, diffusing a robot portrait of the consumer. Consumption habits were thus already calculated and controlled socially (ibid).

This is not to say that prior to the instantiation of this Fordist functional aesthetic, access to materiality was not mediated, but rather that it became mediated through commodities and thus mediated as a part of a specific mode of regulation of social consumption. It is within this stabilization of an intensive regime of accumulation, through establishing a uniformed functional aesthetic, that Floyd locates the formation of an underground gay male formation, a formation which implicitly informs Edelman's understanding of sinthomosexuality.¹⁶

As we have seen, Floyd argues that the Taylorist disassociation of masculinity from the laboring body at the moment of production created the historical preconditions for its Fordist

¹⁵ The linguistic origins of Butler's performativity theory are symptomatic precisely of this abstraction of interpellation to the vacuum of the sphere of exchange. Marry Louise Pratt points to draining of larger social context from communicative practices within speech act theory. She argues that by abstracting the speaking subject to 'excessively private and dyadic examples of communication' (Joseph, 2002: 66-7), speech act theory becomes blind to the fact that 'people always speak from and in a socially constituted position [...] in which the subject and context mutually determine each other ongoingly' (Pratt, 1986 in Joseph, ibid: 67).

¹⁶ Even though Edelman's formalist psychoanalytical register appears to be entirely wrenched from any specific historical or geographical context, his earlier, much more ethnographical work, provides us with some clues of the situated imaginary from which he implicitly draws. In his ten years earlier article 'Tearooms and Sympathy, or the Epistemology of the Water Closet', Edelman (1994) theorizes the understanding of homosexuality within the discourse of U.S. national heterosexuality of the 50s and 60s, focusing exclusively on the underground homosexual subculture. This is for Floyd the imaginary that was constitutive of the construction of the Fordist heterosexual domesticity.

recasting into a strategy of accumulation at the moment of consumption. We have also seen how Floyd locates the instantiation of an opposition between desire and identification within Butler's heterosexual matrix at a historical moment in which the citational quality of masculinity achieved its illusion of fixity through a prohibition of desire for a masculine object, which is then retained as masculine identification. Within this matrix, abjected homosexuality begins to function as a constitutive *building block* of heterosexuality, and it is this weakness of heterosexual masculinity that the underground gay male formation began to *work*, skillfully.

The Fordist era was thus a historical period in which the underground gay male formation began to acquire a larger national visibility precisely through this skilled labor of exposing heterosexuality's constitutive weakness. But in so far as this heterosexuality was established at the site of consumption, performed within leisure time as part of a Fordist effort to manage the rate of accumulation, the labor of working its weakness was at the same time, argues Floyd, the labor of working the weakness of Fordist uniformity of production and consumption, or what Aglietta calls *the functional aesthetic of Fordism*.

Floyd takes recourse to Christopher Nealon's (2001) study 'Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall', in which he argues that the marginalized production and distribution of the so-called physique pictorials, depicting half-naked male bodies, created a condition of possibility for what will later become known as the explicitly political Stonewall movement. The circulation of those commodified images began to bring previously isolated men in contact with each other, enabling them to imagine a beyond to that isolation (Nealon, 2001 in

Floyd, *ibid*: 164-5). This *beyond*, as Nealon calls it, signaled a possibility of this working of weakness within the heterosexual matrix to assume a collective character.¹⁷

Floyd takes Nealon's account of the frequent government efforts to break the circuit of this marginalized circulation of homoerotic images through repressive apparatus to task in order to argue that those efforts should be viewed as part of a larger set of strategies employed by the capitalist state to impose a uniform consumption norm. This way Floyd is able to argue that 'this marginal circuit, this collective labor of homosexualizing masculinity [was] not merely heterosexual masculinity's constitutive outside but a constitutive outside of a uniformity not only of sexual morality but of production and consumption, a provocation for the ongoing enforcement of a [...] Fordist mode of regulation' (*ibid*: 165). Our skillhomosexual is thus both a performative and a collective subject, simultaneously working both the weakness of heterosexual masculinity and the weakness of the functional aesthetic of Fordism. As Floyd maintains, this 'performative subject is here no longer the implicitly individuated subject of Butler's theory of gender [or Edelman's individuated subject of futurelessness], but a collective subject: working the weakness in the norm of masculinity becomes in this case a fundamentally collective performance' (*ibid*: 170).

In other words, the skilled labor of this underground gay male formation was comprised in challenging the use-value of commodities essentially established by that very same Fordist circuit. It is thus the *functionality* of the Fordist functional aesthetic that the skillhomosexual

¹⁷ In this way, Nealon's historical account of the pre-Stonewall era resonates with Kath Weston's (1998) notion of the sexual imaginarium. She draws upon Benedict Anderson's (1982) concept of a nation as an imagined community to argue that in the same way members of a nation state use media representations of nationhood to construct a sense of belonging to a particular national collective, despite the fact that they will never personally meet most of the other members of their group, members of a gay community make use of gay-related media texts to construct what she calls a sexual imaginarium. What Floyd's analysis emphasizes is the commodified nature of this collective imagining.

(re)worked. By attributing a different function to the circulation of commodities, initially determined within the Fordist endeavors to mold the social consumption to fit the assembly line production, this pre-Stonewall *gay historical emotion*, as Nealon calls it, challenged the domestic heterosexual use-value of Fordist commodities. Circulation of commodities, intended for conjugal consumption, was reworked by this pre-Stonewall formation to establish a use-value other than the one of reproducing the hegemonic national domesticity.

3.4. A Matter of Work, Life and Death: Bodies in Marx, Butler and Edelman

However, if we are to locate Edelman's *sinthomosexual* at the site of this collective working of the constitutive weakness of functional aesthetic of Fordism, exposing *sinthomosexual's* transhistorical and phallogentric burden will only get us thus far. We are still left with the open question of how this ostensibly transhistorical embodiment of the reminder of the fragmented body found its outlet in this, very much historically concrete, social formation. The question then becomes: how did Edelman's *sinthomized* subject of futurelessness, ostensibly free from history, come to acquire its embodiment within the historically saturated classification of homosexuality? Edelman would maintain that while this particular location of embodiment of negativity is historically specific form in which futurelessness finds its repository, the repository itself remains transhistorical position within the Symbolic.

Answering this question of overlapping between the *skillhomosexual* and the *sinthomosexual* will require lifting this historically concrete analysis of the emergence of the *skillhomosexual* within Fordist mode of regulation to a more conceptual level, in which

Edelman's sinthomosexual operates, only to then bring it back at the historically concrete, yet disavowed, site of its conceptual inception.

Edelman understands history as a lived form of the endless chain of signifiers whereas reproductive futurism delivers the false promise of the endpoint of that chain which is supposed to realize itself as the final seamlessness of identity (2004: 8). The homosexual subject of futurelessness thus becomes at the same time the one who materializes this *falseness* and who allows for the discourse of reproductive futurism to emerge and reproduce itself to begin with. But this materialization constitutive of reproductive futurism, acquires in Edelman's exposition a specifically Lacanian morphology.

The sinthomosexual embodies everything that is outside the domain of the normalized body to which the future is promised, even if falsely so – everything the subject of desire is kept at a distance of; a radical partiality figured as a pre-phallic fragmentation. Through recourse to Butler's criticism of Lacan, we have seen how this illusion of the pre-phallic body is in Edelman's argument achieved through the self-referential positioning of the phallus within the signifying chain. In this way we have opened the reminder of the fragmented body which the sinthomosexual embodies to historicity. In order to provide the content of that historicity, and to thus further concretize the appearance of this body at the site of the stabilization of an intensive regime of capital accumulation, we must position this body, from which relative surplus value is extracted, within an intersection of Marx's and Butler's more general accounts of the manner in which the body materializes.

3.4.1. The Value of a Thing is Just as Much as It Will Bring

In so far as any materiality is, for Marx, contained within the use-value of a commodity and to the extent that this usefulness is fully determined in (by) its consumption, Marx in a way anticipates Butler's claim that purported facticity of biological sex can only be determined according to the way in which its consumption is epistemologically proscribed; a proscription whose content Butler captures by the notion of the *heterosexual matrix*, to which she offers an oppositional account within the terms of the *transferability of the phallus* (1993:62).¹⁸ In the same way that for Marx the body is not a historical given, but a malleable materiality essentially open to an endless heterogeneity of usages to which it can be put, for Butler the phallus is not a prediscursive *thing*, but materializes only as the effect of the 'reification of logical and structural relations within the symbolic' (ibid: 88) which bring it into being precisely through constraining the range of its possible usages.

In his discussion of use-value in the first chapter to 'Capital', Marx argues that 'nothing can have an intrinsic value' (1976: 126) and in the footnote quotes the 17th century poet Samuel Butler to exemplify his claim: 'The value of a thing is just as much as it will bring' (Butler, S. *Hudibras* in Marx, ibid). It seems, however, that we might insert a quote from a more contemporary *Butler* and still retain the exemplificatory value of the quote to Marx's argument. Both in Marx and in Butler, materiality has no separable existence outside of its historically

¹⁸ Body, as the bearer of labour power, is for Marx a commodity much like any other. Floyd cogently argues that in so far as queer studies maintain the legitimacy of objectification of bodies for pleasurable means, any queer perspective must oppose what Eric Clarke (2000 in Floyd, ibid: 67) calls *sexual humanism*, which is grounded in the argument that 'humans are not supposed to *be* objects because humans are supposed to *own* objects' (Floyd, ibid). This is also true for Marxist perspectives, given the proprietarianist implications of this subject-object dialectic. In this context, this rejection refers to the interchangeability of Marx's notion of the commodity (body as a commodity) and Butler's notion of the body.

determined way of use.¹⁹ What prompts the body to materialize, for both Marx and Butler, is thus only that which this materialization brings. Far from prediscursive/prehistorical, the materiality of the body is, for both of these two thinkers, merely an effect of the social value which this materiality *brings* and which fully exhausts the content of that materialization. In Marx, what materializes the body is the specific way in which the body is put to use within the production process and it is thus the extraction of surplus value from the body which the materialization of the body *brings* and which effectively determines that materialization as labor power.

In Butler, the body materializes as a sexed body because the value which this materialization brings is 'that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility' (Butler, 1993: 2). In other words, for both Marx and Butler, that what a thing *is*, is precisely the value which a thing *brings*. The body *brings* surplus value within the production process, so the body *is*. The phallus *brings* the cultural value of intelligibility to the body within the heterosexual matrix, so the phallus is *brought* into being. Therefore, what a thing *is*, is for Marx comprised in its use-value and determined according to the nature of its involvement within the production process. For Butler, what a thing *is*, is comprised in its cultural intelligibility as a thing; this intelligibility is valuable because it qualifies a thing for that which a thing is

¹⁹ This is not to say that either Butler or Marx negate the existence of matter outside of its historical/discursive deployments (matter as such). Butler argues that 'the materiality of the signifier (a *materiality* that comprises both signs and their signifiatory efficacy) implies that there can be no reference to a pure materiality except via materiality' (Butler, 1993: 68), in this way arguing that matter as such can only be available through its discursive representation, which is different than to say that such matter has no existence *tout court*. Similarly, Marx argues that within capitalist mode of production every materiality is knowable only in so far as it is available as a commodity, and thus mediated by what Marx calls *commodity fetishism*: a mediation of social relations through commodities which appear as having an existence separate from the concrete historical relations that constitute it (much like the body in Butler appears as having an ontological existence separate from its discursive representation). We thus find a version of Marx's argument in Butler when she argues that any attempt to refer to an existence of matter as such as separate from the chains of citationality is inherently circumvented by those very chains through which such an attempt would itself be articulated.

epistemologically proscribed to *do* – to live, or in Marx’s edifice, to produce surplus value (either absolute or relative).²⁰

In this sense, a parallel could be made between Marx’s differentiation between seeable and visible and Butler’s differentiation between intelligible and abjected. In relation to Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism, Rosemary Hennessy explains Marx’s distinction between the two as follows:

‘The visible for Marx is not an empirical but a historical effect. [...] Although the value of commodities is materially embodied in them, it is not visible in the objects themselves as a physical property. The illusion that value resides in objects rather than in social relations between individuals and objects Marx calls commodity fetishism’ (Hennessy, 2000: 128-9).

In the same way that for Marx matter presents itself as seeable when mediated in a commodity form, and as visible after its demystification in terms of critical praxis, for Butler bodies are either discursively mediated, in which case they become intelligible, or they appear outside of citational chains, in which case they are abjected. For Marx and Butler alike, the body is not material because it is made of physical matter. For Marx, body is material because it the product of social labor (*Arbeitsvermögen*); for Butler, on the other hand, the body is material because it is presented within the terms of discursive legitimacy.²¹ As Marx’s analysis at every

²⁰ See also Miranda Joseph’s (2002: 31-2) comparative analysis of Marx and Butler. Through a close reading of Spivak, she argues that in the same way that Marx argued that use value is historically determined, and as such open to the chain of signification, Butler argues that materiality (of the phallus, primarily) cannot be the stabilizer of the signifying chain, as opposed to Lacan’s argument, but can only seem to be one ‘by being posited as such within discourse’ (ibid: 32). In that sense, both Butler and Marx argue, though in different terminologies, that discourse (in Butler) and historical processes (in Marx) is what determines how a certain materiality (in Butler the phallus, in Marx use value in general and of labor specifically) will be put to use.

²¹ In her most recent work, Butler has made efforts to position her previously individuated performative subject within larger social context and to recast the body as a product of social relations more explicitly. In ‘Notes towards

instance shows, that which does not produce surplus value, which cannot, for whatever reason, present itself in a commodity form, is continuously subjected to various processes of devaluation, making it not only not visible but only seeable, but also becomes relegated to the fringes of the very seeability.²² Same is for Butler; whatever is excluded from the domain of discursive representation is displaced in the ‘*unlivable* and *uninhabitable* zones of social life’ (1993: 3).

Therefore, Marx’s commodity as objectified dead labor, made invisible through the operations of commodity fetishism, and thus appearing in the guise of a preexisting ontology, is in this way comparable to Butler’s body as sedimentation of previous instances of social acts, animated by acting its disavowed past out, and appearing in the present as having an ontological priority separable from those performances. For Marx, past is brought to the present in the guise of a commodity, making its past invisible (only seeable), while for Butler past is brought to the present in the form of acting out the foreclosure constitutive of subjectivation. And even though such foreclosure is what brought the subject into being, it never properly appears itself; ‘it is the absence by which the phenomenal is articulated’ (Butler, 1997: 12). For Butler it is the hidden, *non-appearing* repudiation which *makes* the subject but which is being compulsively acted out in the guise of *gender*. Same is for Marx; even though the commodity is brought into being by social labor, this labor never properly appears itself; it presents itself in the guise of *commodity*. Both *commodity fetishism* and *acting out* are thus illusions, ultimately obscuring the true content of their histories which they attempt to convey.²³

a Performative Theory of Assembly’ Butler argues: ‘[...] the body is less an entity than a living set of relations’ (Butler, 2015: 65). This set of relations is precisely what Marx captures with the notion of social labor (*Arbeitsvermögen*) which gets obscured by its objectification in commodity form.

²² Like social reproduction feminists have repeatedly emphasized in terms of devaluation of reproductive labor. On this point see Dalla Costa, 1972; Fortunati, 1981; Vogel, 1983.

²³ At this point of our exposition it cannot be stressed highly enough that this commodity fetishism/acting out pairing utterly overflows any ostensible analogical boundaries. Both refer to the collective epistemological labor of

For our purposes here, the central concern becomes how the materiality of the body for Marx becomes determined within production process, allowing Marx to end up formulating what will widely become considered as a theory of economics, and how this very same materiality for Butler becomes determined within the abstract, *merely cultural*, domain as a sexed body, in this way prompting her to propose what will be referred to as a theory of gender. Even more interestingly, how is it then that, for Marx, the body must materialize as labor power so that it could *labor*, while for Butler the body must materialize as a phallic body so that it could *live*? Or, in Edelman's case, how is it that some bodies must materialize as pre-phallic bodies, so that they could *die*?²⁴

3.4.2. Imposing Foreclosures on Use-Values: Fordist Origins of the Sinthomosexual

To answer those questions we must consider the type of surplus value extracted from the body. As we have seen, within the emergence of an intensive regime of accumulation, it is the relative surplus value which becomes the backbone of capital accumulation. Translated into Marx's terminology, this means that with the stabilization of an intensive regime of accumulation launched by Fordism, the ever larger range of use-values started to be coordinately determined within the instantiation of the social consumption norm. This is in fact the type of consumption

producing the body as a commodity, whereby its psychoanalytical reification is a condition of possibility for the body's fetishistic deployment as a specific kind of commodity, with a specific kind of fetishistic displacement; a commodity that becomes known through its reification in the form of psychoanalysis.

²⁴ Consider in this context an argument most forcefully advanced by the Italian autonomist Silvia Federici. In her account of the transition to capitalism and its effects on the body, Federici argues: 'For while the body is the *condition of the existence of labor-power*, it is also its limit, as the main element of resistance to its expenditure. It was not sufficient, then, to decide that *in itself* the body had no value. The body had to die so that labor-power could live' (2004: 141).

Aglietta (1979: 160) has in mind when he argues that ‘in order for this logic of consumption to be compatible with a labor process oriented towards relative surplus-value, the total of use-values had to be adapted to the capitalist mass production’.

To the extent that materiality is, for Marx, contained within its use-value, and in so far the use-value is determined in its consumption, the innovation of the functional aesthetic of Fordism was its ability to disassociate the process of materialization (of bodies) from the *direct employment of labor by capital* and to the sphere of socially coordinated mass consumption. Once the necessary labor time was reduced, potentially *ad infinitum*, within the Taylorist rationalization of production, the capitalist’s focus shifted towards that other part of the day which now became available. That which he previously wanted to shorten as much as possible, and ignoring, or even disdaining, what happens within that minimum period of non-work, now he turns his fullest attention to. The period spent outside the factory, now becomes extended and qualified as *leisure time*. What he previously abhorred, now he wants to organize and rationalize; firmly tie it to the already rationalized assembly line production and turn it into a unified production-consumption circuit.

Once the determination of use-values was fully integrated with the production process, and once the *process of social recognition was externalized*, as Aglietta argues, the body as a *recognizable* object in the world became available only through its mediation in a commodity form. The sphere of exchange is now the site from which signs, ‘the imaginary within the terms of the symbolic’ (Butler, 1999: 78), will be put into circulation and which will henceforth sustain the image of a unified body. In other words, once the signification of the rationally produced Fordist *way of life* became the primary *modus operandi* for absorbing the surpluses, the market place emerged as the site of epistemic articulation of the body’s wholeness. The specific account

of the pre-imaginary sense of fragmentation which the infant wards off through identification with the ego-ideal, the same fragmentation which the sinthomosexual is *called forth to figure*, is thus achieved only after the signification of the objects in the world was exteriorized for the purpose of instantiating mass disciplinary consumption.²⁵

In this sense, this embodied reminder of the fragmented body is not pre-phallic or pre-capitalist, as it follows from Edelman's analysis, but is itself epistemologically constituted by an unacknowledged reference to the contours of a post-specular body, already stabilized at the site of consumption. Put in Butler's parlance, this stabilization is thus a historically specific production of the *effect* of the laboring body's 'boundary, fixity and surface' (Butler, 1993: 9), achieved in the sphere of exchange, in a regime of accumulation whose viability became increasingly dependent on relative surplus value. In the same way that Butler (ibid: 194) argues that Lacan's Real is not pure materiality outside the matrixes of representation, but cannot itself be but another discursive grid, we would argue that sinthomosexual's embodied transgression of that laboring body's *boundary, fixity and surface* cannot be understood as an embodiment of a foreclosure constitutive of the very possibility of the Symbolic order, the possibility which Edelman grounds in the notion of reproductive futurism.

Instead, we propose that sinthomosexual materializes a foreclosure symbolically instituted at the site of a Fordist determination of use-values within a uniform, institutionally and socially supported, consumption norm. The type of foreclosure we are dealing with here is the one

²⁵ Consider in the context of Edelman's framing of homosexuality *as* figurality, Floyd's remark precisely on this tendency within critical scholarship to mistake concrete and collective epistemological *labor* of opposition to heteronormativity for *figurality*. Although in this instance Floyd refers specifically to Fredric Jameson's deployment of György Lukács, the appropriateness of this remark to the work of Edelman is clear: 'To represent entire histories of collective practical opposition to compulsory heterosexuality as mere figures is especially to fail to see the way in which reification is itself a condition of possibility for those histories' (Floyd, 2009: 224).

governing the materialization process within rationalized and synchronized Fordist production-consumption circuit in which *matter comes to matter* through a regulatory intervention proscribing and constraining the variety of possible usages of bodies and objects.²⁶ The aim of that regulatory intervention was subjecting the type of consumption of those bodies and objects to the constraints of the mode of production which had to ‘conceive use-values as an assembly of standardized components capable of long production runs’ (Aglietta, *ibid*: 160).

If we bring this account of the process of materialization, directed through imposition of foreclosures on use-values, back at the site of the skillhomosexual collectivity, occupying a precarious position within circulation of Fordist commodities and uniformly domesticated subjectivities, what we get is an answer to the question rendered unspeakable within Edelman’s terms: How, through what historical processes, and in what historical context, did the transhistorical subject of futurelessness, called forth to materialize an ostensibly pre-historical foreclosure on which the very possibility of history is grounded, get interpellated as *homosexual*?

We would argue that because the skilled epistemological labor of the collective skillhomosexual subject was comprised in discovering other usages (other use-values) for objects and bodies produced within the Fordist totality, it is precisely the skillhomosexual which was effectively called forth to materialize as partial and fragmented; as embodying a reminder not of a pre-phallic bodily disunity, but of a bodily disunity arising from a constitutive confrontation with a bodily unity whose specific content was produced within what Aglietta calls functional aesthetic of Fordism. And although Aglietta refers primarily to an aesthetic of commodities produced in Fordist assembly line production, I would argue that this was simultaneously a

²⁶ An epistemological constraint which also determines the end-point of a body and a beginning of its outside; be it an object or yet another body.

bodily aesthetic. This was a regulatory intervention taking place at the site of the body, strategically engaging an already established foreclosure on masculinity as an inner bodily property, achieved under Taylorism, in order to produce a use-value of the male body compatible with the Fordist schema of an individuated heterosexual family unit as a consumption-intensive site within the overall circuits of capital accumulation.²⁷

In Marx's terms, the materiality of that male body was comprised in its use-value as a wage-earner and a husband, spending his wage by engaging in mass consumption. By attributing a different use-value to that male body, which is at this point itself materialized *as male* through the prohibition on same-sex object choice imposed by an exteriorization of masculinity within Taylorist rationalization of labor, the skillhomosexual is called forth to materialize not as an *inherently unrepresentable*, Real materiality, as Edelman maintains, but as a body *effectively unrepresented* by the Fordist representational apparatus, instantiated as a tool for regulating social consumption.

Additionally, this *calling forth*, as Edelman phrases it, was not sent out from thin air, but the appearance of transcendentality of this *calling* is a result of an abstraction of interpellation to the vacuum of the sphere of exchange; an abstraction which, as Aglietta argues, duplicated the real 'space of objects [and we would add here, of bodies] of daily life by advertising techniques' (ibid: 161). We would propose that Aglietta's notion of the duplication of the real relationship between individuals and objects, brought about by the functional aesthetic of Fordism, here needs

²⁷ Consider the same argument recast in Derridian terms. In his *Signature, Event, Context* (1982), Derrida argues precisely on the decontextualizing, rupturing quality of the performative as its condition of possibility. Butler elaborates: 'For Derrida, the force of the performative is derived precisely from its decontextualization, from its break with a prior context and its capacity to assume new contexts' (Butler, 1997: 147). If we understand the heterosexual household as a proper context for the instantiation of performative masculinity within Fordist regulation, then to perform this masculinity outside of that context discloses that performance as citational and exposes it to social, and in this case state-administered, scrutiny.

to be thought in a more precisely defined psychoanalytical register. The relationship that was being *duplicated* was not a previously *original* or non-imaginary relationship between psychic life and external world, but *duplication* here refers to an imposition of a commodified content of that relationship.

This is then an imposition of the norm which takes hold on the subject on the level of the imaginary, directing the *specific way* in which the world will be experienced within those imaginary terms. By extending the capitalist regulation to the sphere of non-work, the imaginary realm gets recoded in commodity logic, and it is this newly established mediation achieved by the dispersion of the commodity form that duplicated a relationship between the social and the psychic; a relationship which was as imaginary prior to this *duplication* as it was after, but which now becomes commodified.

4. Of Future, Dispossessed: Queer Marxism at the Disjuncture of Freudian Psychoanalysis and Neoliberal Economics

So far we have been engaged in delineating a historical account of the internal shifts within the dynamic of capitalist development starting at the turn of the 20th century and the way the stabilization of capitalism, within the first half of the 20th century, entailed a stabilization of matter more generally, including the laboring body *as* matter. We have seen how the resolution of the crisis of the 1930 was resolved in Fordist era through various regulatory strategies playing out at the level of the body and the ways in which this *playing out* was unevenly registered within queer engagements of different epistemic traditions; from psychoanalysis, to deconstructivism and, finally, Marxism.

Here we will look at the present capitalist crisis, not so unlike the one from the thirties, and ways in which these post-Fordist fissures, more frequently captured by the term neoliberalism, strategically engage the social reification of time to simultaneously produce and normalize the condition of social volatility on which the newly emergent regime of accumulation is increasingly dependent. In order to do so, we will have to lift our previous discussion of Taylorist and Fordist modes of regulation to a more general account of the logic of capital accumulation. This will be done through recourse to David Harvey's concept of dispossession, as a theoretical tool for understanding the socio-economic parameters specific to the times of capitalist crises, which he situates within a dialectical understanding of accumulation of capital.

We will argue that with the advent of neoliberalism, as a contemporary epistemic and economical instantiation of accumulation by dispossession, it is precisely the reified knowledge of the market economy that steps in to perform the labor of social reproduction which was in the

previous era, as we have seen, relegated almost exclusively to forms of sexual knowledge, primarily psychoanalysis.

This will imply engaging with Floyd's understanding of reification of sexual knowledge as one mode of reification's objective moment and its effects on social reproduction and collapsing this sexual knowledge with knowledge of the market economy whose effectivity on reproducing the conditions of reproduction of capital becomes growingly productive in the present neoliberal moment. The chapter will then conclude with an open-ended question regarding the potentialities that emerge at the site of this internal differentiation of capital in which the disciplinary labor of one form of abstracted knowledge is being actively complemented with another. Gradually closing the frontier of Freudian psychoanalysis and its figure of the Child, and opening the frontier of contemporary neoliberal twist on orthodox economics with its figure of the Market bears asking the most contemporary of all questions: is the new homo oeconomicus increasingly barren and if so, what does that mean for contemporary critical praxis, herein understood within Floydian terms of queer Marxism.

4.1. The Repetitious in the Circulatory: Matter as Movement in Marx and Butler

In the previous chapters we have seen how Floyd locates the process of subjectivation at the moment of consumption within the Fordist stabilization of an intensive regime of accumulation and its focus on the extraction of relative, as opposed to absolute, surplus value. There are many terms that try to capture the economic and cultural landscape of the post-Fordist era, coming from the most heterogeneous range of activist and academic praxis: neoliberalism, flexible accumulation, precarity, dispossession, post-modernism, free market economy, financial

capital, indebtedness, austerity, national security, privatization, market liberalization, structural adjustment programs, devaluation; to name just a few. Here we will try to make sense of the interconnected processes which these concepts name, and the ways in which they can help us think about futurelessness and queer theory in the present moment; a moment which is as terrifying as it is filled with potentialities for transformative action; potentialities usually unmatched within more stable periods such as the one of the Keynesian consensus.

In the last chapter of ‘Reification of Desire’, Kevin Floyd (2009: 195-225) follows these historical unfoldings within the dynamics of late capitalism in order to position a collective queer labor of challenging the privatization of sexuality within a broader horizon of privatization within the neoliberal crisis. He locates what he calls the *dispersal of queer social formations* within an organized deployment of violent strategies of dispossession by the neoliberal state; strategies not endemic only to the present crisis of capitalism, but inherent in the logic of capital itself.

If the *modes operandi* of the present crisis of capitalism, dating back as far as to the late sixties of the last century, can indeed be captured by the term of dispossession, as proposed most comprehensively by David Harvey in his book ‘The Limits to Capital’ (1982) and reframed in his later works, most notably ‘Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography (2001) and ‘The New Imperialism’ (2003)²⁸, then the question emerges: does the notion of dispossession refer to a contemporary twist in the way in which capital is accumulated (what Harvey calls flexible accumulation) or it is indeed the case that dispossession is a process that has to be periodically repeated in order to enable the continuation of capitalism. Harvey argues for the latter, but in order to delineate the logic of this process we will have to lift out analysis from the spheres of

²⁸ He also gives an extensive overview of the implications of these shifts in strategies of accumulation for the cultural production in the 20th century, from academic accounts, to architecture and various other forms of art production, in his book ‘The Condition of Postmodernity’ (1989).

production and consumption, in which we have so far been engaged in analyzing, to the sphere of circulation, as this is the sphere in which Harvey positions the logic of dispossession; a logic ultimately definitive of capital.

In ‘A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy’ in the chapter ‘The General Relation of Production to Distribution, Exchange, and Consumption’ Marx (2010: 274-92) distinguishes between three spheres of capitalist economy: the sphere of production, circulation and consumption, all of which are interdependent and mutually constitutive in various ways. The sphere of circulation consists of two parts; exchange and distribution. Marx elaborates: ‘Production appears as the starting point; consumption as the final end; and distribution and exchange as the middle’ (ibid: 275). Circulation thus mediates between production and consumption and is determined by them to the extent that this is the place where the buying and selling of commodities, including labor power *as* commodity, takes place. In this sense, capital appears within circulation both as money capital (provided by the buyer of a commodity) and commodity capital (provided by the seller of a commodity).²⁹ When labor power as commodity appears in the sphere of circulation, then the capitalist provides money capital to acquire this particular commodity capital so to consume it within the sphere of production. Exchange is thus an instance when the sphere of circulation (in which commodity labor power circulates) effectively determines the sphere of production.

²⁹ In Part I of Volume II of *Capital*, Marx identifies three circuits of capital: money capital, commodity capital and productive capital. Money capital is surplus value in the form of money with interest which is invested in commodities as its means of realization. Commodity capital refers to the surplus value realized in money form and then reinvested in more commodities, while productive capital involves the surplus value in a commodity realized through its sale on the market and then reinvested in means of production or labor. ‘As capital circulates and passes through the production process, it undergoes a metamorphosis and passes between the three interconnected circuits, each of which is a home of a sector of the total social capital’ (<https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/c/i.htm>)

Conversely, circulation as distribution is the product of the sphere of production. This is so not only because without the production of commodities there are no commodities available for distribution, but also because, as Marx elaborates, ‘the definite manner of participation in production determines the particular form of distribution, the form under which participation in distribution takes place’ (ibid: 284). By this Marx refers to the fact that certain forms of productive capital need no social labor to be produced (e.g. the land), and/or are fixed in one place and cannot be lifted to the sphere of circulation through distribution, but only through exchange (land can be sold on the market but cannot be distributed to a different place).³⁰

In more general terms: because there is a complex social mediation between the instance of production of a commodity and its consumption, as the above paragraph has attempted to merely sketch out, the sphere of circulation becomes one of the crucial concepts in Marx’s exposition. Such mediation is reflected in the fact that commodities and services are brought to the market, they do not simply appear there upon being produced; they are exchanged for money or other commodities and services; those markets do not create themselves but must be discovered or produced (as we have seen with regulatory mass consumption); labor power as a commodity must itself travel from the spaces of its reproduction to the sphere of production where it will be consumed, etc. The sphere of circulation is one of movement.

In the context of queer Marxism, we would argue that the analysis of circulation becomes increasingly important as it is here where the fluid and dynamic nature of bodies is particularly resilient to mystifications, especially those mobilizing ontological illusions of fixity ostensibly preexisting their placement in circulation. This is especially what Harvey emphasizes when he

³⁰ The same is with some other forms of productive capital such as housing, water system, transport and communication networks, etc.

argues against dominant forms of misinterpretations of Marx as a crude philosopher dealing with immovable laws of economics. In the very Introduction to his 'Companion to Marx's Capital', Harvey counters such receptions:

What Marx is talking about here is his intention to reinvent the dialectical method to take account of the unfolding and dynamic relations between elements within a capitalist system. He intends to do so in such a way as to capture fluidity and motion because he is [...] incredibly impressed with the mutability and dynamics of capitalism. This goes against the reputation that invariably precedes Marx, depicting him as some sort of fixed and immovable structuralist thinker. Capital, however, reveals a Marx who is always talking about movement and the motion - the processes - of, for example, the circulation of capital (2010: 11-2).

He emphasizes that, for Marx, 'capital is not a thing, but rather a process that exists only in motion' (ibid). Similarly, for Butler, matter is not a thing, but a process of materialization that exists only in and as that process (Butler, 1993: 9). What Marx's analysis emphasizes, however, is the historical determination of the specific content this movement will acquire. This is particularly Arruzza's general point about reading Marx and Butler together and she especially argues that such an endeavor is most productive when one looks at the sphere of circulation. She proposes, against Floyd's exclusive focus on consumption and, to a lesser degree, production, situating gender performativity within the sphere of circulation, arguing that this opens up the way to analyze all sorts of different kinds of labor specific to circulation and the 'way in which striving towards the realization of value (finding markets for the commodities produced) contributes to the creation not only of new needs, but also new desires' (2015: 49). It is against the backdrop of this incessant movement towards the endless realizations of surplus value within

the sphere of circulation that we will assess Edelman's concept of futurelessness and its relationship to Harvey's understanding of capital accumulation.

4.1.1. A Marxism without Reserve: Rethinking the Body as Fetishistic Displacement/Deferral

So how is then capital accumulated precisely through its circulation through different circuits, and what is the position of bodies and futures within those circuits?

Harvey proposes a dialectical understanding of capital accumulation in which accumulation by extended reproduction forms heads of the coin and accumulation by dispossession its tail. By this he means that even though accumulation has a dual character, these two are inextricably linked; joined in a larger interconnected system of capital circulation in which the limit-point of one must simultaneously be the beginning of the other, if capital is to continue to circulate and reproduce itself.

Through an intervention into Marx's theory of the tendency of profit rate to decline (2006: 176-89), Harvey identifies the main configuration of capitalist crises to which capitalism inherently tends – the crisis of overaccumulation. This is the condition of 'idle capital and idle labor existing side by side with no apparent way to bring these idle resources together to accomplish socially useful tasks' (1989: 180). Since the *modus operandi* of accumulation by extended reproduction is comprised in perpetual allocation of new investment opportunities (in *extending* the available markets for *reproduction* of capital), whereby surpluses already extracted can be reinvested elsewhere, there is always a tendency of the rate of surplus extraction and the rate of finding new opportunities for their profitable investment to become disproportionate in

favor of the former. In other words, surpluses are accumulating at a growing rate, but no new extensions for their realization are available or their availability is not matched by the quantities of surpluses that need investing. The outcome is clear: growing chasm between unproductive capital on the one side, and unproductive labor on the other.

In the context of accumulation by extended reproduction, what becomes crucial for our present discussion is the body as one of the potential sites onto which *reproduction* can *extend*, potentially infinitely. Recall here our previous discussion of a shift towards extraction of relative surplus value within an intensive regime of accumulation, in which extraction of surplus value is increasingly oriented towards lowering the necessary labor time (as opposed to extending the working day, and extracting absolute surplus value, which cannot even potentially be infinite – hence the *relativity* of relative surplus value). Lowering the necessary labor time is thus an instance of capital extending at the level of the worker's body, increasing its productivity potentially *ad infinitum*, while at the same time ascribing this increase in productivity to a false ontology of an individual productivity preexisting its social production (what Macherey calls the illusion of productive power – *Arbeitskraft*). By incessantly pushing the body towards an imagined apogee of its productivity, and simultaneously normalizing this asymptotical movement through retroactively containing it within the notion of a human (productive) essence, ostensibly preceding this movement, the body itself becomes what Harvey, following Donna Haraway, has termed an *accumulation strategy* (Harvey, 2000: 97-116).³¹

We would argue that it is at the site of this never-ending extension(s!) into the body's productivity, through developments of new skills, that Edelman's subject of futurelessness meets

³¹ Haraway straightforwardly elucidates: 'It is crystal clear to me that the body is an accumulation strategy in the deepest sense' (Haraway, 1995 in Harvey, 2000: 97).

Macherey's productive subject. In so far as the voracity for accumulation knows no limits, once the body itself becomes the territory for infinite extensions of the ways in which it can be productive, it simultaneously becomes a peculiarly undetermined project, performing, so to speak, in an 'ontologically suspended mode' (Butler, 2000: 78) in which it infinitely awaits further instructions, further reskillings, further redefinitions into its never fully determined content. As soon as the new round of reskilling is finished, it is instantly attached to his *Arbeitskraft*, fetishistically obscuring its socially produced nature. Once the *depths of the unrealized*, as Macherey effectually puts it, have been *plumbed* yet again, the surface of the body epistemologically forecloses around the plumbed abyss, and social labor that went into it is forever enclosed behind it, and henceforth symptomatically repeated, *acted out*, as it were, in an expectation that those repetitions will somehow release in the future what has been foreclosed in the past.³²

In the context of Marx's theory of the bodily subject (Harvey, 2000: 101-16), it is worth noting that even though Marx was writing in the period of capitalism's development in which class struggle was primarily waged around the amount of absolute surplus value extracted at the expense of draining the immovable length of the working day, he noted that the very limit to which a body can be pushed transcends physical limitations: '[...] the length of the working day fluctuates within boundaries that are [at the same time] physical and social' (Marx, 1976 in Harvey, 2000: 108). But Marx ultimately (under)theorized the social production of the body only within the terms of property rights over the body as means of *production*, thereby focusing exclusively on the sphere of production when attempting to account for the social imprints on the

³² Consider the same claim rearticulated in more Edelmanian/Lacanian terms in the context of pre-phallic corporeal wholeness: once the body's wholeness is redefined by the intervention into its productivity, once the existing pull of the range of possible repetitions available to the body has been refilled in a way that attaches those refillings to its imagined core of being, it simultaneously displaces both the image of the body's unity and the image of its fragmentation.

body. The obvious corollary is a presumption of some imagined corporeal ontology on which the economic is retroactively inscribed; a kind of a background ontological noise which haunts Marx's entire oeuvre.

Harvey attempts to transcend Marx's limitation by the very same dialectical method which Marx failed to apply to his own analysis on the bodily subject. He argues that instead of positioning the production of subjects exclusively in relation to production,³³ as Marx unadvisedly did, it is better to position it in a broader sphere of capital circulation: 'It is in this sense that the laboring body must be seen as an internal relation of the historically and geographically achieved processes of capital circulation' (ibid: 114). He further claims:

Capital circulates, as it were, through the body of the labourer as variable capital and thereby turns the labourer into a mere appendage of the circulation of capital itself. (Harvey, 2006: 175)

Implication of this false corporeal ontology, arising from Marx's theorizing of the body exclusively in terms of its positionality in relation to production, was that it ultimately prevented him from fully exploring its fetishistic deployments. Obviously it makes no sense to talk about commodity fetishism if one is to stay confined exclusively in the realm of the factory – how is something that is imagined to be static to become fetishized? Commodity can only become fetishized if it is dislocated from the site of its production. If the process of production of a thing was constantly within the field of view, no fetishistic displacement of the nature of its making would be possible. It is because the thing circulates, because it is constantly propelled to movement, that its history can be obscured. The question then becomes: how does the body get

³³ This also explains how the issue of reproduction was dropped from Marx's analysis altogether, and conceptualized only briefly and rather Darwinistically in terms of 'drives for self-preservation and propagation' (Harvey, 2000: 114).

fetishistically displaced in circulation; what are the names that contemporary queer theory gives to these displacements, and how can we read those concepts against the backdrop of Marxist analysis?

Within Floyd's theoretical edifice we have seen how the exteriorization of masculinity (a specific type of commodity fetishism) within the sphere of (Taylorist) production was later further displaced within the sphere of consumption in the Fordist era. However, we would propose that some of the ambiguities arising from Floyd's reconceptualization of heterosexual matrix would be alleviated if we broaden our analysis from the spheres of production and consumption, to the sphere of circulation. After all, if the Lacanian formula of the signified being the *circular* effect of the signifier's chain is valid, then it is at the site of circulation where that effect is ultimately achieved; with production and consumption appearing only as particular sites of display of that, effectively circulatory, production.³⁴ What follows is thus an attempt to think of heterosexual matrix as ultimately stabilized not in the sphere of Taylorist production or within Fordist regulatory consumption, as proposed by Floyd, but within perpetually displaced movement between the two.

³⁴ On the formalist level at least, what Lacan calls retroactive temporality of meaning corresponds to Marx's notion of commodity fetishism; both assume that the movement of matter (matter as movement) is retroactively registered within symbolic terms. For Lacan, as we have seen Žižek explain, 'meaning always comes later, [and] the notion of always-already there is the true imaginary illusion-misrecognition' (Žižek in Butler et al. 2000: 118). For Marx, the always-already-there of a commodity is a similar kind of misrecognition, ultimately obscuring the social labor which produced it. For both Marx and Lacan, the technique of achieving such misrecognitions has a circulatory character; for Marx it is the circulation of capital, for Lacan it is the circulation of the symbolic chain. Same is for Butler; matter is 'not a site or a surface, but a [circulatory] process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary fixity and surface we call matter' (Butler, 1993: 9).

4.1.2. Drag Gender, Drag Capital: Reconceptualizing Heterosexual Matrix as Spatio-Temporal Fix

How then is the body as a commodity fetishized in the sphere of capital circulation? How can we think of the process of materialization of bodies which achieve their provisional stability in the drag of gender, within the incessant process of self-valorization of value which achieves its provisional valorization in the drag of capital?³⁵

Within the accumulation by extended reproduction, as we have seen, overaccumulation is always on the horizon; in every instance in which surpluses fail to find an immediate extension for their release, a small molecular overaccumulation impules stress the overall process of circulation of capital. But before these molecular stresses agglomerate to a proportion large enough to cause greater distress for the overall circuits of capital, and before capitalism responds to this agglomeration by *switching* to its dispossession mode, it has several strategies for relieving the overaccumulated surpluses at its disposal. These strategies Harvey captures with the notion of *spatio-temporal fixes*. This means that capitalism can spatially (new markets, new productive technologies, new skills, geographical expansions) and/or temporally (long-term projects that defer the realization of value in the future) displace/postpone the realization of overaccumulated capital that cannot find its instant outlet in the direct production-consumption circuit.

The temporal fixes are sketched in Figure 2. In the center we see the primary circuit of immediate production and consumption out of which flows of capital are drawn off from and redirected (Harvey, 2003: 109). They are deflected either in the secondary circuit (the upper half of the Figure), or in the tertiary circuit (the lower half). As shown in the figure, the secondary circuit is comprised of investments in fixed capital for production (factory equipment,

³⁵ cf. Arruzza, 2015: 39

transportation infrastructure, ports) and fixed capital as an infrastructure for consumption activity (e.g. housing) and hence normally mediated through the capital market (ibid: 111). Transfers between the two are also possible, as some investments can facilitate both production and consumption. These types of investments absorb vast amounts of capital and labor.

Additionally, a portion of overaccumulated surpluses is redirected in the tertiary circuit, normally through state functions, into either scientific/technological innovation, with a small temporal deferral before feeding back into production, or into improvements in the standard of living in terms of health-care or education, in this way assuming a much longer temporal deferral before the investment can yield new surpluses (e.g. a more skilled labor force usually needs decades before it is available for productive consumption).

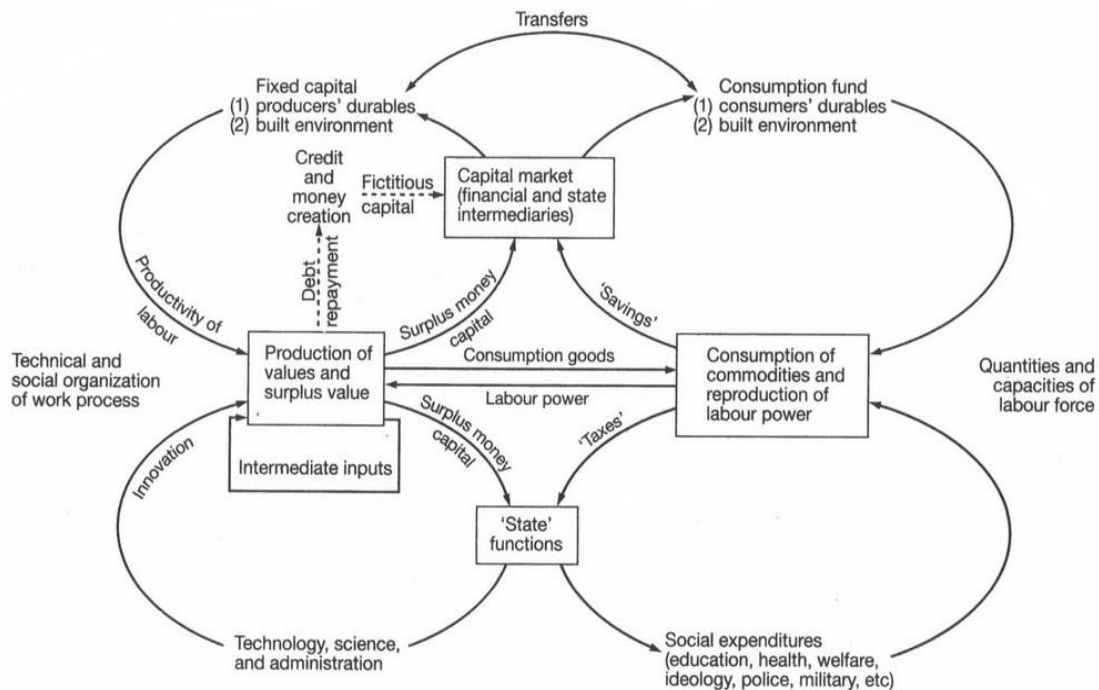


Figure 2. Paths of Capital Circulation³⁶

³⁶ Source: Harvey, 2003:110

Overaccumulated capital can also find its outlet through its displacement in the form of geographical expansion into previously non-capitalist territories, or intensifying the production in internal regions with previously low-intensity production capacities. If the surpluses within a given territory, Harvey argues, ‘such as the nation-state or a region, cannot be absorbed internally [either through temporal deferrals or internal geographic displacements] then they must be sent elsewhere to find a fresh terrain for their productive realization’ (ibid: 117). The trouble here, Harvey continues, is that those territories in which surpluses have been displaced often do not dispose with the reserve of commodities available to trade back. This is then resolved through exerting an additional temporal deferral on top of the spatial one – these territories are given a credit or aid (more often than not, forced into receiving it through military intervention) with ‘which to buy the surplus commodities generated at home’ (ibid), and expected to redeem the surpluses transformed into fictitious capital in the future. Temporal deferrals in forms of credits and other forms of fictitious capital³⁷ can also be achieved without spatial displacements to boost internal consumption.

The question that interests us here is how the body itself is constituted as a territory onto which capital can extend its reproduction and upon which it can execute its spatio-temporal fixes. What Macherey’s conceptualization of the productive subject ultimately teaches us is that the body is a territory unlike any other, a territory whose still unrealized depths can be infinitely plumbed and it is this infinity of productivity as a collective corporeal property which ultimately allows for the extraction of relative surplus value. We will propose that Butler’s conceptualization of heterosexual matrix can be thought of as precisely one of such spatio-temporal fixes within the larger matrix of accumulation by extended reproduction.

³⁷ Fictitious, because it has no material backing in the present but can be used as money capital under the expectation that it will feed back into production in the future.

The historical period in which Floyd locates the emergence of the heterosexual matrix, within an instantiation and stabilization of an intensive regime of accumulation, was precisely such an instance of overaccumulation, temporarily voided by successfully inducing effective consumer demand. In Harvey's dialectical understanding of capital accumulation, boosting mass consumption to a degree high enough to soak up the surpluses is itself one form of spatio-temporal fix in which investment in skilling the labor of consumption (through advertisement, television programing, lifestyle magazines, etc.) is deferred in the present so that it would yield results in the future in which such labor would lead to surplus extraction by effectively becoming *skilled* in terms of successfully internalizing certain performative patterns, usually captured by the hegemonic discourse with the notions such as *consumer habits*.

Heterosexual matrix is precisely such an instance of capital extending to the space of the body; reconstituting, revalorizing, re-determining, plumbing, as it were, that corporeal space through the (infinite) temporal deferral of the resolution of its constitutive melancholic foreclosure. But what is the precise nature of such a spatio-temporal operation when it is played out on the level of the body?

In our previous discussion of Hitchcock's *The Birds* we proposed a productive way of rethinking the heterosexual matrix from the perspective of the Butler/Edelman intersection. There we suggested that Butler's notion of heterosexual melancholy, as a past refusal of grief of the lost same-sex object of attachment and its subsequent melancholic incorporation, is in Edelman's edifice turned into a false expectation of a future acceptance of that loss; an expectation materialized in the figure of the Child.^{38 39} In this scenario heterosexual melancholy becomes not

³⁸ Although in Edelman's exposition the nature of this loss ostensibly transcends the historically specific instantiation of a prohibition of homosexuality, and into a transhistorical repudiation of the maternal body as a possibility for history as such.

only conditioned by a refusal of loss, but also by internalizing an expectation of its future acceptance; striving to be achieved through repetitious acting out of the lost object's characteristics. The broader social effects of that expectation, as we have seen, Edelman captures with the notion of reproductive futurism. Here we will contextualize the imposition of such a foreclosure at the site of capital circulation within accumulation by extended reproduction.

Recall Arruzza's (2015) reading of Butler against the backdrop of Marx's *Capital* in which she elucidates on the nature of gender not as a fact, but a spatial inscription on the body as the only visible part (a kind of a perpetually reconstituted tip-of-the-iceberg) of what is in reality a product of dead labor, and the unrelenting repetition that gender requires to avoid melting into thin air. She then elaborates on the nature of capital as a similar process of repetition of its own circuits which retroactively create capital's provisional facticity, while in reality capital is an illusion which is achieved only through its recurrent circulation. 'When circulation stops', Harvey (2010:12) explains, 'value disappears and the whole system comes tumbling down'. In other words, there is no capital outside of the motion of surplus value (its spatio-temporal displacement), and there is no gender outside the regulated, corporeal motion.

In other words, just like gender is always already drag, an imitation of previous performances, which loses all of its content outside the context in which it is enacted, so too is capital always already drag, a repetition of self-valorization of value which defers the achievement of a self-identical value (value in itself) into the subsequent self-valorizing citation, or displaces it, and within the movement of those perpetual deferrals/displacements creates the

³⁹ With Edelman's Child in mind, it could be said that heterosexual melancholy has a kind of a double productivity for the realization of surpluses – it incentivizes the labor of consumption, but also reproductive labor, as described by social reproduction theorists.

possibility of its own provisional ontology.⁴⁰ The sphere of circulation is ultimately capital's context within which its illusory facticity is achieved, through displacements and deferrals internal to that context. Those displacements/deferrals are what Harvey terms *spatio-temporal fixes*.

In this sense we would propose reconfiguring Butler's proposition of the body as the site where the fantasy and the norm merge (Butler in Butler et al. 2000: 155) into an alternative proposition of the body as a site where drag gender and drag capital merge in the form of variable capital.

In Marx's edifice, variable capital refers solely to labor-power as a commodity which can be sold or purchased. What allows Marx to propose this type of alienation argument (labor-power being alienated from an otherwise *un-alienated* person of the labourer), as we have previously demonstrated, is his positioning of the body exclusively in terms of its relationship to the sphere of production (as a form of means of production). But Harvey points to *the circulation process distinct to variable capital itself* (2000: 102), and thus argues against Marx's understanding of the body as a separable ontology onto which other forms of capital merely inscribe their imprints, a maneuver by which two parallel corporeal ontologies are created; the body as a biological given, part of a semi-autonomous process of *propagation of species*, as Engels argued in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) on the one hand, and the body as variable capital on the other.

In other words, while the production process does indeed alienate the worker's labor-power, there are no substances pertaining to the worker prior to this alienation, as those were themselves alienated (displaced/deferred) in the broader process of capital circulation. Harvey

⁴⁰ The skeptical reader I would refer back to the Footnote 23.

asks: ‘what effect does the circulation of variable capital [...] have on the bodies (persons and subjectivities) of those through whom it circulates?’ (ibid: 102-3). The answer is clear: it not only *acts upon* those bodies in the course of their consumption within the labor process, as Marx and Engels imagined, but produces them in the larger process of capital circulation, through a fantastical incorporation of circulatory foreclosures *acted out* in the drag of gender. Gender thus becomes a porously psychic and embodied continuation of circulation of capital, playing out, manifesting, at the level of the body as variable capital, in this way simultaneously producing the ontological illusion of both capital and its own.

This corporeal spatio-temporal fix is achieved by deferring the resolution of heterosexual melancholy in the future, and deploying consumption as a sphere within which such resolution can eventually be realized, through purchase of other commodities, even though it never ultimately does. Neither drag gender, nor drag capital ever arrive to that future in which gender, as melancholic incorporation of lost same-sex object choice, is finally self-identical to its specular ideal, and in which capital achieves a value outside of the process of its circulation. Moreover, by temporally deferring the resolution of a foreclosure constitutive of subjectivation, the body itself becomes fetishistically displaced as a spatial inscription of gender on the surface of the body, which obscures that body’s processual nature and appears instead as a surface.

Heterosexual matrix is thus a spatio-temporal fix in which a process similar to that which Edelman terms reproductive futurism postpones the resolution of heterosexual melancholy, indefinitely, and produces the gendered space of the body as an effect of that postponement. The body is brought into being through a social labor of epistemological production of the foreclosure whose content is, from then onwards, permanently deferred through *acting out* and displaced in consumption through which its successful deciphering by the Other is promised of eventually

realizing itself. And even though that promise is never realized, realized are the overaccumulated surpluses which find their outlet through *plumbing the depths of the unrealized*, as Macherey puts it. What is *unrealized* is in this case precisely the resolution of heterosexual melancholy, at the expense of whose impossibility capital itself is realized, temporarily at least.

At this point we find it crucial to once again warn against misapprehensions of this drag gender/drag capital pairing as in any way analogical. Therefore, the argument here is not merely that gender behaves *like* capital, but that gender behaves like capital because gender *is* a form of capital – a specific determination of the body in the sphere of circulation, as variable capital.

The interdependence of the body as variable capital upon other forms of capital in this case becomes peculiarly animated by a specifically melancholic affect, striving to resolve in the present, what was foreclosed in the past, through purchase of commodities.⁴¹ Melancholy is here a kind of a fictitious capital, continuing its circulation in the psychic life of a subject, and granted to the subject so that it could be realized in consumption. Heterosexual melancholy in this way feeds almost immediately back to the realization of value in the form of commodity capital. In other words, with the instantiation of heterosexual matrix as the determination of variable capital,

⁴¹ Although drawing an additional perspective into our present discussion, the perspective which has become referred to as the *affective turn*, falls beyond the scope of this project, we would like to briefly mention Sara Ahmed's (2004) article 'Affective Economies' for its relevance to the issue at hand. There Ahmed proposes an understanding of affects relying precisely on Marx's understanding of capital circulation and commodity fetishism. She argues that 'emotions work as a form of capital' and goes on to elucidate that 'affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced only as an effect of its circulation' (2004: 120). She claims that just like the movement of money and commodities in circulation converts surplus value into capital, 'the movement between signs converts into affect' (ibid). However, Ahmed's analysis for the most part stays within the boundaries of the analogical.

the passage of variable capital through consumption sphere becomes what ultimately achieves the realization of surplus value.⁴²

Therefore, the content of a circulation process *distinct to variable capital itself*, whose existence Harvey identifies, is *gender itself*; produced through the epistemological labor of prohibition of the same-sex object choice as a symbolic response to the preceding process of exteriorization of bodily properties within the Taylorist rationalization of production, as Floyd proposes. However, what escapes Floyd is that this exteriorization had to find its outlet – it could not have been merely an exteriorization *tout court* – it was an exteriorization *into* the sphere of circulation from which it can be available for citation, and thus from which it can be embodied, and only then could it have been used for other kinds of productive deployments, such as using it as the content of a social consumption norm in the Fordist era. Circulation of variable capital is thus circulation of gender as its commodified surface.

The ambiguity in Floyd's, otherwise solid and in a lot of aspects groundbreaking, analysis is best reflected in the undertheorized status of the body after the Taylorist exteriorization of masculinity and before its Fordist deployment as the content of the consumption norm. This ambiguity arises, we would argue, from Floyd's mistreatment of the sphere of production and the sphere of consumption as autonomous, at least when it comes to the body appearing within those spheres. The body is here conceptualized as being constituted in either one or the other, never in the process of movement between the two. If, in contrast, we understand that production and

⁴² Other determinations of variable capital, such as *Arbeitskraft* in a more strictly Machereyian sense, achieve the realization of value by passage of variable capital through production sphere (through productive consumption) and in the form of productive capital.

consumption are merely sectors on a larger road of capital circulation and surplus realization, then we see that gender performativity can only ever be situated in the sphere of circulation.⁴³

In other words, within capital circulation, body as labor-power is just one of its *powers*, as it were, which appears within the sphere of production as productive power (*Arbeitskraft*), but is in fact collectively achieved by social labor as power that produces (*Arbeitsvermögen*), and can be deployed in other spheres to perform other types of labor, e.g. skilled labor of consumption (cf. Joseph, 2002).⁴⁴ Productivity is thus a circulatory achievement, moving back and forth between production and consumption, and ultimately being stabilized neither in one or the other, but within that very movement.⁴⁵ Gender here appears as one of *Arbeitskraft's* contents – performatively consolidated *in* and *as* circulation of variable capital, and then retroactively inscribed as that gendered body's essence, attached to the worker's productive power, in this way appearing as an always-already-there, permanently enclosing its social and laborious origins

⁴³ This also helps alleviate further conceptual equivocations pertaining to the conceptualization of norms more broadly. Floyd (2009: 117) argues against Butler's endorsement of Macherey's argument that norms can only ever be embodied, arguing instead that norms are both practical and abstract. Instead, we propose that they are only practical, and thus existing only at the level of embodiment, as Butler argues with Macherey, and that the appearance of their abstraction is a result of circulation of variable capital in the manner here described. In other words, the appearance of their abstractness is the effect of circulation of their collective embodiments in the form of variable capital. Floyd argues: 'If we are to think capital and performative gender as mutually constitutive [...] gender norms have to be understood as both practical and abstract' (ibid). In contrast, we propose that gender is an objectification of capital in the form of variable capital; and thus a commodity fetishistically displaced in the drag of gender. Just like any other form of capital is fetishistically displaced or deferred to obscure its performatively achieved, circulatory nature, so too is the body fetishized through corporeal acting out in the drag of gender.

⁴⁴ Or in the sphere of reproduction to perform unpaid reproductive labor, as social reproduction theorists have been arguing for almost half a century now (see Footnote 22). In this respect, it could be said that the myth of the maternal instinct, among others, here appears as *Arbeitskraft*.

⁴⁵ This provides an answer to the question we posed at the end of the previous chapter (p. 74) and are now able to answer straightforwardly: It is because the body circulates and achieves its productive functions within that circulation, that it acquires qualities which are always performatively attaching themselves to the worker's *Arbeitskraft*, and in this way producing those qualities as arising from some imagined core of his/her being, but only if one is to position the body exclusively in relation to the sphere of production, as Marx did, can that performativity appear as labor proper (or economy proper if you will). Similarly, only if one is to position that body exclusively in relation to the sphere of consumption, as Butler does, can that performativity appear as *merely cultural*. As Joseph argues: '[...] the strategic production of specific but diverse bodies as [variable] capital requires the complicity of discourses not normally named *production* [or more explicitly – not normally named economic]' (2002: 40).

behind an illusion of the body as a surface. The body appears as a finished project with a self-identical past and future.

4.2. Dispossession as Disappearance of Body: Queer Enjoyment in the Age of Austerity

But all of these spatio-temporal tricks and fixes, allowing for the accumulation by extended reproduction, must find their final limit and this is what Harvey means by the notion of *capital bondage* – capital's internal limitation manifested as the overaccumulated capital, which appears as a result of previous instances of spatio-temporal fixes which failed to redeem in the present, the investments of the past, and with no further feasible postponements or displacements on the horizon. Combined with additional overaccumulating surpluses in the present, these aggregate into a large quantity of idle capital and seriously threaten capitalism as a whole. This is the point at which, Harvey argues, extended reproduction's dialectical pair takes the stage. This is the process that we more generally refer to as a *crisis*.

In the general sense, the principal *modus operandi* of dispossession is mimicking the specific techniques which brought capitalism to the historical stage to begin with, within what Marx has termed the primitive accumulation of capital – enclosures of the land, turning common property into private property, the destruction of the commons, imperialism and slavery, invention of debts, instantiation of wage labor, taxation, etc.⁴⁶ All of these techniques, Harvey argues, are not in fact (only) primitive, but periodically reenacted, in one form or the other, in every instance of capitalism's history in which spatio-temporal fixes fail to yield results. Ardent argued along similar lines:

⁴⁶ For a more detailed account of primitive accumulation see *Capital*, Volume I, Part 8.

They realized, for the first time, that the original sin of simple robbery, which centuries ago had made possible *the original* [primitive] *accumulation of capital* and had started all further accumulation, had eventually to be repeated lest the motor of accumulation suddenly die down. (Ardent, *Imperialism* in Harvey, 2003: 142)

If we are to specify the techniques by which dispossession is achieved in the present moment, however, then the crucial notion becomes the following – devaluation. In the most general terms, devaluation works by institutionally orchestrating crises within specific, enclosed spaces which will devalue all productive assets within those spaces, while other spaces are strategically protected from devaluation. Overaccumulated capital then preys upon those devaluated assets (including devalued labor-power) by buying them at ever lower prices and in this way returning those temporarily excluded assets back into its circuits, but now without any significant depletion to itself (Harvey, 1989; 2003; 2006).

Privatization is usually one of the most promising prospects opened up by devaluation, whereas devaluated assets within a given territory propel the state to make private, what before was public – therefore turning a *dispossession* of common assets into its own *extension*; a contemporary technique of destruction of the commons.

A crucial digression, however, has to be made at this point and this is the following: devaluation is productive only if it is administered as a kind of an economic quarantine. From the system's perspective, devaluation only makes sense *because* it is contained within an enclosed territory. If devaluation would be all-encompassing it would also be self-abolishing vis-à-vis class struggle. It is thus *because* the owners of the means of production are protected from

devaluation that they can effectively prey upon those whose assets have been devalued, and in this way score points in the class struggle.⁴⁷

So what then is this mechanism of quarantine which allows for certain territories to be devalued and not others? This is the function performed by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Commission, commonly referred to as the troika, or in the case of the U.S. what is widely known as the Wall Street/US Treasury financial regime. Through controlling the flows of financial capital (credit manipulations and debt management practices), Harvey (2003: 129) elucidates, these institutions protect financial centers from devaluation and thrive on displaced crises by ensuring that countries pay up their debts through what has become known as the structural adjustment programs, and in this way ‘flight off capital from a localized crises elsewhere’ (Gowan, *The Global Gamble* in Harvey, *ibid*).

Simultaneously, within territories protected from devaluation, extended reproduction remains more or less business-as-usual, with an additional provision that extended reproduction itself is affected by autonomisation of financial capital as a consequence of its deployment for the purpose of accumulation of dispossession.⁴⁸ This is how Harvey finally summarizes the extended reproduction/dispossession dialectics:

Capitalism survives, therefore, not only through a series of spatio-temporal
fixes that absorb the capital surpluses in productive and constructive ways, but also
through the devaluation and destruction administered as corrective medicine to

⁴⁷ As Andrew Mellon allegedly summarized the essence of devaluation: ‘In a depression assets return to their rightful owners’ (quoted in Harvey, 2003: 151).

⁴⁸ Further elaborating on this point falls beyond the scope of this thesis. See an abridged version of this argument in Harvey, 1989: 189-97 and a more comprehensive exposition in Harvey, 2006: 239-324.

what is generally depicted as the fiscal profligacy of those who borrow (Harvey, 2003: 135).

4.2.1. The Contemporary Relevance of Rosa Luxemburg's Legacy for Queer Marxism

What becomes crucial for our present exposition is the specific nature of that constitutive outside of capitalism which has to be perpetually created so that it could be devalued and dispossessed, and in this way allow for the reproduction of capital *by other means*. Harvey extrapolates and reconceptualizes the notion of constitutive outside of capitalism from the work of Rosa Luxemburg who proposed a Marxist understanding of imperialism.

In her book-length work *The Accumulation of Capital*, Luxemburg (1913) argued against Marx's understanding of capitalism as being an isolated system which essentially sustains itself by subsuming a variety of productive activities under the abstracted and reified notion of socially necessary labor time (what Harvey would later call accumulation by extended reproduction). Colonialism is thus for Marx nothing more than the spatial corollary of capital's domination over time to which capitalism resorts when faced with its internal limits of surplus extraction. Against this understanding, Luxemburg proposed that capitalism has not been an isolated entity at any stage of its development, but rather that it required some form of a constitutive outside from its very inception, and that it is precisely the consumption of non-capitalist strata, i.e. that which at some point in history is external to capitalism, actually the essence of the capitalist mode of production, rather than its corollary. This form of argument is thus a proposition of an underconsumption as an explanatory tool for accounting for the crises of capitalism. This

argument can be summed up as follows: because capitalism perpetually fails to induce sufficient demand to soak up production outputs, it must perpetually expand through trade with non-capitalist formations. Those formations uninterested in such a trade are forced into it through military intervention. For Luxemburg, this is the essence of imperialism (Harvey, 2003: 138).

The trouble with this argument is, as we have seen in Harvey's account of capital circulation, that faced with the prospect of underconsumption, capital still has a series of other spatio-temporal solutions at its disposal, which points to the status of underconsumption as merely an effect of a larger problem that lies at the heart of capitalism – overaccumulation. What Harvey does take from Luxemburg's exposition, and what we consider to be her most valuable theoretical legacy, is her more general apprehension of capitalism as a system in a perpetual need of something other than itself. But imperialist expansion, Harvey (2003: 139) argues, forms but a part of those possible constitutive outsides.

Nonetheless, an understanding of capitalism as a system whose reproduction is forever tied to the production of negativity, of something both outside of it and negative in relation to it, which allows for its internal realization of positivity and coherence, is Luxemburg's crucial insight which proved to be immensely productive for the developments both in Marxism and in queer theory. Harvey's entire critical geography project in fact consists in framing the profound changes of global landscapes as the effect of perpetual alterations between insides and outsides; extended reproduction and dispossession; production and destruction; exploitation and exclusion; in which heterogeneity of constitutive outsides dynamically appear and retreat in often disperse and contradictory ways. We have seen how the body itself is a geographical entity, similarly prone to these appearances and retreats, and how the instantiation of the heterosexual matrix is itself a spatio-temporal fix occasioning one in the series of historically specific appearances of

the body. Here homosexuality initially emerges as yet another form of capitalism's constitutive outside, as we have seen with Floyd's positioning of an underground gay male formation as a constitutive outside of Fordist production – consumption circuit.

Both the constitution of such an outside, and the subsequent challenging of it from within that abjected position are, as Floyd demonstrates, instances of collective epistemological labor. The crucial point here is not only that both of these social locations are enabled only by the existence of the other, but that each of the two is only ever achieved collectively and thus within specific social formation, whereas an imagined individuation of that laborious achievement is merely an analytical abstraction, nowhere performed outside of its communal context, and, even more importantly, nowhere external to the larger context of capital circulation.

This is particularly Miranda Joseph's (2002) main point when she argues *Against the Romance of the Community*, in this way pointing to the pervasiveness of the fetishistic displacement of the community as ostensibly autonomous vis-à-vis capital. The belief in that autonomy, Joseph argues, usually manifests itself as 'an idealization of community as a utopian state of human relatedness [and communities as] organic, natural, spontaneous occurrences' (ibid: ix).⁴⁹ She proposes instead, following Harvey and Haraway, that 'not only are individual bodies

⁴⁹ Here it is worth noting that Joseph situates her understanding of community within Harvey's notion of flexible accumulation (and concomitant neoliberal discourse) whereas deindustrialization, corporate mergers and outsourcing have, for Joseph, strong consequences on the subject. She argues that in the context of flexible accumulation, corporations effectively outsource a sense of investment in corporation's profitability on the workers themselves in a process in which they become, ideologically at least, articulated no longer as wage workers but as participants in the corporation, which is, in return, discursively reframed as a community (and in this context we can then interpret corporate investments in diversity management, human potential management and the like). Even more so, in the context of outsourcing of labor to small-scale production and small entrepreneurship (both as a material practice and a specifically neoliberal ideology) that will carry the risks when possible, flexible accumulation recasts a wide range of workers as communities of producers which are proclaimed to participate in the production process at the same level as capitalists. Joseph's thus understands community as becoming increasingly important in conditions of flexible accumulation in which the social sphere becomes ever more fragmented into distinctive *communities* engaged in various form of performative production, to use Joseph's terminology.

an accumulation strategy [...] but [so too are] social bodies, social formations, families, and communities' (ibid: 40).⁵⁰ Here we would suggest that Joseph's argument be read against the backdrop of Harvey/Luxemburg intersection, in which community, in times of capital accumulation by dispossession, becomes precisely one form of a constitutive delineation internal to capitalism, isolating some particular collectivity, and some particular territorial parcel, however porously delineated, and enclosing it so that it can be either devalued or protected from devaluation, depending on its position within broader horizon of class struggle. More specifically, we propose that community functions as a proper site at which heterosexual matrix produces gendered bodies, with an individual body functioning only as a necessary analytical abstraction that must eventually be brought back to the site of the social formation/community at which it was brought into being to begin with.

Translated to the level of Harvey's analysis, this means that Joseph's community functions at the same plane as all of those territories Harvey (2003: 145-69) explicitly enlists when he discusses the *modus operandi* of devaluation; territories which are produced as isolated, only to be devalued (or protected from devaluation) – such as specific nation-states⁵¹, regions, neighborhoods, *gated communities* etc. (and not other nation-states, regions, neighborhoods, communities).⁵²

⁵⁰ In Floyd's work community is replaced by the preferred term *social formation*, but aside from this terminological distinction, both concepts function on the same level of analytical abstraction.

⁵¹ E.g. in the case of structural adjustment programs, devaluation targets precisely the whole of national territory.

⁵² This also helps us to position Hennessy's argument regarding the inseparable connection between heterosexual matrix and class struggle within specific context in which capital is accumulated at different points in time, and in different localities. She argues: '[...] if we acknowledge that the coherent sex-gender identities heterosexuality secures are fabrications always in need of repair, their fragility need not be seen as the property of some restlessness in language itself but rather as the effect of social struggle' (Hennessy, 2000: 119-20). What makes the fragility of sex-gender identities a concrete product of class warfare is indeed that to what Floyd refers as working the heterosexual masculinity's constitutive weakness, but if we are to position this type of labor within the broader context of capital accumulation, and not just constitutively outside the hegemonic production-consumption circuit, as Floyd grounds it, then we have to refer this back to our previous account regarding

Those preserved from devaluation continue to be invested by capital through extended reproduction, mobilizing melancholic affect to invigorate the always extending consumption demands arising from a perpetually expanding production of needs and desires. Within these communities, where extended reproduction remains a dominant form of capital accumulation, the promise of future and the reification of psychoanalysis that secures it continue to function as dominant knowledge regimes individuating bodies as variable capital, through heterosexual matrix. Here variable capital continues to be realized both in consumption, through its determination as gender, and in production, through its determination as productive power (*Arbeitskraft*).

4.2.2. Notes on a Political Urgency of Queer Marxism

However, within those communities that have been placed on the constitutive outside of capitalism, devaluated so as to be looted, the body ceases to be realized as variable capital and becomes cut off from capital circulation entirely, forming instead the constitutive outside of circulation of variable capital, in a way that closely resonates with notions such as politics of abandonment (see Leyshon and Thrift, 1995) or necropolitics (see Mbembe, 2003). These become surplus populations not even used as reserve armies of labor to perform the function of forcing down wage rates, but populations that capitalism can increasingly do without *tout court*. There is the excluded zone of utter unlivability and there are the bodies no longer exploited either for their skilled labor of production or consumption, but rather entirely excluded

devaluation, as a specific strategy of accumulation by dispossession, only being possible if some communities are preserved from it. In this sense, Floyd's (2009: 178-86) argument regarding the devaluation of heterosexual masculinity as part of a larger, globally achieved, devaluation of the Fordist regime of accumulation is precisely a historical concretization of an instance of destabilization of heterosexuality as a result of class struggle.

corporealities - dispossessed of all other forms of assets and infrastructural support left for them to consume. Their very being achieves a direly disappearing quality as even the provisional ontology achieved through performative practices becomes increasingly suspended, as all forms of infrastructural support in which those performances can take place have been snatched from them. Harvey argues:

‘[...] the mix of performative activities available to the body in a given place and time is not independent of the technological, physical, social, and economic environment in which that body has its being.’ (Harvey, 2000: 98).

Once this very environment becomes the object of dispossession, the very corporeal ontological stability, in so far as it is achieved through an enmeshment in that environment, becomes permanently destabilized in a way in which Edelman’s pairing of futurelessness and death drive acquires an ominously material and specifically contemporary dimension.

In reference to Harvey’s abovementioned understanding of interdependency of bodies and geographies, consider a very much Harveyian argument more recently advanced by Butler in her *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015):

‘[...] precisely because bodies are formed and sustained in relation to infrastructural supports (or their absence) and social and technological networks or webs of relation, we cannot extract the body from its constituting relations – and those relations are always economically and historically specific. [...] body exists then in an ecstatic relation to the supporting conditions it has or must demand, but

this means that the body never exists in an ontological mode that is distinct from its historical situation' (2015: 148).⁵³

It seems that today's Butler is increasingly aware not only of the embeddedness of performative subject in larger collectivities, formations or communities, but also of its embeddedness in a larger environment where 'that body has its being', as Harvey puts it (ibid). But while Butler's subject is here contextualized within larger matrixes of sociality, its environmental/infrastructural insertion, although acknowledged, still remains decontextualized vis-à-vis capital accumulation. What we proposed here, through recourse to Harvey's dialectical theory of capital accumulation, is a specific way in which such collective performative subject can be conceptualized within broader horizon of contemporary crisis.

We would argue that in the present moment of crisis of accumulation, in which drag capital and drag gender keep failing in their repetitions, and in light of the global austerity programs imposed by global capital under the regulatory institutional efforts of the troika, oedipal futurity no longer extends to those constitutive outsides of capitalism disciplined neither into production, nor into consumption, but rather into exclusion. Within those devaluated and dispossessed, crisis-torn zones, no melancholic absences are produced because the only mode of existence in those zones becomes absence itself. For a body realized through continuous plumbings of the unrealized within extended reproduction, to now become dispossessed of those extensions marks a disappearance of that body brought into being through extended reproduction. Here no future resolutions are promised, regardless of the epistemology in which future appears.

⁵³ See also Butler's preceding work in this direction in *Dispossession: The Performative in The Political* (Athanasiou and Butler, 2013).

Far from a predicament reserved for Edelman's sinthomosexual, *No Future* here becomes an already imposed and lived reality.

The knowledge that normalizes capital's fragmentation of totalities into those of extended reproduction and those of dispossession increasingly becomes that of neoliberal economics. Here capital no longer appeals to the Child in whose name sacrifices have to be made in the present in order to enable prosperity in the future. Austerity strikes at the site of the dispossessed body, hindering its own reproduction, and in this way exposing the phantasmatic Child as precisely that – phantasm. The knowledge that proliferates through the social field to normalize this most recent internal differentiation of capital is of a different valance than psychoanalysis and its oedipal figures. The main apparatus that this knowledge strives to isolate and autonomize is the Market which is ever more capable of demonstrating the economic dimension of previously overtly non-economic experiences and practices.

Although this final subchapter is conceptualized as providing with brief notes on the future of queer Marxism in the contemporary moment of rampant neoliberal restructuring, the question of reification of market economy merits some preliminary considerations. Rather than attempting to lay down an in-depth analysis, these will serve as open-ended reflections, intended to spark further theoretical labor that is before us.

Wendy Brown (2003) defines neoliberalism through Foucault's concept of governmentality which he develops in his 1978 and 1979 *College de France* lectures. There Foucault delineates an account of the extension of techniques of governance to the realm of mentality; a gesture which is in many ways a continuation of his general preoccupation with the power/knowledge dynamics. Brown recasts neoliberalism along these lines; primarily as a

knowledge regime which governs its subjects not by repression or punishment but by producing a docile self-governed subject. This subject of neoliberalism Brown captures with the notion of the new *homo oeconomicus*, a subject of neoliberal rationality which, far from focused exclusively or even primarily on the economy, ‘involves [rather] extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action’ (ibid: 3). Neoliberal governmentality emphasizes the market as the ‘organizing and regulative principle of the state and society’ (ibid: 4), increasingly oriented not towards abandoning the state in favor of the market, as it is frequently depicted, but rather towards mastering the state apparatus so that it can be used for directing and fostering rational economic action. The state, as Brown’s analysis suggests, is ‘no longer defined in terms of a historical mission [the constitutional state as the universal representative of the people] but legitimated with reference to economic growth’ (Lemke, 2001 in Brown, ibid: 5).

Reification of economic growth as the guiding principle of all political discourse, and the imagined figure of the Market as its ultimate point of reference, here operates on the same level as Edelman’s reproductive futurism and the Child as its guardian angel. And while it is true that those two notions, rather than being mutually exclusive, can and often do operate in tandem, it is also the case that the Child itself becomes recast in economic terms; especially in neoconservative discourses increasingly oriented towards notions of demographic regeneration as a condition of economic sustainability, thereby pointing to the changes in the discourse of reproductive futurism itself.

In his biopolitical reading of neoliberalism under the title *Global Society Must Be Defended: Biopolitics Without Boundaries*, Leerom Medovoi (2007) proposes that Foucault’s notion of governmentality converges with regulation school’s concept of the *mode of regulation* in the regulation school sense. He argues:

Both governmentality and regulation serve to designate the ensemble of mechanisms and tactics through which a conducive social environment for capital accumulation emerges, renews, or even improves. (ibid: 57).

This Medovoi's argument we find instructive for thinking about neoliberalism together with Floyd's concurrent engagement with regulation and performativity theory in the context of normalization of what could be termed *dispossessed embodiments* through neoliberal knowledge. It is precisely this kind of dispossessed mode of suspended existence, marked by precarity and absence, that Butler (2013; 2015) has recently endeavored to problematize within the terms of her earlier works.

In the course of its reification, the knowledge of the Market and its internal protocols becomes knowledge of the human itself, firmly tying its destiny to that of humanity. Here we see how it is no longer only the Child that compels the present in the name of the future that it promises, but rather the Market with its continuous deferral to a future state where it will finally be free and with it, so will we. Ever larger number of corporeal gestures, everyday practices and intimate beliefs and behaviors, all of which fall under the notion of mode of regulation, cease to be interpreted in terms of the subconscious, and start being recast as having an effect on the Market, in this way permitting or curbing its freedom and in return, the freedom of the people themselves.

Market here performs a measure for the category of the human, similar to that performed by gender, which qualifies it for a specific kind of precarious life and determines that precarity as a norm 'by which recognition as human can be conferred' (Butler, 2000: 81). It tells us that the rise of the utter destitution of the human can only be hindered if the privatization process is

further advanced so that it can create new jobs, and that this is the only viable path to restoring the lost possibility of future. *The freer the market, the freer the people*, it tells us, in this way clearly establishing a firm connection between its own field of expertise on the one hand, and the people in general on the other.

This loss of future, that recasts the dispossessed body in terms of Edelman's death drive, at the same time queers that dispossessed body, whose every enjoyment can only be understood within this neoliberal episteme as achieved at the expense of the social order, a condition that Edelman ascribes to queerness:

The sinthome that drives the subject engages, on a figural level, a discourse of what [...] gets read [...] as a version of homosexuality, itself conceived as a mode of enjoyment at the social order's expense (Edelman, 2004: 114).

But this is the order that is no longer (exclusively) shaped by what Edelman terms reproductive futurism, casting homosexuality as its repudiated condition of possibility, but increasingly by the proliferation of the discourse of austerity which renders nearly any expenditure of the dispossessed body as further deferring society's future, in much the same way reproductive futurism renders the enjoyment of the (sint)homosexuals as inimical to the system. Dispossession is administered, as Harvey argues, through the discourse of austerity which is aimed at those who have enjoyed at society's expense; those Others engaged in a fiscal profligacy deterring society's progress defined increasingly, if not entirely, in terms of economic growth. Dispossession is normalized.

It is precisely this kind of reification of neoliberalism which performs the effect of normalization of destructive changes brought about by the pairing of extended reproduction with

dispossession; future with futurelessness. In this sense, we would argue, future and dispossession are themselves brought into a dialectical relationship in which future ends where dispossession begins. The main general point that we tried to make throughout this thesis is that queer theory is very much capable of tackling the processes of normalization more generally, and that a specific strand of what Floyd terms queer Marxism is best suited for the task of providing a critical response to the present crisis.

Conclusion

We started this thesis with an antithesis: *No Future*. We introduced Lee Edelman's seminal work on queerness as the embodiment of negativity which lies at the heart of sociality. Then we introduced the work of Judith Butler into the equation, seeking to demonstrate how there cannot be a single, ahistorical foundation to any experience of the social. Instead we proposed that negativity always carries with it its historically specific content. With Pierre Macherey and György Lukács we suggested that through reification of power that produces (*Arbeitsvermögen*) as productive power (*Arbeitskraft*), the body becomes reified as a sexual body. In this way we proposed a historical materialist reading of Edelman's fragmentized and death-driven figurality, in the guise of which homosexuality is compelled to appear within heteronormative culture, by tying it to the fragmentizing potential inherent in the logic of capital itself.

Throughout the second and the third chapter we engaged the regulationist approach in delineating historical unfoldings of the 20th century and the ways in which modes of regulating specific regimes of accumulation create their own constitutive outsides, which later appear as an always-already-there. Here we proposed recasting Edelman's *sinthomosexual* as a *skillhomosexual* by rethinking individuated subject of futurelessness in materialist terms; as collective social location produced by skilled epistemological labor which is obscured in Edelman's analysis under the implicitly idealized notion of the *sinthome*.

Finally, we have delineated the existing scholarship which tends to read Marx and Butler together and expanded it by bringing Butler's and Edelman's engagement with Freud's notion of acting out to bear on Marx's concept of commodity fetishism. We captured the negativity

inherent in capital accumulation with Harvey's notion of dispossession and proposed rethinking Butler's heterosexual matrix as an instance of capital extending to the level of the body by spatio-temporally fixing it as variable capital. We proposed that the sphere of circulation is ultimately the site where this *fixing* occurs, with the sphere of production and consumption appearing as sites of display of that fixing.

Towards the end of the thesis, we tried to outline the potentialities that recasting of negativity in queer Marxist terms has on the multiplicity of contemporary struggles against an increasingly crisis-prone capitalism, which becomes less and less capable of containing the drive towards dispossession as its negative dialectical correlate.

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