

Queer Intimacy

Performance in a Time of Neoliberalism

by

Kimberlee Pérez

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2014 by the  
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Frederick Corey, Chair  
Gitta Honegger  
Kristin Langellier  
Daniel Brouwer

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2014

## ABSTRACT

Performance is a public speech act that can present the experience of difference and generate relations across lines of difference. In personal narrative performance, performers do not just *tell stories*, the stories they tell are strategic hailings that call attention to discourses that produce the conditions of their exclusion and form intimate relations in public. Personal narrative performance renders the private public. Performers take to the stage, the space of the public, to offer their stories, their bodies, and their relations to audiences for collective consideration. In turn, the act of performance generates further relations: among performers and audiences, and between performance and discourse.

This study analyzes these two layers of relation in performance through looking at the ways neoliberalism and performance interanimate one another. Through looking at three sites of neoliberal relationality—same-sex marriage, family, and immigration and multiculturalism, it asks questions of how performers narrate and represent non-normative experiences within neoliberalism, the historical and cultural context through which they are living and narrating. In order to understand the cultural work, the resistive and relational potential, of the relations that occur in and through personal narrative performance, we also need to understand the political, cultural, and historical conditions under which narratives in performance are produced. My argument is that in and through performance *intimacy is queered*: it takes the private—the stuff of the personal presented as aesthetic communication—and renders that private very public. In public and through relations, performance can raise awareness and shift consciousness, reify orders of relation or generate alternate imaginaries. This is to say that a lot of different types of

work are done in performance, and although performance is often seen as resistance, under the weight of neoliberalism, it is important to tend to what arguments performances are making and how in turn that shapes the relations that occur in the site of performance.

Queer intimacy offers a way of engaging performance, an analytic that considers the text of performance as well as the relational context among performers and audiences, and turns back on larger cultural questions of belonging. The potential of performance, of the concept of queer intimacy, provides a lens to read performance, to tend to the conditions that give rise to and inform performance in the current historical moment. It brings together the critical impulse of intercultural communication and cultural studies with performance studies. From a critical cultural perspective, it tends to the structural in performance, and through performance emphasizes the lived experience as narrated and embodied as and through communication. Coupled with the impulses of queer theory, queer intimacy offers both resisting normativity and imagining beyond it. To consider queer intimacy in performance is not only to recognize that relations are made possible, but to tend closely to the belongings we are making.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To write on the topic of queer intimate relations is to be grounded in my own. For all the ways you have contributed to making this happen I thank my committee for your unwavering support and encouragement, brilliance, listening and witnessing, depth of patience, care, and humor. Each of your commitment to your work, politics, and performance has buoyed me throughout the frustrations, terrors, pleasures and ecstatic moments that make up the process of writing and revising, thinking, reading, watching, and then writing and revising again. You push me beyond the limits in which I bind myself, and with me, imagine otherwise and beyond.

Fred Corey, you are simply the best!!! You hold me accountable to the sound of *my* voice, its rhythms, inflections, and relations. Your engagement with my work bolsters my confidence and affirms my commitment to performance studies. You listen to my ramblings, in person and on the page, and provide the space to make sense of them. Your passion for performance, performing, ideas, and collaboration is inspiring and holds me to a high standard. Fred, your willingness to speak truths, to laugh out loud, and to just be there is so damn cool. Thank you for leading me through this process.

Dan Brouwer, you are an interlocutor extraordinaire. With razor sharp questions, insights and engagements, you demonstrate a commitment to theoretical and linguistic precision, even in the “lumpy geometry” of queer politics; messy politics in muddy times. I am thrilled to encounter beyond the conditions that brought us together. And peanut butter cups. Gitta Honegger, you are an acute and insightful reader. Your vast and depth of knowledge of culture, politics, and performance. Thank you for welcoming me into your class and discipline, the possibilities and constraints of Brecht, and for seeing me

through to this moment. I have so enjoyed our queer belongings in fancy places and cannot wait for what comes next. Kristin Langellier, since the moment we met I felt my world might change. And it has. And will continue to do so. You have demonstrated to me what it means to be a forever student and to approach theory with vigor, passion, and detail. Your scholarly and interpersonal contributions and engagements have largely inspired the thinking that unfolds here. Thank you for your willingness to play along. And for reminding me to take the time to eat. Well.

My parents, Dave and Merrilee Perez have supported me in many ways and I am grateful for your sacrifices and willingness. The same to my too soon departed Uncle Tom Perez. Julia Johnson, core of my chosen kin, is an ever-present source of leaning and laughter, and reminds me of the infinite dimensions available. Karma Chávez's return to my life has opened my heart and pushed my thinking and politics further. My dear G. has laughed and cried, but mostly laughed, with and at me through the most absurd and mundane aspects of life. And kittens. Dusty Goltz has offered useful feedback and engaged in hours of processing all things performance. Jan Mancini is hilarious and strange, a master scheduler, dear friend, and fellow Pisces and karate kid.

Across institutions, conferences, and cities, inside offices, performance sites, coffee shops and homes, many people have supported and been especially important to this process. My deepest gratitude goes to these wonderfully meaningful people:

Adelheide Fischer, Ann Russo, Arline Kaweah Lemeschewsky, Barbara Speicher, Belle Edson, Bryant Alexander, Craig Gingrich Philbrook, Cynthia Rose, Dustin Gotlz, Elizabeth Drexelius, Elyse Pineau, Eric Peterson, Erika Martinez, Francesca Royster, Heather Carver, Heather Freireich, Heidi Rose, Jackson Jantzen, Jacqueline Martínez,

Jacqueline Taylor, Jan Mancini, Jasmine Mejia, Jason Zingsheim, Jeffrey Wickersham, Jennifer Linde, Jess Alberts, Jonny Gray, Jose Muñoz, Karma Chávez, Kim Davis, Lexa Murphy, Lisa Anderson, Lisa Calvente, Liz Cantu, Lucy Liu, Marita McLoughlin, Michael Walker, Mindy Fenske, Misty DeBerry, Noni Olison, Olga Davis, Omi Osun, Joni L. Jones, Rae Langes, Robbin Crabtree, Sandy Chavez-Lopez, Sarah Amira de la Garza, Sarah Tracy, Scott Dillard, Sharon Bridgforth, Sheena Malhotra, Tami Spry.

The performance artists that are featured in these chapters, as well as those performers and texts I was unable to include in this iteration, have generously shared their scripts, homes, and time with me. For all of this and more, I thank Bryant Alexander, D-Lo, Dustin Goltz, Emma Tramposch, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Holly Hughes, Tania Katan, Tim Miller, Michelle Ceballos, and Roberto Sifuentes.

Finally, I acknowledge my dear friend Rae Langes. You have been present to all the phases of this process, talking and processing, reading and offering feedback, companionship and sustenance, kittens, and spirit. With humor and love, you have playfully, loyally, and consistently made this process possible, even when it meant space. Dog soldier, fool, cat daddy, and fierce performance artist, I remain your biggest fan.

In Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant," an anti-war ballad, he identifies and eventually joins the Group W bench, the place the nation designates for those who "may not be moral enough to join the army after committing their special crime." I've always identified with their performance of difference, the outsiders who seem to be having such a good time in resistance to the state. I dedicate this project to the Group W bench, to radical performance art, and all others who may also feel this exclusion and through it find queer intimacy and belonging.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1 ON NEOLIBERALISM AND PERFORMANCE .....	1
The Vampiric Suck of Neoliberalism on the Incredible Shrinking Public .....	3
Performance in a Time of Neoliberalism.....	7
Performance, Relationality, Queerness.....	16
Performance as Reverse Interpellation .....	32
Performance as Queer Intimacy.....	39
Overview .....	46
2 WHAT DO WE DO WHEN I DO? .....	51
Queer Performance of/and White Gay Men.....	59
Inheritance Interrupted and Redone: Return to the Scene of the Child .....	76
Ambivalent Allegiance and National Insistence.....	86
3 (LGB)TALES OF THE FAMILY .....	97
Performing Family, Telling Tales.....	105
Out of Line? D’Lo’s Family Storytelling.....	110
Touring Family Tales.....	116
Dis/Embodied Claims .....	120
Feeling D’FunQT .....	130
4 FACE TO FACE IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST .....	139
Face to Face with Immigration and Multiculturalism .....	147
Face to Face with the <i>Border Brujo</i> .....	152
Face to Face in Time .....	156

CHAPTER	Page
Face to Face with Feeling .....	163
Face to Face in Queer Intimacy .....	169
5 QUEER INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS, REFLECTIONS	
IN THE STATE OF PERFORMANCE .....	178
Staged Encounters .....	178
Shattered Reflections, Embodied Refractions .....	186
The Currency of Encounters—Passing the Hat? .....	191
Concluding Reflections, For Now .....	193
REFERENCES .....	197



## CHAPTER 1

### ON NEOLIBERALISM AND PERFORMANCE

Let's face it—neoliberalism sucks.

To say “neoliberalism sucks” is to call neoliberalism out as a thing, a doing, and a thing done. In this way, neoliberalism is performative. It repeats itself, it morphs in synch with and in response to the rhythms, the stories, of culture and time. It is pervasive and elusive. Powerful. The thing, the form neoliberalism takes, Wenshu Lee refers to as “the beast of neoliberalism” (915). Beasts and other monsters reflect the fears and anxieties of a particular culture and historical moment. They are the repository of dominant ideologies located in the bodies of *Others*, outsiders, and minoritarian subjects (J. Cohen). At the same time, minoritarian publics also use tropes of monsters and beasts to identify dominance and oppression. When Lee refers to the “beast of neoliberalism,” her apt calling conjures an image: beasts who suck are vampires. Vampires, the eternally undead, feed on the blood of the living in order to survive.

The vampire of neoliberalism sucks the lifeblood out of relations, out of publics, and out of the potentialities therein. In response to the visibility and inequalities raised through the local and transnational countercultural and civil rights movements of the 1950s through 1970s, neoliberal discourses that manage difference, that construct relationality between and among people and publics, have shifted (Povinelli). Neoliberal discourses absorb and neutralize difference. Publicly sanctioned forms of relationality and belonging have become increasingly narrow and private (Harvey; Berlant, *Queen*). I name this narrowing and privatization neoliberal relationality. The choices for those who occupy sites of difference— queers, people of color, diasporas, the poor, disabled, and

other *Others*—are especially susceptible in the incredible shrinking public sphere of neoliberalism; they are expected to assimilate or remain excluded (Warner, *Trouble*; Warner, “Normaller”; Berlant, *Queen*; C. Cohen). These expectations are communicated not as invitations to participate in publics, but rather as mandates disguised in the language of multiculturalism.

The potentials of relationality, and here my interests are specifically in queer and other non-normative forms of relationality, materialize in participation in forms of belonging and sociality, imaginaries that push beyond the constrictions of neoliberal relationality (J. Rodríguez; Muñoz, *Disidentifications*). One form these imaginaries take is through staged performances, politically mobilized forms of resistance, means of visibility, and participation in and formation of publics (Langellier, “Two”; Muñoz, *Disidentifications*). In these ways, we might think of performance as an antidote to, or a reflection on, the limits of neoliberal relationality, what I develop further below through the concept of queer intimacy. Queer intimacy accounts for the potential of performance, what happens in the doing of performance, the embodied and affective coming together of performers and audiences. In the coming together of performers and audiences, some things (might) happen; things neoliberalism informs are called forth, re-jected, re-done. In those moments, I am un-done. Or, at least I want to be undone. I have been undone. And these are the moments, the potentials in performance that I consider here.

These relations in performance are not pure, they are messy. They can be ecstatic, but ecstasy is not an escape. They may insight anger, and the anger may be threatening. This is the danger and potential of performance and the relations that it fosters in a time of neoliberalism. In this neoliberal context, through the platform of performance, this

dissertation takes up the questions of the lived experience and narrations of neoliberalism and asks how neoliberalism and performance interanimate one another. It does so through the site of the relation between performer and audience, and through performance texts.

### The Vampiric Suck of Neoliberalism on the Incredible Shrinking Public

There is no one definitive construct of neoliberalism. It circulates as synonymous with globalization, global capital, neoconservativism, and the status quo. The ways that I am working with neoliberalism include critical cultural discussions of it and its implications on the lived experiences of those it affects disproportionately. I specifically focus on contexts of neoliberal relationality, primarily as they occur within the United States and US nationalism, not necessarily limited to US citizens.

Neoliberalism, as it evolves from liberal theory, is primarily a political theory that privileges minimal government involvement in the marketplace. What distinguishes the *neo* in neoliberalism is its break with the Keynesian economic model that recognized the importance, though limited, role of government in the marketplace (Povinelli). Increasing globalization and interconnected global capital in the wake of World War II was an especially important condition for the further reduction of government and the rise of multi-national lending institutions and their lending policies. One of the most significant “models” of neoliberalism began with economic experiments in Chile in the 1970s and continues through the present (see Harvey). In these contexts, lenders such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank disperse money to countries with political conditions, including Structural Adjustment Policies, which regulate the use of the money. Under this system private global institutions (albeit with the backing of powerful nations), whose imperative is economic profit, exercise control over supposedly

democratic governments. The resulting relational dynamic reinforces hierarchical dominance in two ways: among nations and within nations among elite and poor.

These neoliberal practices, though globally widespread, are popularly associated with the elections, reigns, and ongoing legacies generated under the administrations of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States. Under these leaders the citizens of, as well as global migrations to and through, these countries are perceived and reported upon in the mainstream press. In these nations, the discourses of neoliberalism circulate as economic policy laced with a heavy dose of conservative morality. The central tenet of privatization in business also absorbs the private citizen; the private citizen is expected to uphold standards of fiscal, physical, and moral wellbeing without interference from, yet in the in service of, the nation (see Harvey; Berlant, *Queen*).

While in some ways, the idea of keeping the government outside the private lives of its citizens sounds like a good one, the reality is that neoliberalism blurs the lines between public and private through narrowing the limits of proper relations. The moral ideology that neoliberalism touts through privatization means that the private is in the public and the public is in the private. The private as and in public is what Lauren Berlant calls the intimate public sphere (*Queen*; see also, *Female*). Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner offer a concrete example of the effects of neoliberal relationality in 1990s New York City. The local administration was under economic pressure to address rising crime rates and the public perception of New York City as dangerous and dirty. The city's reputation as it intersected with its economic prospects motivated a change in public policy aimed at changing the city's image and wealth increase. Coupled with moral

discourses, these economic imperatives targeted and resulted in the surveillance, regulation and mass closings of gay bars and nightclubs, video stores and sex shops, as well as openly gay cruising and queer youth hangout spots where sex happened in public.

These publics that often were made up of safe sex and sex positive discourses, explain Berlant and Warner, were (and continue to be) regulated and disciplined through dominant norms of morality and intimacy. These publics that can no longer legally and socially circulate in and as publics, are relegated back in time and back into closets (Berlant and Warner). These publics are ushered out of existence, or at least visibility, and dominated by the values of neoliberal relationality that emphasize heteronormative coupling, Christian morality, and privacy, the kinds of arguments also consistent with the same-sex marriage movement (Berlant and Warner; Warner, “Normaller”; Whitehead). The campaigns in New York are but a microcosm of the ways neoliberal relationality swept the nation beginning with the 1980s culture wars that targeted difference and nonnormative relationality, including the governmental response to the HIV/AIDS crisis (Gould; Crimp), anti-black racism (Jenkins; C. Cohen), feminist backlash (M. J. Alexander; Moraga and Anzaldúa), shifting immigration policies (Luibhéid, “Introduction”; Chávez), and more.

With the neoliberal shift in governmentality modes of resistance keep up with and understand these changes. Lisa Duggan argues that “the Achilles’ heel in progressive-left politics since the 1980s, especially, has been a general blindness to the connections and interrelations of the economic, political, and cultural, and a failure to grasp the shifting dimensions of the alliance politics underlying neoliberal success” (*Twilight* xvi). This lack of understanding produces a divide and conquer scenario wherein factions of the left

argue against themselves among each other “while failing to clearly perceive the chameleon that eludes them” (Duggan, *Twilight* xvii). One site in which the failure of broader understandings of the interconnections Duggan describes is in the fractures and the narrowing of LGBTQ politics. Whereas coalitions and the intersections of oppressions across a range of interests were at once a mainstay of the movements, the rise of neoliberalism resulted in split interests (Valentine; Whitehead). This is a concern that will be taken up across the subsequent chapters.

The effects of these forms of neoliberal relationality that suck potential from relations also suck in the quotidian sense, in the affective flattening out of human resources and political moments of resistance. For some, this results in a retreat from political life, frustrated or unfeeling, exhausted and immobile, in a state of what Ann Cvetkovitch calls “political depression” (Cvetkovitch, *Depression* 105-111; see also Lee’s discussion of “neoliberal melancholy” (915-919); and Schulman’s “gentrification of the mind”). While Cvetkovitch (*Depression*) narrates political depression primarily through her body, she locates her embodied depression within social movement contexts such as the AIDS crisis and sexual rights movements. She similarly reads other memoirs and narratives of depression and links them to colonial, raced, and gendered histories of violence. While political depression affects individual bodies, political depression can also take its toll on social movements during which the urgency and end goals of the crisis that brings people together takes precedence over feeling its effects (see Schulman; Gould; Crimp). These understandings of depression as within and in response to publics invert normative medical discourses that pathologize, medicate and universalize the individual body. Theorizing in this way insists on asking questions about the link

between embodied experience, structures of power, and culture, to look broadly at the shape and the dynamic of relations.

This project offers theoretical interventions in two different ways, intertwining multiple bodies of theory. First, it is an intervention into understanding neoliberal relationality. Second, it is a performance project that asks what it means to do performance in a time of neoliberalism, how neoliberalism conditions and informs performance, even as performance seeks to resist it.

### Performance in a Time of Neoliberalism

In the historical moment leading up to the stronghold of neoliberalism, in the United States especially, the kinds of staged performances that broke with tradition to use the stage as a platform to reflect and refract the contemporary political moment and to generate forms of sociality and imaginary began to circulate widely (Carlson; Fisher-Lichte; Goldberg; Muñoz, *Cruising*; Jackson, *Professing*). Of course, these forms were not necessarily new, as certain experiments in theater and visual art that had broken with tradition were ongoing. My point here in marking the time of the 1950s through 1970s is to locate the intersections of art and politics in the time leading up to neoliberalism. Further, the era of these performances have been of particular focus of performance and queer scholars for their relational, and also utopic, potentiality (Muñoz, *Cruising*; Moten). To situate performance in a time of neoliberalism is to understand the time leading up to it. The performative trend from the 1970s that centers the personal as political has maintained popularity. The forms of belonging that hold potential for relationality that I consider in this project are those that form in and through staged performance. Specifically, each chapter features performances that through personal

narratives, personas, and embodied symbolism confront, negotiate, and at times reimagine the discourses of neoliberalism that affect relations.

To ask about performance in a time of neoliberalism is to ask questions about performance's relation to the state, how performance circulates, and under what conditions it gets produced. Performance, when it critiques the state, or the conditions of the time, sometimes sees itself outside of those machinations, working from outside, critiquing from outside. In this way, performers can mark themselves as radical (Jackson, *Social*). At the same time as performance sees itself critical of the state, the state of the arts is an ongoing conversation, including the lack of grant funding and so forth. In the absence of grant funding, artists consistently turn to the private sector for support of their work. Shannon Jackson writes in *Social Works* that to critique the state while also lamenting state support is to engage in the same kinds of political gestures that it refuses. This contradiction is not only of logical concern, but should also be examined for the kinds of interplay that mirror neoliberal concerns. An important dimension of relations in performance is to ask what structures *govern* our relations? This is not to ask what discourses are present, informing, and being resisted in any given performance text, but to ask what informs performance more generally, how it is produced or hindered, and what conditions make that (im)possible. This is to say, in order to understand performance, we must situate it in relation to the state more generally. It is to tend to questions of culture, the nation and economics as part of culture, and citizenship. Aesthetic representation has traditionally been understood as part and parcel of being a citizen. Artists reflect culture back to us and participate in the public sphere. What this means and how performance functions an important foundation to understanding how



performance is conceptualized and received in relation to what it actually does. This section first looks at art funding broadly and in the history of the United States and then turns to a discussion of how the ideologies informing the relation between the state and art inform queer intimacy in performance.

In a document titled *The Arts and the Public Purpose*, the Ninety-Second American Assembly outline four arguments in favor of public art:

1. The arts help to define what it is to be an American...
2. The arts contribute to quality of life and economic growth...
3. The arts help to form an educated and aware citizenry...
4. The arts enhance individual life. (as cited in Rushton 266)

Rushton argues that these four reasons represent interdependent and competing ideologies. He identifies these ideologies as liberalism, utilitarian, and communitarian. The first two, liberal and economic philosophies, differ somewhat in their approach to art but share a common investment in narratives of future. A liberal approach to art takes a preservationist and archival stance for the benefit of future generations to look back and know that past. From this perspective, art functions to catalogue culture and its materialization in art form (Rushton 269-70). This differs from how an economic philosophy might guide art production in its emphasis on markets, but shares the consideration of future. Market values of art, how art benefits the state, and how and whether the public is able to make these decisions are guiding factors (Rushton 270). From an economic perspective, children are a consideration in that this ideology recognizes the states investment in narratives of equal opportunity. While adults hold moral ground and can make their own decision, the unequal class differences of children

mean that some are exposed to high culture more than others and this exposure influences cultural standing (Rushton 270).

The communitarian approach to art is perhaps at once at odds with the other two. While liberalism and economics center the individual, a communitarian philosophy locates the whole above the group. “What it means to be an American” opens questions of who is American, how does one get to be American, and who and how participate in that construction. This is of particular interest to the formation of the United States. The United States was established on principles of a democratic republic rather than an aristocracy. The nation as ostensibly shaped by its citizenry meant a collaborative, if unequal, production of culture between the government and those eligible to participate in it. Though it was anticipated that the United States would have little interest in the arts, its focus instead on manufacturing and industry, the arts did play a significant role in the development of its citizenry and meaning (Miller, “National”).

The United States was the first nation to establish national parks. Miller recounts, “In 1872, Congress purchased Thomas Moran’s painting of the Grand Canyon, which so engaged spectators that the area depicted was later secured for conservation” (“National” 1430). Here the tension between circulation and representation, the original and its representation, which was a question that consumed Adorno and Benjamin, plays out with the creation of a state sponsored site for its citizens to enjoy. While nature is not art per se, it was artistic representation that led to the commitment. The nation’s indirect support of arts was a result of early legislation (1917-18) that gave tax deductions to corporations that donated money to the arts and that paved the way for the non-profit industrial complex (Miller, “National” 1930; Smith). The post-depression era witnessed a

more deliberate funding of arts by the state through the Works Progress Administration that gave direct grants to artists (Miller, “National” 1430). By 1965, much by way of honoring John F. Kennedy’s support and love of the arts, Lyndon Johnson established the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), a national system that offers grants to artists of varying kinds.

What interests me in this limited history of national funding for the arts is less the chronology (for a more thorough history of the NEA in particular see Binkiewicz) than how national arts funding reflects back on and is informed by the nation. While Lewis and Rushton suggest that states and possibly private organizations give more money to arts funding than is given out at the national level, I’m interested in broader cultural discourses more than regional ones. In the post-World War II moment, the United States became a more significant world power. Its emphasis was most particularly in the realm of economics and its tensions with the Soviet Union resulted in rhetoric that underscored capitalist ideologies and shaped culture in a particular direction: consumerism and manufacturing bolsters economic progress, family values support the individual. Alongside the growth of this nation, across the globe a wave of post-colonial independence movements and cultures redefining relations would also find its way into the United States, first in the Civil Rights movements and then into others. Art and performance as a site of culture would become a site of struggle with the nation.

We see this particularly during the culture wars of the 1980s that emerge with the rise of national and global neoliberalism. What this meant culturally was an increased emphasis on questions of morality. Being a “good citizen” was grounded in notions of individual responsibility, primarily fiscal. This was realized in a decrease of state

responsibility in favor of the individual taking care of him or herself and charitable organizations responsible for those who cannot do so (Berlant, *Queen*). This restructure of state responsibility was realized in a decrease in state funding while simultaneously providing tax breaks for corporations who set up, and therefore could control and even sponsor, non-profit organizations (Smith). Although the rhetoric of morality then, was to effectively separate the state from dictating meaning, in actuality the strands were reinforced.

What this would mean for performance was an increased attention to how both government and private funding was disbursed in relation to heightened narratives of morality and intimacy that were circulating and as a result there was an active government participation in and control of meaning and representation. Miller puts it this way:

How did the NEA become a problem? The answers lie in four adjacent domains: party politics, constitutional law and lore, the function of art, and debates about sex and race. Each one is interlaced with the notion of what constitutes Americanness: private enterprise versus centralized power, the separation of the state from the generation and suppression of meaning, and changes in national citizenship occasioned by migration, public sexual subjectivity, and their expression in cultural forms. (“National” 1432)

More concretely, questions of morality were directed at arts funding at the national level, much of it surrounding sexuality. In fact, Lewis and Rushton make an interesting argument that links support for the arts with sexuality and sexual preferences. They write, “according to Lewis (2006), approval of homosexual and extramarital relations and

support for civil liberties for unpopular minorities are important predictors for public spending on the arts, even after controlling for political liberalism and personal characteristics” (Lewis and Rushton 109). However much we can account for whether this represents individuals, it certainly seems to be informing funding at the national levels. Lewis and Rushton report that while NEA’s funds swiftly climbed after 1965, during the 1980s its budget was not increased and by 1994 was cut in half (107).

Much of the emphasis on decreasing funding art was not due to a lack of support for art but rather on *what* art was being supported. In 1989 the funding and public displays of Andres Serrano’s *Piss Christ* and the posthumous exhibit of *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment* drew intense public criticism and debate, including on the floor of congress. This debate would lead to further changes in the NEA and raise other questions of the relation between the state and art. While this history has been well documented and dispersed, it is briefly worth narrating here. Just months after the controversial visual arts exhibits were displayed, in 1989 the NEA’s new chairperson, John Frohnmeyer took office. In February of the following year, a solo review panel recommended funding of performances, including Karen Finley, Holly Hughes, John Fleck, and Tim Miller.

In mid-1990 the NEA’s guidelines were amended with a clause required the chairperson to include ““general standards of decency”” and ““respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public”” when granting funding (Rushton 272). This led to the reversal of grants to the artists. Finley, Hughes, Fleck, and Miller, who became known as the NEA 4, sued the NEA in a case that would go all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States. While the NEA 4 settled with the NEA and received an

undisclosed return of their grants, the suit on the grounds challenging the decency clause was pursued. The Supreme Court would ultimately uphold the decency clause. In 2001, then acting chairman of the NEA, Robert Martin, awarded and also rescinded a grant to artist William L. Pope.

What might the rulings indicate about the relationship between art and the state? How do the shifts in political ideologies turn back on questions of citizenship, patriotism and belonging and the importance of arts and performance to both reflect culture and to participate in the public sphere? The intimate sphere? In the current historical moment, arts funding continues to be taxed and cut under the Obama administration in favor of advancements in science and technology while normative intimacy and morality continue to inform the lives of citizen subjects. Perhaps as a response to this crowd sourcing has become a popular way for artists to seek funding for projects. Crowd sourcing is a new technique to drum up funding and takes place through websites that collect money on behalf of the artists. The sites take a percentage of the funding and artists can describe or detail where the money will go, identify sponsors, and craft a plea for why they deserve it. Different levels of sponsorship, similar to public radio and television funding, indicate different rewards or relation to the artists. For example, one pledge might get a “thank you” while another pledge might warrant a T-shirt, updates throughout the project, and more.

Some crowd sourcing ventures are more successful than others and might depend on the persuasiveness of the argument, visibility of the artists, or networks with money. Requests circulate like wildfire across social networking sites. On any given day over the past couple of years, for example, I might open my email or FaceBook wall to find

requests to “help fund” a performance project. I get these requests because these are circuits of belonging I enjoy in the performance world. Often times I know the artists, but just as often recently, I have been identified by a “friend” as someone who would be interested in supporting this or that artist, not to mention the sitting president, from whom I now receive even daily emails even though I asked to be removed from the list. I am told that I can do it immediately, with the “click of the mouse” because my information is saved somewhere. If I were to be able or inclined to respond to every request, even at a minimum, I could easily donate hundreds if not thousands of dollars a month. I am neither inclined nor can I afford to fund art in this way and recently have become uncomfortable (affect) and critical (intellect) with such requests. Given the pervasiveness of neoliberalism and its tendencies toward privacy in the current moment, as critics and practitioners of performance we need to ask important questions about what crowd sourcing means in relation to the state. Is this the formation of a counterpublic in which one can simultaneously critique the government and not be dependent on it or does it fit squarely in line with neoliberal expectations? Might it be both or something different? I take up these questions more thoroughly in the conclusion.

### Performance, Relationality, Queerness

Performance studies, across disciplines, addresses relationality in multiple ways. These include within and through texts, through live performance events or through individual performers, and in some cases through relational belonging, community, and futurity. Yet relation in performance studies remains an undertheorized site. After Langellier’s (“Phenomenology”) 1983 article on the phenomenology of audience, in communication studies there has been a dearth of scholarship that theorizes audience. Langellier writes in

1998, “the audience may be the most neglected aspect of personal narrative performance studies” (“Voiceless” 210). In the same volume on the *Future of Performance Studies*, D. Soyini Madison also calls forth the need to tend to audience. She writes of performance as an intersubjective venture and utilizes Maria Lugones’ theory of world travelling and playfulness as a framework for performing the voices, bodies, and texts of others as well as a means for audience and performer interaction (Madison, “Performance” 281). Both Langellier’s (“Voiceless”) and Madison’s (“Performance”) arguments locate the performer-audience relation as a political site, one where culture is reflected upon and made (see also Hamera *Opening*). In this section, I review relationality in performance and conclude with a discussion of queerness in performance.

### Textual Emphasis

The textual emphasis in performance theory has been widely recognized, critiqued, and maintained. In his important and oft-cited “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research,” Dwight Conquergood underscores the privilege that comes with textual production and attention. Texts as written, as material and economic objects, have historically been the property of and ensured access to those who could produce and consume them. He writes that “the hegemony of textualism needs to be exposed and undermined.” (147) He links the hegemony of textualism to Western epistemology. The field of performance studies, which often emphasizes and defined performance through its resistive labor (Langellier, “Two”) paradoxically relies on power to come to that understanding. This paradox is not particular to performance studies and is woven through critical paradigms. This may be a situation of the master’s tools being unable to dismantle the master’s house (Lorde), and we often see this through at times



tense relations between practitioners, activists, and academics in performance studies and elsewhere. Feminist cultural theory brings reflexivity to weigh in on the issue and it is through this practice that we can reflect back on our relation to texts.

Conquergood forcefully maintains, “textocentrism—not texts—is the problem” (151). Texts, then, are central to our lives. But when texts eclipse, replace, or ignore what bodies and other communicative actions do, we lose site of more full and deeper meanings. When we are reflexive and aware, we move not away from the text but rather toward the interpenetration of texts and bodies. The more ephemeral circulation of resistant acts, such as those generated by socially and legislatively oppressed peoples, are less visible and therefore often historically unrecognized and overlooked in archives and study, although these practices have been increasingly taken up.

Rather than generate a false binary between knowledge systems through the body as performance (resistant) and the written word/text (oppressive), Diana Taylor distinguishes the relation among texts and bodies in this way, between the archive and the repertoire. The archive is that locale which is public, privileged, accessible, and known. Archives catalogue and maintain certain kinds of knowledge. This knowledge is not neutral, rather, it is organized by *some body* and presented and cared for (or not), and sought out by *some bodies*. In contrast to the physical objects and locations that constitute an archive, Taylor theorizes body as repertoire. By the repertoire, Taylor names the doing of performance, the meaning that is made through performing bodies, bodies that do not always live in proximity to or make it into the archive.

Queer intimacy is located as, and accounts for, the potentially ecstatic encounters that shatter the mundane and ambivalent moments of day-to-day life through

performance. Performance often utilizes “twice behaved behavior” (Schechner 36), experiences from the past that are both spectacular and mundane for reflection in the present. To center the everyday-ness in performance is to re-consider the potentiality, the doing, of daily acts whether full of desire or pain narrated and re-done through performance (Muñoz, *Cruising* 6-7, 14). It is to take note of the present as more than an accumulation of acts and experiences and to re-call, or to re-do, re-consider their relationship to discourse, resistance, and change. It is what Langellier (“Two”) describes as the potential performance holds beyond an aesthetic form of communication. She theorizes that rather than performance situated *only* as a text, that the text moves through the body of the performer and with an audience is a doing. Fischer-Lichte argues that when we our attention from the text as text we understand “the fusion of the aesthetic and the social” (55).

#### Performance as Communication

Performance as a communicative act is enabled through the agency of voices, particularly marginalized voices, to participate in a politics of resistance and therefore respond to and perhaps reshape discourses of oppression. That performance utilizes past events not as representation of *what happened* but rather relocates the temporality of a past experience into the present, so that the performance is doing *now* rather than recounting what happened *then* renders it a particularly dynamic form of speech (Langellier and Peterson). Fischer-Lichte adds that this allows us to account for the “experience [of performance] as a social reality—even if uninvolved spectators experience it as purely aesthetic” (55). So what performance might *do* then in relation to,

and as an aspect of, social reality, is not merely to reflect or represent it, but rather to participate in its unfolding.

In addition to those performance studies that emerge from or consider textuality, other discussions of relation come from live events in which the author is performer or audience. In Dolan's *Utopia in Performance*, the live moment of theater and performance provides the site from which she theorizes what is being done. For her, this moment of liveness provides a tacit yet tangible quality of both being in relation to other audience members and the performer(s). As a collective, though heterogeneous body, something happens for Dolan. It may be a temporary potential that lasts only the duration of that particular situation, but through that affective response and the communal engagement, that something *could* happen. Something *might* change. This utopian performative, as she names it, holds the potential of that moment in time to continue in some way.

Linda Park-Fuller ("Audiencing") analyzes audience reactions in interactive playback theater and tends to the ways audiences actively engage performance from their own experience. Bryant K. Alexander theorizes generative autobiography as the agentic position of audience members to actively respond to autobiographical performance with their own stories that come from listening. While his own generative autobiography is produced from a rather painful and critical listening and response, generative autobiography calls attention to the politics of relation in performance and the conditions that inform it. Muñoz ("Feeling") theorizes affect in performance, insisting that whiteness informs our behaviors, our "feelings," in response to what's happening on the stage and that white and brown audiences feel differently. Others write about performance from the perspective of the performer. E. Patrick Johnson ("Strange") writes about performing his

solo piece “Strange Fruit,” and the ways in which different audiences read him, he felt them, differently. Pérez and Goltz find that their collaborative narrative is read by audiences differently and is dependent on the context and space in which they perform. I now shift to some of the theories of relationality and belonging in performance and continue to build queer intimacy in performance.

Performance theories that consider relationality and belonging in performance come out of qualitative and critical studies of performances, performance communities, and performance texts. I first review some of these contributions then turn to more extensive discussion of relation and belonging in performance. Performing communities include sustained and mobile sites of work. These can include workshops that are ongoing or singular events. Many performance artists supplement their performance practice, or shift it entirely, to emphasize intergenerationality among performers, generate community, train in particular aesthetic skill or methodology. These workshops function pedagogically as they work like a laboratory or classroom setting in which performers can learn from senior artists. They are also an important site of culture and cultural production, history, and networking and are increasingly written about in books by the performer-authors (see Rosenthal; Osun, Moore, and Bridgforth; Gómez-Peña, *Ethno-techno*; Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes).

Others utilize qualitative methods to ask what sorts of productions are happening at the site of performance. This includes kinds of performance ethnography. While a larger discussion of performance ethnography is beyond the scope of what is relevant here, I am focusing in particular on those who use qualitative methods to report back on and theorize performance’s doing (For more extensive discussions on performance

ethnography in its myriad forms, see Madison, *Critical*; Madison and Hamera; and the special issue on Performance Ethnography in *Text and Performance Quarterly*).

Qualitative performance encounters of the sort that focus on relation include Rebecca Schneider's reading of Civil War reenactments. Here Schneider asks what reenactment does even as it reflects back on what was done. Her title aptly asks us to consider what "remains." In *Dancing Communities*, Hamera considers the ways that sites of dance both construct and instruct forms of belonging and culture. Madison (*Acts*) looks at political activism as a site of performance and considers how it informs and is informed by staged performance. In 1995 Nicolas Bourriaud forwards his idea of "relational aesthetics" as a way to decentralize the *object* of performance and focus instead on the intersubjective happening among performers and audience. His book and the exhibitions of art objects and performance art have generated a great deal of discussion and re-consideration, most recently through the work of Shannon Jackson in *Social Acts*.

What performance does for the author and audience in relation to everyday experience is to contemplate and remake, to reflect upon, moments of daily life that are situated in discourse, order relations, and enable and constrain our bodies and voices (Langellier and Peterson). A performative re-doing through aesthetic practice, the present moment's event-ness of performance (Fischer-Lichte) reminds us that moments of resistance and change are located not always in spectacular and notable events, but rather in the mundane and everyday. For an example of the ecstatic and discursive present in the mundane, Muñoz (*Cruising* 6-7) offers Frank O'Hara's poem "Having a Coke with You." Layered throughout the poem's description of two men sharing a coke Muñoz remarks on

the private intimacy routed through coded glances and shared and unspoken knowledge that co-exist alongside the palpable relationship of care and desire between the two men.

Even as any pair or group of lovers might develop their own codes and insider-group knowledge, that this private moment performed in a heteronormative public imposes codes that cloak deeper meanings to waive off an ever-present homophobic threat of violence, discursive and/or physical. Yet in calling for the memory in poetry, through the lens of the performative, the potential for harm rests in uneasy tension with the care, the desire, and the potential O'Hara imagines that one day this scene will truly be unremarkable. Muñoz reads the poem and its gesture to an imagined future to demonstrate the potentiality of the past (performance) holds to reflect on previous experiences to open sites of learning, re-doing, and re-lating in a future horizon. While Muñoz directs our attention to what *might be* in the future, the latent charge in such re-considered moments also directs our attention to relations that are both present and possible.

When we consider these moments addressed outward and audienced through and among performances, these ecstatic moments may contribute to the formation of communities, whether temporary or longer-lasting, around identity politics or political resistance (Dolan, *Utopia*; Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, *Cruising*; Cvetkovich, *Depression*). Fischer-Lichte theorizes the transformative power of performance to produce relations and/or community as “an *event* that involves everybody” through conceptualizing performance as a ““production” and “reception” [that] occur at the same time and place” (18). For her the transformative power of performance lies in its present-ness and the relational dimensions it opens. To theorize site of transformation as community

formation, Fischer-Lichte draws on Victor Turner's description of liminality. The liminal is located primarily as a cultural phenomenon of ritual practice.

Through ritual, a person's social location, participation in the community, and meaning, shifts from one locale to another. The temporal markers before and after the ritual are relatively stable subject locations. However, Turner describes ritual as it is happening as an in-between space, a space where subjectivity is malleable, is changing. The experience is outside time and space as well as relations. It can be experienced as a dizzying, ecstatic, and possibly scary in between that is dynamic and visceral. Fischer-Lichte argues that while performance might be ritualistic as a happening, what distinguishes it from ritual is that it ritual is for the most part publicly and/or culturally sanctioned. Performance is not extra-cultural, but it is not sanctioned and is often critical of culture. However, she suggests that, like ritual, the audience undergoes moments of transformation and change in individual and collective subjectivity as well as relationally.

Transformation (whether in sustainable or temporary communities of relation), like liminality, implies a certain linear progression, a chronological temporality that locates a before and after. My interest in theorizing queer intimacy is to more deeply understand the moments of coming together that performance offers. It is not to look toward what might or could happen as a *result* of performance relationality, but rather to pause within, to contemplate that particular experience. To attend to the productive relational tendencies in performance is to respond to the question of "what kind of community is comprised of those who are beside themselves" (Butler, *Undoing* 20). While Butler is specifically addressing political rage and grief of the kind that responds to the lives of LGBTQ people post-September 11, 2001, this is precisely the kind of

relational doing present in and among performance events and texts. It is to recognize that in the range of responses to political violence and resistance and community formation, that performance contributes as one mode of communication and organizing alongside others.

Queer intimacy in a performance encounter is a concept that is not only capable of accounting for multiple experiences of the same event, multiple sites of relation, it very much depends on it. This is the kind of “belonging-in-difference” that Muñoz locates in the 1971 manifesto of the Third World Gay Revolution (*Cruising* 20). Therefore, queer intimacy accounts for multiple sites of difference and experience, ranging from categories of identity and experience to spatial disparities such as urban/rural (see Clare for a call for queer coalition along lines of spatial distance; see also Tongson for a discussion of rural queerness). Queer intimacy is a site of affective and simultaneous difference present in, and leading toward, coalitional subjectivity.

How a focus on shaping a future might inform our relations in the present opens possibilities for community formation. The types of community formation that are possible through queer performance practices can be seen through various considerations of contemporary performance practices. Anne Cvetkovitch (*Archive*) finds the formation of lesbian communities in response to traumas. Trauma, ranging from sexual abuse to racism to transnational immigration and HIV/AIDS, is a site where performance can relocate often-pathologized issues from the private to public realms. For Cvetkovitch (*Archive*), these publics are sites of potential healing, pleasure and redress. They are not meant to replace psychoanalytic care; rather these publics form a complementary and politicized site of awareness and community formation.



## Queer Performance

Queer performance also participates in generating sites of imagination, fantasy, and reflection of queer pleasure. Berlant and Warner write in “Sex in Public” of the erotics of staged sex acts as reflection and production of a queer aesthetic and public formation. Other acts of imaginary include performance as participating in a queer mythology (Dillard). What these collectively ask us to participate in is the integration of pleasure into queer performance in a realm that often focuses on pain. While pain, discursive, physical, or erotic, can be recast as a site of pleasure (Corey, “Tim Miller”), in *Time Binds* Elizabeth Freeman generates what she calls erotohistoriography, “a politics of unpredictable, deeply embodied pleasures that counters the logic of development” (59). The stage, then, is a space for critical consideration of self-hood, self in relation, and individual and collective subject formations of our own making through and against dominant constructions (Madison, "Performance").

Any attempt to categorize queer performance risks representing queer as a stable category and therefore undoing its mobility and power of resistance. If we can, and we do, speak of queer performance, it is a frustrating task. For example, in Tim Miller’s *Body Blows*, Tony Kushner pauses in his introduction of the book to reflect upon the difficulty of locating Miller’s performance into a discrete genre (xi). Those that he attempts to place it in—theater, stand up comedy, narrative—all fail to adequately describe what Miller’s queer solo performance is, what it does. This is perhaps a productive frustration that queer resists any fixed category. Together with performance, queer works overtime, as performance is just as slippery a descriptor as it integrates a number of artistic practices and theoretical discussions.

Yet queer performance is an apt joining in that it triggers the speaker and listener to be attentive to the charge of the labor at hand. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook offers us one useful analogy for and the doing of queer performance through his discussion of stand-up theory. His discussion of stand-up theory locates the performer and performance as having the “the responsibility of a cultural critic, testing theoretical language's ability to “unpack” everyday experience (352-3). Therefore, queer performance indexes practices across genres that utilize the body, language, and other media to do particular things.

That queer performance can be used to describe art across genres is part of queer performance's mobility. While it may be a point of departure from them, queer performance does have grounding in a range of artistic practices, ranging from film and sculpture, to theater, and other genres. The range of the queer performance canon is beyond the scope of this project. Here I will limit my discussion of queer performance as it emerges from theater. Sparked in part by the cultural revolutions of many aspects of U.S. culture, throughout the 1970s and 80s an explosion of performance art emerged that deliberately broke with the formality, confines, and tradition of theater to explore styles that mixed media, content, and authorship (Carlson). Within this context personal narrative performance gained a political and performance traction and popularity that continues today (Langellier, “Two”; Hughes and Román). These tactical performance strategies developed in tandem, across academic disciplines and artistic practices, and continue to form overlapping and distinct categories (for a genealogy of performance across disciplinary practices see Jackson, *Professing*). The literature of and about gay, lesbian, and queer theater and performance is complex and varied. Broadly speaking, gay,

lesbian, and queer theater addresses the distinct and overlapping categories of identity and history, resistance, and imaginary.

Gay and lesbian theater historians mine past writers, communities, and texts for traces of queer presences (Loomba; Senelnick; Muñoz, *Cruising*). To claim writers from the past and integrate them into a queer canon contributes to building queer history, lineage, and archive. Part imagination, part mining the archive for queer presences inform this work. To narrate a queer history also participates in forming queer identities. It is to ask questions of who and what “we” might be and from what struggles and pleasures we emerge and continue to produce.

Queer performance participates in an ongoing discussion of what it means to be queer, gay or lesbian, who claims it or is excluded from it, and what it does to mark one’s identity and body in that way in relation to self, others, and across intersecting lines of difference. Queer performance also works double time, as it does the work of reflecting back on what is present and asks for a continuous grappling with “what is.” What is might include identity, but more importantly, queer calls attention to the structures that inform and produce identity and offers itself for disruption and redoing. For example, Dolan (“Introduction”) probes whether *queer* as a category risks erasing specific *gay* and *lesbian* histories and performances that are grounded in the particularity of identity politics. Here the boundaries of identity are linked to histories of struggle and distinguish between gay and lesbian political investments and experiences that may or may not be linked.

Others seek to develop a queer historiography of the range of queer, gay, and lesbian performance practices that are distinct from other types of theater in what they

address and what they accomplish (Savran; Román, *Acts*; Hughes and Román). Still others mark a distinct contribution of queer people of color and their performative contributions that center the intersections of sexuality with race in their performance work (For additional discussions of the intersections of sexuality of race, and also ability, and nation, see Muñoz, *Disidentifications*; L. Pérez; Arrizón; Sandoval-Sánchez; Román, *Acts*; Johnson, “Quare”; Loomba; Kupperts; Galloway.) Rather than attempt to account for the multiple contributions and strands of queer performance, we might say that “queer theater [and performance] cannot be created from without: the status of its creator as a “queer” within a “straight” society is, at some level, its raw material” (Senelick 21).

If experience, whether fictionalized, abstracted, or rerouted through personal narrative is the “raw material” of queer performance, then what queer performance does (or holds the potential to do) is resist. While marginalization is one aspect of gay and lesbian subjectivities, that social and discursive location resides alongside agency and action (Foucault). As Dolan argues, queer is “not who you *are*, it’s what you *do*, it’s your relation to dominant power, and your relation to marginality, as a place of empowerment” (“Introduction” 5). If stand-up theory is a methodological practice to approach queer performance, then what it holds the potential to do is to counter and re-write master narratives with personal narratives (Corey, “Personal”). Queer performance resists normativity in myriad and intersectional ways, but is always a critique that addresses heteronormativity and the limitations of queer expression. The tentacles of heteronormativity lend queer performance’s resistance work into realms that include expression of identities (Langellier and Peterson; Johnson, “Quare”; Miller and Taylor) as well as to make direct interventions into intersecting social issues.

Queer performance has a long history of speaking resistance directly into the political realm. In this way queer performance offers otherwise marginalized subjects access to the public sphere in which they otherwise might find themselves without a voice (Langellier, "Two"; Langellier, "Voiceless; Johnson, "Quare"). These types of performance have made significant public interventions through pedagogy, awareness and consciousness-raising. Román (*Acts*) traces the ways that HIV/AIDS medical discourse and performance tactics mutually inform one another in struggles over definition, naming, and survival (see also Corey, *HIV Education*; Gingrich-Philbrook). Queer Latina performance both marks out spaces for queer Latina identity production as well as participates in transnational and decolonial practice (Arrízon; L Pérez). Black queer performance resists twin forces of anti-Black racism and internalized homophobia (Johnson, "Quare"; Johnson, *Appropriating*).

While queer performance exists across genres and disciplines, a form that queer performance often takes is the personal narrative. In communication studies in the 1980s a disciplinary turn corresponded with the cultural practice of personal storytelling and personal narrative performance (Langellier "Two"; Pelias and VanOosting). The practice of personal narrative performance holds roots in storytelling collectives and festivals, ranging from Chautauqua meetings to second wave feminist consciousness testimonials to the performance art movement that centered the experience of individuals (Carlson; Hughes and Román; Langellier "Two"). The increasing attention to the individual followed the sociological turn to the mundane, the everyday speech of individuals in community. Langellier explains and extends the work of analysts who consider narratives as units of analysis as she situates them in larger socio-political contexts with an

understanding that “telling personal narratives *does something* in the social world.

Personal narratives participate in the ongoing rhythm of people’s lives as a reflection of their social organization and cultural values” (“Two” 261). The study and practice of personal narrative, in everyday life and on the stage, exploded across disciplines and continues through a corpus of theory. The generation of theory, text, and analysis of and through personal narrative performance over the past thirty years is grounded in the cultural revolutionary slogan that the “personal is political.”

Theoretical and textual production around personal narrative performance brings with it the politics of naming, practice, and criticism grounded in matters paradigmatic clashes. Performance motivated by and about the personal range in their categorization as autobiographical performance (Miller and Taylor), personal narrative and storytelling (Langellier and Peterson), autopoiesis and generative autobiography (B. K. Alexander; Alexander and Warren), performative writing (Pelias; Pollock), and autoethnography (Holman Jones; Ellis and Bochner). Different names invoke sometimes subtle and other times significant distinctions between what each practice purports to do in writing or on the stage. Divisions are sharply drawn between how one should engage and critique these types of practices. Suspicious of the personal, some question how to evaluate and critique the representation of self-knowledge and experience and whether centering self reifies individualism (Schneider, "Solo"). These inquiries are met through re-turns to aesthetic inquiries that reject notions of objectivity and generalizations in favor of listening to voices from the margins to attend to subjugated knowledge (Conquergood "Interventions"; Gingrich-Philbrook; Madison "Performance"). Aesthetic inquiry that

addresses and seeks to transform oppressive power relations is part of what we might understand as a performance studies paradigmatic approach (Pelias and Van Oosting). Listening to subjugated knowledge means to question discursive constraints of voice in material contexts. It is to question “under what conditions do particular individuals tell particular stories to particular listeners?” (Langellier “Perspectives” 261). Solo performance relies on the convention of speaking and listening to offer marginalized subjects to mark and to resist the intersections of material and discursive oppression (Langellier "Two"). For queer performance, the practice of personal narrative offers insights into the lives of queer people and generates intra-and inter-personal dialogue and community formation. I now turn to the conditions of performance, to the material and economic forces that enable and constrain its doing and production.

#### Performance as Reverse Interpellation

What happens in performance may be narrated, responded to or ignored, and even forgotten. It cannot be replicated, repeated, or redone. Yet performance can, and does, have the potential to undo, unravel, and reimagine. Performance is dangerous. Scripts, rehearsals, and spatial and relational conventions of performance discipline bodies into familiar and expected motions: we take the stage, take our seats, applaud, and at times interact. Performance is a site of spatial and temporal dimensions where there is no way to know what will happen, how it will unfold. Even when performers and audiences anticipate knowingly what will happen, there is no telling how it will feel. In this space. In this time. With these people.

Perhaps this unknowing is what renders performance so threatening, so tingly. Normative western culture depends on a linear progression toward a known destination.

Discourses that regulate culture course through bodies and narratives in performance. Produced under that weight, performance might collapse and succumb or it might reflect discourse back on itself, on us, and insist on something different. The something different performance might imagine, what José Muñoz calls a utopian performative (*Cruising*), is generated through and emerges from performance as a site of relation. When we call one another by these names—performer, audience—relations materialize. We step into subject positions and constitute meaning. Things happen. Things change. Performance animates layers of relation—to discourse, self, other—that materialize through embodied, aesthetic practice (Langellier and Peterson).

The relationality of performance connects discourses to bodies in visible, visceral ways. Mexican performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña narrates a story I have heard before. But it's a good one, so I am willing to lean in to him, smiling, nodding, eager for the feeling of fullness and wonder that comes with a good story. His performance aesthetic is highly interactive. He feeds off of and depends on audience responses to move his script forward. In this story he is surrounded by props: a knife, fake guns, masks, rattles, high-heeled shoes and combat boots. As he offers his body to the audience a woman takes the knife in her hands and stabs him in the chest. The scar he slowly fingers rips wide open with each telling.

With Gómez-Peña, with others, in these moments of narrative and performance, I am undone. Spent as I move through the feelings and reflect on how they shift. In my first audiencing I was shocked, a little afraid because I was about to perform with him. What might happen to my body? The narrative was a warning, an invitation to play, to play at my own risk. In the second telling I was expectant, watching, critical, eyes



crinkled as I considered gendered and racial dynamics. This time I am the student-writer-critic, both present and distant as I analyze and participate in his narration. I settle into a different relation with “GP.” We dialogue, write and perform together. In the four years since our worlds collided our intimacy grows thicker, deeper, more complex. He is the queerly figured persona whose performance art spans decades; the artist I want to audience, perform with, write about; the Mexican father who stands in for my own. As the story washes through me, as I receive and give, I think about relations, the sociality of performance.

Gómez-Peña’s story is reminiscent of Augusto Boal’s dilemma during a Theatre of the Oppressed action in Latin America when the actors take an instruction literally and arm themselves with real rather than fake weapons. In another example, Armando García tells of Chicana Nao Bustamante’s performance, *Indigurrito*, where she dons a strap-on with a burrito dildo and invites white men to eat from her phallus. The meaning in these performances, in their re-narrations, hinges on the site of relation. What might these moments prompt us to ask further about relationality in performance? If performance is a communicative act that does something in the world, and I am arguing that it is and does, then what is it doing? Among and between whom? For and toward what?

When Gómez-Peña offers his bare chest to the audience his body invokes discourses of the immigrant-subject who threatens the nation, the body from which white women must be protected. When the woman stabs him, does she seek to wound the immigrant or does she, as a woman, seek to use violence against sexism? When he is stabbed, the knife pierces his flesh and simultaneously, symbolically, punctures the bubble of avoidance that maintains oppressive ideologies as normative. Boal confronts

the lived experience of dictatorship and the urgency to combat it. Nao Bustamante's indigenous woman recalls a colonial encounter and offers a visible and embodied site of return to exorcise the demons that continue to haunt us. In each of these examples, performers and audiences touch the potential of performance to be decolonial. Each also risks reaffirming oppression through stereotypes: the bare-chested immigrant, armed revolutionaries, and the indigenous woman. There is a lot at stake in performance.

While critique is imperative, a queer of color critique invites us to consider what might be happening alongside the obvious, particularly in aesthetics (Ferguson). As we name the stereotype we might also ask what modes of resistance are enacted when they are performatively and intentionally displayed for consumption and interaction. This is to say that while we might bring in critiques of the stereotypes that may function for some audience members to reinforce or cement them, that they may also function to do other things. What happens when bodies, both performers and audience, confront one another in this context? What happens to the ideologies that inform this aesthetic union?

Following Ferguson, I am suggesting that while performance risks reinforcing that it may also resist. The resistance happens through relation.

In each of these moments, these performative actions that are grounded in relation depend on bodies coming together. Performance is a site of relation and belonging. To unpack the idea of relation and belonging and what it means for performance I turn to Aimee Carrillo Rowe's ("Be Longing"; *Power*) notion of a politics of relation. A politics of relation calls attention to our relations, our desires, our belonging to one another as a political site. Carrillo Rowe writes, "my argument is that who we love is political" ("Be Longing" 16). Therefore, relations, relations under any conditions, are not neutral but

embedded in and produced by discourses of power. To consider relationality in performance then is to take seriously the ways in which relations, the relations among performers and audiences, are formed, under what conditions, and with what meanings and doings.

Performance relations, like the feminist academic relations Carrillo Rowe writes about, are for the most part chosen and voluntary, although not always. Especially in university settings, for performance students, performance events are often requirements. So even though performance relations may be loosely chosen relations, we cannot assume homogeneity, political agreement, or any particular orientation to the ideological and political issues raised or addressed in any performance. For example, I will never forget the anxiety and regret that I initially experienced when I decided to invite my mother to Tim Miller's *Lay of the Land* in Los Angeles, in 2009. I remember vaguely telling my mother what the performance was about, who Tim Miller is, and what she might expect (especially naked bodies). My mother tends to enjoy gay men like Tim, which is to say gay men whose bodies are white, soft, fairly normative and generally fun. My invitation was prompted by our shared love of theater productions and I genuinely thought she might enjoy it, enjoy Tim, and potentially think through and be closer to the experiences of gay and lesbian people through narrative and entertainment. I didn't necessarily want to have this conversation with her through *my* experience as this is a generally avoided topic in our relation. As we've often been able to relate through even theater, literature, and media, I thought I'd give it a try, even though my heart was racing a bit shortly into the performance, tacking back and forth between the stage and her face to gauge a reaction.

When I prompted her to respond to the evening during our car ride, what I didn't expect to hear was that she felt angry and defensive. She told me that she felt attacked by Tim. I interpreted this to mean that she felt implicated in his rage, a rage that she found excessive and that I felt was simultaneously not enough and misdirected. When asked whether she might think about what it might be like not to be able to marry the person you wanted to, to think about (not equate) the racism that she and my dad experienced against their marriage *in our own family* as well as outside of it, her anger dissipated a bit and turned to wonder what that might be like and that maybe Tim should be angry. Perhaps he was not angry with her and she should be angry, too, alongside him and possibly alongside me. I didn't have the energy or choose to explain that I in fact was not angry, do not want to get married. I was at the edges of my belonging and willingness to share the breadth of my politic with her. But something happened in multiple layers of relation through bodies and to ideology that night in performance. And that is what interests me here.

Therefore, I offer the mother-Tim Miller example not only as a glimpse into the politics of relation in my family but also as an anecdotal representation of the politics of relation in performance. Discourses of race, sexuality, and nation collide in this moment with desire, belonging, and lived experience. The relations are dynamic and intimate. The site of performance is one that hailed us into certain subject positions (performer-audience) and called attention to the politics of that relation (homosexual-heterosexual-queer, male-female, white-brown, married-not married-not wanting marriage). Although performance hails, when we simultaneously consider bodies and especially bodies in relation, through those relations performance is also a site of reverse interpellation.

Reverse interpellation is a concept developed by Chela Sandoval that Carrillo Rowe builds on through the politics of relation and belonging and that here I want to apply to performance. Reverse interpellation is Sandoval's useful shift that complements, rather than replaces, Althusser's foundational concept of interpellation. Interpellation names the process of subject formation. This involves the interanimation of discourses, speech, and bodies. Althusser's famous example that explains interpellation is the cop who shouts out 'hey you there' to a person on the street. In the moment the person stops, s/he is hailed. A relation is accomplished, albeit a relation of power. The cop infused with the authority of the state uses speech to name and once called the hierarchical order is established. Discourses, speech, and bodies align to materialize interpellation. It is real. Hailing happens.

Performance is a site of interpellation that hails audiences and performers to one another. Although not necessarily holding the authority of the state (though state university performances certainly do) performance spaces, like other spaces, propel bodies to move in certain ways with and toward one another (see Massey for a discussion of space that produces and disciplines bodies). There are conventions in performance. And while these conventions are not *inherently* hierarchical, there is a history and a disciplining that inform embodied movement and relations in performance spaces. Of course these conventions of performance that hail us are in the service of a certain kind of order, and yet my intent here is to name the conventions as a process that relies on the same logic and process of hailing in a more oppressive situation. The authority infused into the performer positions the audience in a certain subordinate role. Both positions are

with agency, including the relative choice to be there or to leave. My interest here is in what happens in that relation.

Reverse interpellation tends to the site of relation in the process of hailing. It asks what relation has to do with an orientation to discourse. Reverse interpellation intervenes and reroutes interpellation, the forces that hail subjects into rigid and hierarchical subject-object, self-other, positions formed through oppressive discourses. Reverse interpellation does not ignore power but rather acts as a gesture “to call attention to the politics at stake in our belonging, and to envision an alternative” (“Be Longing” 16). This is to say that reverse interpellation, with its eye ever on interpellation, acts to think through what it means to be in relation, to ask what conditions inform our relations and in turn might inform our understanding and stances toward ideologies. In the example above, it is to tend not only to Tim Miller’s argument in performance against the prohibition of same-sex marriage on the grounds of citizenship, but to also ask what relations are *activated through* performance, through a communicative act that like interpellation, depends on bodies. Reverse interpellation, like performance, happens through relations, to whom and how we belong.

As performance emerges from and responds to cultural discourses, performance is a site of interpellation. However, through the kinds of political performance that I engage in this project, four solo performers and one performance troupe, I argue that performers can enact a reverse interpellation. Performance is a site of reverse interpellation that draws collective (performer, audience) attention to political issues, ideologies, and discourses as a form of cultural critique and reimagining.

## Performance as Queer Intimacy

While interventions into the public sphere and counterpublics are things that might happen *through*, as a result of, the doing of performance, they move swiftly past the relation that is often taken for granted or undertheorized in performance. Audience, and those bodies that are willing and oriented with the performative argument are swept up into these imaginaries without fuller consideration. While this might happen, I think it useful to pause in the momentum of a performance to ask questions about relation, to the intersecting discursive and cultural structures that are the conditions for bodies coming together in performance. These relations are intimate. Performance is intimate. Intimacy in performance is *queer intimacy*. Queer intimacy in performance asks what conditions and politics of relation are produced within performances, performance texts, bodies, and subjectivities. I will return to queer intimacy after a discussion the narratives and discourses, the doings, of intimacy and queer and what happens if we join them together.

This query into relationality and intimacy is propelled by and traces a certain thread of theoretical, practical and activist interests in relation and intimacy. Toward a definition of queer intimacy in performance, which is not to say that any fixed definition of intimacy or performance is possible or desirable, I begin with Lauren Berlant's discussion of intimacy and the intimate public sphere. Her argument locates intimacy within shifting forms of citizenship and national belonging. Since World War II, but more pronounced during the reigns of Thatcher and Reagan, neoliberal ideologies pervasively link economic interests with social and private ones; these consequences

reverberate across nations and constitute both domestic and transnational relations (Povinelli).

What circulates as intimacy is private (for normative citizen-subjects). Intimacy describes the familiar, at times sexual, relations of kinship and closeness. Intimacy is more an ideology informing relations, or how they should be, than it is a doing. However, the effects of neoliberalism render intimacy and privacy central to cultural and public meaning, the very fabric of citizenship and belonging. Berlant explains:

[I]n the patriotically-permeated pseudopublic sphere of the present tense, national politics does not involve starting with a view of the nation as a space of struggle violently separated by racial, sexual, and economic inequalities that cut across every imaginable kind of social location. Instead, the dominant idea marketed by patriotic traditionalists is of a core nation whose survival depends on personal acts and identities performed in the intimate domains of the quotidian. It is in this sense that the political public sphere has become an intimate public sphere.

(Berlant, *Queen* 5)

Her argument is that the public has collapsed into the private. The cultural shift in the 1980s that witnessed a surge in private lives of “everyday” people (read normatively white, middle class, straight, and Christian), Janet Jakobsen (“Perverse”) locates in the formation of this country. In other words, democracy as we know it emerges from a specifically Protestant ethic and concern with morality. History and the contemporary moment govern private lives through social and legal regulation. This has often meant the monitoring and policing of non-normatively racialized, gendered, abled, and foreign



bodies as part of what it means to be a citizen and to belong to the nation (see Berlant, *Queen*; Eng; Jenkins; Giddens; Sharpe).

Berlant's theorization of the intimate public sphere and intimacy calls attention to the ways in which the relation among governmentality and intimacy circulates in our daily lives. She argues that it is the circulation of narratives of appropriate intimacy that forms our desires and our relations (Berlant, "Intimacy"). Intimacy in its normative strivings circulates in tandem with the circuits of heteronormativity and whiteness to name and regulate the boundaries of citizenship and belonging. Yet it can be done differently.

In queer theory, the attention to the regulation of LGBT intimacy and relations has led to compelling discussions of intimacy, relationality, and sociality (see Halberstam, *Gaga*; J. Rodríguez; see also the special issue of *GLQ* on Social Bonds). Perhaps the most obvious is the same-sex marriage movement in mainstream gay and lesbian politics and the dismantling of the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy of the U.S. armed forces (see Warner, *Trouble*; Duggan; Puar, *Terrorist*). While these efforts do not constitute a new moment, it is happening now. Queer theory, queer activists, have countered vociferously in visible and theoretical ways with critiques of marriage that visibly and theoretically point out, among other things, the tendency of marriage to eclipse intersecting oppressions that queer and other people face. Cathy Cohen maintains that the limitations of singular identity politics to confront structures that regulate intimacies and bodies call for a radical and intersectional approach. I take up the intersections of same-sex marriage, race, and gender in Chapter Two.

Other discussions of queerness and intimacy link social discourses and embodied practice. These include qualitative and critical studies of queer and sexual lives, including gay male barebacking (Dean; see also Bersani and Phillips), transgender experience (Valentine; Namaste; Stryker, *Transgender*; Cavanagh), and lesbian lives (Kennedy and Davis; Cvetkovich, *Archive*). Kath Weston's important monograph *Families We Choose* names the ways that normative structures may not inform the way queer relations are figured. Queer people may love differently, forming kinship groups in unrecognizable ways from the normative Western nuclear family structure. What might be called the temporal turn in queer theory has seen an explosion of literature that accounts for the ways in which normative narratives of time extend from and maintain master narratives of how lives should unfold, including education, family, and reproduction in a linear and swift fashion (see especially Halberstam, *Queer*; Edelman; Freeman, *Time Binds*; Muñoz, *Cruising*).

The heteronormative circuits of belonging to the nation, routed through the everyday language of morality and family values, prompt what Muñoz (*Cruising*) calls the antirelational turn in queer theory. He notes that while the antirelational turn, which we see in texts such as Bersani's *Homos* and Edelman's nihilist polemic *No Future*, forcefully critiques mainstream gay and lesbian pragmatic and assimilationist tendencies, ultimately it reproduces singular notions of the self (Muñoz, *Cruising* 10-11). Muñoz counters with an anti-antirelational commitment as he argues we "understand queerness as collectivity" (Muñoz, *Cruising* 11). If queerness is collective, or has the potential to be collective, then it is a collectivity through which we might tend closely to our relations, which is to say that we must be careful not to romanticize queer relations lest they

become homogenous or counterproductive to dialogue and difference (Joseph; for discussions of homonormativity see also Duggan; Stryker, “Transgender”; Puar, *Terrorist*).

Juana Rodríguez, although interested in the relational and collective discussion in queer theory, reminds us that women are often both under-theorized in these sites and that we have a wealth of queer feminist theory that only emphasize relationality alongside resistance. Using metaphors of bridge, sandbar, and island, Gloria Anzaldúa writes that among feminists we must maintain our mobility in sites of relation. Building on this, Chela Sandoval theorizes differential consciousness. Maria Lugones theorizes world traveling as a way to describe the mobility, and the necessity of self-reflection, humility, and vulnerability required to traveling across difference. What these feminists offer us are ways of doing relation that maintain, rather than erase, difference.

I want to note here the way I am deploying queer and queerness. While the majority of the performers that I engage across this project are indeed queer-identified, I am not using queer as an identity. Rather, here queer relies on its use in queer theory as a force that ruptures and interrupts, reroutes and reimagines normativity; rupture is one condition for alternate subject formation. Performance generates intimate relations and as it does, we must tend to the meanings of intimacy and the relations that are made and remade through it. Queer coupled with intimacy attends to the ways in which intimacy is routed in public, or the productive force of intimacy in the current historical moment. Berlant writes that intimacy “involves an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way” (“Intimacy” 281). This is the real disciplinary force of how intimacy circulates today. Rather than

something that *is*, as in “I have intimacy with you,” intimacy is a master narrative, that alongside other oppressive discourses, work together to govern the spatio-temporal direction of our desires. To interrupt and reroute normative spatio-temporal dynamics, it seems to me that intimacy needs queerness, as in “how might I do intimacy with you” and “why intimacy and how?”. Performance, as a site of culture and relation where something happens, is a site where we might locate and consider queer intimacy.

Queer intimacy in performance names the affective doing of performance, the immediate and potential relations that exist in the temporal swirl of before, during and after. At the intersections of texts, discourses and bodies in performance are complex and potentially transformative relations. While this can apply to the experience of actual people sharing space in any given performance, this project is not a qualitative interpretation or audience analysis. Jill Dolan’s *Utopia in Performance* is one model that draws on her own experiences of audiencing theater and performance. It is useful and informative here but this is not that kind of analysis. Rather, each chapter looks at sites of culture that the performances address, namely, same-sex marriage, identity, immigration, and transgender representation, and considers the conditions and discourses through which performances emerge and how this in turn forms back on relation.

What, then, is this relation, and how does it happen? The relationship is not merely a performer-audience dyad, nor it is a mental or intellectual encounter with new or different perspectives on ideas. The relation is a *dynamic* that happens in and through performance, creating a proximity of experience through narrative, both visual and vocal. People, ideas, desires, politics share space in performance. There is meaning and

significance here in this relation. The discourses in relation to the text and the bodies of the performers form the basis of my analysis.

In this project, the relationality among performers and audiences is central. Performance, as a site of culture, is a site of relation. What I will argue in this and subsequent chapters through sites of performance is that we must attend to relationality, to the politics of relation among performers and audiences. That relation, of performer and audience, that I call queer intimacy produces an emergent subjectivity. The emergent subjectivity is a coalitional performance subject (Pérez and Goltz), a kind of belonging in motion that is the affective and political doing of performance.<sup>1</sup> Carrillo Rowe, writing about relations of feminist academics, theorizes that coalitional subjectivity happens through intentional relations across difference, what she calls differential belonging (*Power* 22). Karma Chávez emphasizes the ways in which coalitions come together to address discourses of LGBT and immigrant issues. Chávez argues that coming together in these ways constitute what she calls “coalitional moments,” out of which groups may “create space to reenvision and potentially reconstruct rhetorical imaginaries” (8). In this way, she addresses the political imperatives of coalition building, regardless of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Coalitional subjectivity in performance is a concept initially conceived and written about with my coauthor and performance collaborator, Dustin Bradley Goltz. In “Treading Across Lines in the Sand: Performing Bodies in Coalitional Subjectivity,” we draw on our experiences through co-authoring and performing together. We make the argument against the personal in personal narrative and open the personal to account for the relational. Through what we call “collaborative narrative,” we understand our individual subjectivities through performing together to be produced as a coalitional subjectivity. In the final section of the essay we read our coalitional subjectivity through multiple sites of the performance for different audiences and experience a threat to our newly formed subjectivity through audience responses that emphasize, or return to, our singular and individuated selves. We feel “pried apart” from one another and from the coalitional potential with the audience. In this project, I utilize the idea of a coalitional performance subject not between co-authors and co-performers but rather among performers and audience. Therefore, I extend what in the final section of the performance might be understood as failure, and tend more closely to the relations and coalitional potentials among audience and performers as a coalitional performance subject. Turning back on this essay, my argument here is that queer intimacy might allow for the varied audience responses and rather than turn away from the prying apart, might rather be the conditions of coalition.

difficulty, uncertainty and the “messiness” of their doing (147). She stresses, “Coalition is not comfortable. It is not home. It is scary and unpredictable” (147). The queer intimacy of performance, the relation among performers and audiences is similarly situated, bringing people together across difference. Rather than collapse difference into a singular emergent subjectivity through performance, a coalitional performance subject maintains and recognizes the importance of our differences and what they bring in relation.

Queer intimacy makes an intervention into performance and cultural studies and contributes to discussions of audience and relation in and through the acts of performance. It is to take up Janet Jakobsen’s argument that asks the question “Can Homosexuals End Western Civilization as We Know It?” and rousingly join her in the affirmative through performance. Each chapter looks at performances as sites of queer intimacy. Performances are situated in the cultural discourses they address and the analysis examines the relations and subjectivities that are hailed and resisted through acts of performance. Through performance, the object of analysis is relation and culture as performance brings together texts, discourse, and bodies.

### Overview

Each of the following three chapters takes up a different discourse of neoliberalism through an analysis of narrative performance texts that reflect the lived experience of those discourses: Chapter Two focuses on same-sex marriage through the stories of white gay men, Chapter Three looks at family from the perspective of a transgender person of color living in diaspora, and Chapter Four considers immigration and multiculturalism narrated by a migrant. Each performance context is read through

and as a site of queer intimacy. The performance artists and texts that I read in each chapter are Tim Miller's *Lay of the Land* and Dustin Goltz' *Blasphemies on Forever* in Chapter Two, D-Lo's *Ramble-ations* and *D'FunQT* in Chapter Three, and in Chapter Four Guillermo Gómez-Peña's *Border Brujo*. Four of the performances I have seen live, at least once, and some multiple times in different spaces. In the absence of a live audiencing, of *Border Brujo* and *D'FunQT*, I have used video recordings and performance texts.

Chapter Two looks at the mainstream gay and lesbian political agenda of same-sex marriage. It is not an explicit argument against marriage, but does take up queer critiques of same-sex marriage as a narrowing of queer politics and issues. Here I am specifically interested in the ways neoliberalism secures normative relations. One effect of neoliberalism is an emphasis on the family and familial in-dependence. Through homonormativity, or the normalization of gay and lesbian relations that more closely mirror heteronormative relations, other types of relations—polyamorous, asexual, and more—are seen as less valid and without the same kinds of state recognition and protection. Moreover, the question emerges as to what happens to gay identity, again a narrowing, and also how and of what importance a gay political agenda is narrowed—health care, homelessness, sex in/and public, become less visible or pushed aside in favor of this particular right and recognition. Some argue that this is in response to the AIDS crisis, therefore calling attention to the kinds of healing/pain that queer publics have not fully mourned (Schulman; see also Lee). So an important part of this chapter looks at the relation of gay and lesbian, here specifically white gay men, in relation to the state and what I call the claims to/or loss of neoliberal inheritance.

Tim Miller's *Lay of the Land* and Dustin Goltz' *Blasphemies on Forever: Remembering Queer Futures* demonstrate a complex negotiation of relations to the state and to a shifting gay identity: Tim Miller, through the persona of the statue of liberty rewrites her invitation to "give me your fierce faggots your strong dykes," while Dustin Goltz ("Blasphemies") ambivalently marks the shift that happens in gay men who are "no longer the pervert or predator, we're American to the core." While Miller constructs homophobia as outside the nation, Goltz suggests that we have exchanged one construction of gays for another. Later in this scene, the American white, waspy gays don't even fuck anymore. Sex then, especially gay sex, is the consequence that is lost in exchange for belonging.

Family, and its boundaries around gendered, sexual, and raced identities, are the subject of the next chapter. While transgender has always existed in tense relation to gay, lesbian, and even queer publics and politics, the coalitional impulse to join these was in response to larger sexual rights movements, health crises, and others in the 80s. However, in the current moment, there is more and more of a political split or disidentification among the subjectivities that make up LGBTQQIAA. So even when more and more letters are being added to the alphabet soup of queer identities, in practice, through neoliberal discourses, they are pried farther apart. This is especially true for trans-subjectivities who are not white nor American. In this chapter, then, I look at two performances by queer, trans Sri Lankan Los Angeles based performer D'Lo. D'Lo writes that "Queer Hindu Hip Hop—These 3 things make me but don't allow for one another. This is my attempt at fusing these elements of my being (and my imaginary friends) onto the stage" (D'Lo). While the previous chapter looks at the arguments and



ambivalence about gay marriage, D'Lo offers a coalitional gesture with the audience by pronouncing the audience queer, trans, and Sri Lankan or South Asian for one night. Differences are temporarily suspended in order to construct a relation of similarity and proximity. He shifts from an object, through discourses of difference, into the center through a construction of relation.

The final analysis chapter addresses themes of multiculturalism and immigration through looking at neoliberal discourses of difference that emerge in the post-80s socioeconomic shift. In this historical moment, in a rhetoric and practice that continues today, multiculturalism emerges as a homogenizing gesture of inclusion. The conditions of multiculturalism insist that difference—language, custom, even identity—be sublimated as a condition of belonging. Here I read the 1988 performance *Border Brujo* by Mexican, Chicano artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Gómez-Peña is known for spectacular representations of racial, gendered, sexualized stereotypings in order to provoke dialogue and reflection around issues of immigration and cultural difference. However bizarre his aesthetic may intentionally be, his objective is collective consideration and dialogue. Toward the beginning of the performance, he constructs a relation through politics and policies of immigration and then moves through different personas, scenarios, and actions: he states, “I come following your dream your dream became my nightmare once here I dreamt you didn’t exist I dreamt a map without borders & when I dream like this you suffer my dream becomes your nightmare” (Gómez-Peña, “Border”). In calling attention to border politics, the politic of relation generated through mainstream rhetorics of immigration and multiculturalism, he highlights the affect of fear and nightmares that bind bodies across difference. His embedded references hail the

discourses of immigration policy, NAFTA, the American dream, and xenophobia as the site to name, reclaim, and rearticulate the conditions of relation among performer and audience.

Finally, in the conclusion, through a series of encounters and reflections, I address the contributions, limitations, and two final sites of queer intimacy. The first site of queer intimacy is through the performance work that I participated in with Guillermo Gómez-Peña's performance troupe, La Pocha Nostra. Founded in the 1993, by 2005 La Pocha Nostra began conducting performance workshops with international artists to share La Pocha Nostra's performance methodology. I participated in three workshops between 2008 and 2009 in two countries and three different cities. Included in this section is a performative exploration of queer intimacy from inside a performance. Another encounter in the reflection, addresses the economic side of performance in a time of neoliberalism, the ways in which neoliberalism informs the production of performance, again through La Pocha Nostra. In 2011, La Pocha Nostra entered into the increasingly popular method of crowd sourcing to fund performance. I describe and analyze La Pocha Nostra's "conceptual live art credit union" which was publicly funded by individuals in excess of ten thousand dollars. My argument here is to extend the contributions of queer intimacy and to take seriously the neoliberal conditions that not only shape our performances but that inform the very means of production.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT DO WE DO WHEN I DO?

White poufy dresses. Tuxedos. Fancy suits, togas, accoutrements. Flowers, candles, birds. People. Roles. Weddings. Weddings, same-sex or otherwise, can be quite the performance events. As performance, Elizabeth Freeman (*Wedding*) writes, weddings function as openings. Understood as ritual, the highly stylized spaces of wedding performances are liminal. Through the enactment, we might land any place, any time. It is in the particular moment of coming together, the situatedness and the relational dynamic in that time and place with those people, that holds the potential to determine what this will mean, where these events will take us. We will not know until we arrive. After. And through the performance we, the collectivity of performers and audiences, make that happen. Weddings brim with potentiality.

Marriage does not. Freeman (*Wedding*) continues: marriage is a well-worn narrative. An old yarn. The end of the story. In literature and fairy tale, marriage is the end point that bleeds into the happily. Ever. After. Whereas weddings hold the potential to push at the edges of knowing, gesture toward alternate imaginaries, marriage is the turning point in the heteronormative cultural narrative that dominates Western culture. It is what one does, where one goes, and marks the normative belonging, expectation, of citizenship. Marriage shifts one's relation to the state and to society as a whole. A point of arrival, marriage signals the end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood. Coupledness. Accountability. Tax credits and legalized inheritance. Marriage is the locus of normal (Warner, *Trouble*; Warner, "Normal"), what circulates in queer theory as

heteronormative temporality (see Halberstam, *Queer*; Muñoz, *Cruising*; Freeman, *Time*; Warner, *Fear*; Duggan, *Twilight*; Berlant, *Queen*).

Many readers, many people, are likely to take issue with this read of marriage. If marriage is one part of a structure, one form of subjectification through dominant narratives, then individual couples do their marriages in many different ways. People, in the form of couples, have agency, define their own path within the construct of marriage. Certainly the doing of marriage differently was one response to the feminist critique of marriage as patriarchal. Short of those radical feminists who would dismantle the institution on the grounds of its capitalist, power-laden, legal limitations for women and non-white people, up to and even after *Loving v. Virginia*, many took those critiques and set out to redefine the doing of marriage. Keeping names, hyphenating names, open marriages. There are countless ways to do marriage that would be unrecognizable to the norm. Yet the structures, the master narratives, the regulation, remain intact.

That marriage is done, if not desired, is understandable. As a structure, marriage shapes the contours of (most of) our lives before birth. Heteronormative temporality is a given. It is woven into the fabric of our culture and permeates our narratives. From the often punishing and embarrassing retorts directed at two children discovered together, even children move swiftly from sitting in a tree to K-I-S-S-I-N-G. The potential of that exploration is directed into love, marriage, and then children. The temporal and relational formula of this nursery rhyme is duplicated in countless narratives that circulate all around us. Judith Roof argues that all narrative is heteronormative. Indeed, it is difficult to do otherwise, as not doing it often leads to the hypervisibility, non-belonging, even criminality, of the not normal, the Other.

Understanding marriage as a structure that forms subjectivities of normalcy, of proper citizenship, and cultural belonging opens the possibility to consider the conditions of its productions. If marriage is the endpoint, what are the conditions that make it so desirable? What forces lead to this particular relational configuration? Historically, marriage has taken different forms and different conditions led to its normalcy. In Europe, marriages only institutionalized with the rise of capitalism and prior to that were matters only concerning the state (Freeman, *Wedding*). In the United States, the regulation and institutionalization of marriage was part of the production of the nation, race and citizenship, and capital (Eng; Freeman, *Wedding*). Conditions arose for appropriate relations and these relations were routed through the law. Women's citizenship and inheritance rights were legible through and followed their husbands (Freeman, *Wedding*, 22-23). Marriage rights of the slave population were regulated through ownership and petitions to marry had to include demonstration of fiscal ability (Freeman, *Wedding* 23; on the regulation of black intimacy see also Eng; Jenkins). Other regulations of marriage included, and still do include, proscriptions against polygamy and familial relation as well as standards of physical health (Freeman, *Wedding* 24). The addition of the physical regulation of sexuality was codified much later in the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996. The Defense of Marriage Act, a performative accomplished handed down by President Bill Clinton which arrived at a crucial point of neoliberal prosperity, simultaneously functioned to further mobilize the burgeoning same-sex marriage movement that began in the early 1990s (Warner, "Normaller" 121). Another catalyst would follow, also at the federal level. In 2003 George W. Bush enacted Marriage Protection Week, to be held the week following National Coming Out Day (for

a discussion of Bush's timing, see Brandzel 181). From these historical movements, the narrative directive comes down to everyone should want to get married, but not everyone can. In a capitalist culture, scarcity and belonging always drive up the price, inform our narratives, and cultivate desire.

Prior to the same-sex marriage movements that began to gain traction in the 1990s, one of the tenets of the same-sex rights movements argued for the civil rights and visibility of lesbian and gay people and emerged alongside similar and at times intersecting movements for the rights of women, and racial minorities including Chicanos, Asian Americans, American Indians, and the ongoing Black Civil Rights and Black Power movements. These movements were situated in the context for larger social changes, responding to the war in Vietnam, which came quickly on the heels of the cultural and global changes set in place in the wake of World War II. Collectively, these arguments for visibility and inclusion are the backdrop of, and the motivation for, the culture wars in the 1980s; these convergences were coterminous with the rise of neoliberalism (Duggan, *Twilight*).

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the rise of neoliberalism shifts cultural narratives of relationality. For marriage, then, neoliberalism and neoliberal relationality change the conditions and production of marriage. Neoliberal relationality heightens the stakes of marriage, ups the urgency, and for same-sex relations, anchors same-sex relations to the state (Whitehead). The neoliberal cause sets forth to dequeen the lives of same-sex relations. Neoliberal citizenship mandates the responsible and highly privatized married couple. Though in the intimate public sphere, Berlant explains that the private—or intimate relations—are highly public, the publicity of intimacy translates into

appropriate performances of intimacy. Despite the movements that tried to socially redefine lesbian and gay sociality in public, these forms of relation remain socially and legally marginal. Out of bounds. Other. It is no wonder then that the pervasive structures of neoliberalism would provide such a pull for some gays and lesbians. Why be visible (out, proud) if you cannot be accepted as normal, go the rhetorics and logics of the early same-sex marriage and gay and lesbian assimilation movements, primarily led by white gay men (Duggan, *Twilight*; Warner, “Normaller”). The neoliberal conditions that produce marriage might look similar to narratives of marriage past; however, the impact has been huge. And changing swiftly.

The Human Rights Campaign website reports that as of winter 2014, seventeen states and the District of Columbia have legalized same-sex marriage. Additional challenges, including proposed legislation for marriage, civil unions and domestic partnerships continue across the nation and the globe. Same-sex marriage rights and obstacles to it emerge historically through court cases challenging the constitutionality of a ban. The 1971 US Supreme Court dismissed the case of *Baker v. Nelson*. In this case, two men had applied for a marriage license in Minnesota and when denied appealed to the US Supreme Court claiming the denial was a violation of Equal Protection and privacy. The Court did not so much rule against the men as decided there was no federal question to be answered. From 1971 through 1973, thirteen states passed laws defining marriage between a man and a woman (Brandzel 181-3). While the initial legal challenges build on past arguments of antidiscrimination of race and gender and argue for similar constitutional protection of gay identity as a protected class (Brandzel 181-7), the contemporary same-sex marriage arguments made vociferously by groups such as the

Human Rights Campaign and Marriage Equality, emerge rhetorically as single-issue and intimate rights campaigns whose investments in inclusion and recognition by the state mirror neoliberal ideology (Duggan, *Twilight* 48-51; Whitehead).

In the fall of 2012, two cases regarding same-sex marriage were heard by the US Supreme Court. Argued on March 26 and March 27, 2013, respectively, the cases of *Hollingsworth v. Perry* and *U.S. v. Windsor* each challenged a different aspect of same-sex marriage legislation. In *Hollingsworth*, a previously married male couple in California challenged the legality of Proposition 8 in California, which overturned the brief state allowance of same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriages performed during that time were rendered null. *Windsor* took action on a national level. Though New York State legalized same-sex marriage, the federal government was bound by the Defense of Marriage Act. Because the federal government did not recognize Edith Windsor's marriage to Thea Clara Spyer, on the event of Spyer's death and as the executor of Spyer's will, Windsor was liable for a tax bill of approximately \$360,000.

Whereas in *Baker v. Nelson* the US Supreme Court argued there were was no "substantial federal question," these cases challenged state and federal laws. The rulings in each of the cases were handed down on June 26, 2013, in the final moments before the Court's session adjourned. The handing down of the rulings was a media event, with standby and moment-to-moment coverage followed by live analysis and discussion that added to the urgency and legitimacy of the moment. In *Hollingsworth*, the majority decision vacated the lower court's decision and sent it back to them. That California court's decision to not rehear the case in effect nullified Proposition 8 and marriage was again legal in California. In *Windsor*, however, the majority opinion did make a ruling,



overturning the Defense of Marriage Act on constitutional grounds, including due process and equal protection. The directive was at the federal level, however, mandating the federal government recognize and guarantee protections to all legally married couples. The Court ruling leaves intact each state's rights to determine the legality of marriage and as of yet there is no federal allowance for marriage.

Queer critiques of the same-sex marriage movement, partially rehearsed above through situating same-sex marriage as part and parcel of neoliberal relationality, raise further questions around the meaning of queer and the doing of queer relationality. The conditions of neoliberalism that are changing marriage are also sucking the potential from queer. What queer relationality opens marriage forecloses (Muñoz, *Cruising*). Marriage limits legal and social recognition of alternate forms of relationality, including polygamy, polyamory, friendships, and singleness (see Freeman, *Wedding*; Duggan, "Beyond"; Whitehead; Halberstam, *Gaga*; Kipness). What emerges through the rubric of economic, social, legal, and relational normality (Warner, *Trouble*) Lisa Duggan names homonormativity (*Twilight* 50, 65). Although the next chapter takes up transgender constructions of homonormativity that predate and in some ways broaden Duggan's argument, in this chapter I use Duggan's discussion as a way to link performance as a mode of queer visibility.

The previous chapter situates queer performance as one site, among others, of resistance. Performance functions as a platform for narratives that might not otherwise be heard, as a place of visibility and dialogue for marginalized voices and stories (Langellier, "Two"). Social movements such as those that arose in response to HIV/AIDS have used the kind of personal narrative and autobiographical performance under

consideration in this chapter as a tactic of public intervention, awareness and education, personal narrative and testimony. Performance used in these ways can reflect, resist, and re-imagine dominant cultural, governmental, and medical (in)action (see Román, *Acts*; Corey, *HIV*). Hence, performance does double duty. Its labor addresses the structural through the individual; performance yokes the personal to the structural to pry open an imaginary to do something differently.

However much we might understand rights-based performance to resist structures of oppression—as indeed it claims to do, and sometimes does—the work of this project is to consider the labor of performance, the structures informing it, and the relations that are possible through it. As the conditions of neoliberalism continue to inform the same-sex marriage movement then what is the labor of performance? Is this performance in the service of neoliberalism? When “queer” performance promotes, insists on, imagines narrow forms of relation, what becomes of queer? Particularly queer forms of relationality? Of queer intimacy? Of performance? The remainder of this chapter centers these questions of neoliberal relationality and queer intimacy in contemporary gay and queer performance, through Tim Miller’s *Lay of the Land* and Dustin Goltz’s *Blasphemies on Forever: Remembering Queer Futures*.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere I have written about Goltz’s *Blasphemies on Forever*. The themes present in that article emerge from an earlier draft of this chapter. The main argument of that article addresses the politics of relation through the performance and include gay men in relation to normativity, how I as queer Chicana enter the story of a white gay man, and how the performance opens or forecloses relations across difference. Where applicable, I cite the ideas that have already been published.

## Queer Performance of/and White Gay Men

One thread of the temporal turn in queer theory names the organization of time in support of heteronormativity. Though Michael Warner deftly exposes the investments in, and fallacies of, “normal,” dominant cultural structures map our lives along a set timeline. In *Blasphemies on Forever: Remembering Queer Futures*, Dustin Goltz lays out his investment in performatively exposing and rerouting time through queer relations. The opening of *Blasphemies* begins when the empty silent stage lights up in glowing white letters. A poem by Dennis Cooper frames a point of entry and a (dis)orientation:

Time is a construct.  
Invented so we wouldn't miss  
mass and meals  
births and bombing raids,  
weddings and wakes,  
meetings and monied accounts.  
What is time?

A false finite; a blasphemy on forever (Goltz, “Blasphemies”).

Cooper's alliteration underscores mundane and spectacular moments that plot our daily lives to expose the constructedness of the ways we mark it. Implicit in the actions Cooper names are the intersections of time and heteronormativity: the inevitable (war, death, work) stand next to obligations (worship, marriage, reproduction). Goltz's use of Cooper by way of opening the performance scrambles time and performance. The performance, like heteronormative time, relies on the convention of an opening, like a wedding.

However, rather than settle into the expectations of what comes next (marriage, the rest of the performance), the audience must confront this constructedness. This raises important questions of queer temporality and queer performance by bringing our attention to time.

Time as a “blasphemy on forever” insists that forever cannot be harnessed, manipulated. To call time out as a blasphemy exposes time as a mechanism of control, a seemingly arbitrary yet powerful illusion that manipulates lives along a particular path in a specific way. It is to secure that path in the service of predictability, certainty, in service of the normal and the appropriate. While Butler’s (*Gender*) theory of performativity demonstrates the instability of the ever-changing normal that is now, normal nonetheless presents itself as natural, something we can grasp at and strive for in the unfolding of a life and the disciplining of bodies. As children, before we drop, we find our bodies move to the pulse of the now-normal. Our familial kin and cultural constructs both call us into the world. Even when they are at odds with one another, they collectively mold our subjectivities and have a hand in shaping our future. Time gets away from us. It works on its own to do its bidding. We have lost control over time. Time is indeed a blasphemy on forever.

If time, and its keepers, blaspheme forever, what might it mean to blaspheme back? Might performance, in a reverse interpellation, blaspheme blasphemy? What might it mean, using the second half of Goltz’s title, to enact “Remembering Queer Futures”? To remember the future implies the work of time travel, the ability to move back and forth in time, to connect and also undo the constructedness imposed on bodies in the service of opening an alternative. To time travel is not necessarily to go back and *do*

things differently in ways that alter the course of time. It is not a linear return and progress model that performance invests in by reconsidering past events. Rather, time travel in performance means to re-turn to re-consider meaning, or Schechner's twice-behaved behavior. It is to embody a past self and connect it to other selves. It is to stitch together an imaginary that might not otherwise have been available in the constructedness of time. Time imposes the danger of taking away the work of the imaginary. Meaning is made for us when we walk through time ticking off the mundane and spectacular. Performance can work within time limits and puts it to queer uses. Performance can become queer temporality unfolding in the present tense, not in the service of time but rather the unpredictability of futurity. The queer bodies on stage in *Blasphemies* and *Lay of the Land* refuse linear plot lines in favor of the kind of the kind of time travel performance permits.

The choice to center these performances by these white gay men is deliberate and conscious, yet not without risks. One risk of writing about whiteness and white gay men is re-centering whiteness. This is a risk I am willing to take, as writing about whiteness through the performance narratives of white gay men adds to understandings of the interconnections among neoliberalism and whiteness, the ways that neoliberalism informs relations, and the ways neoliberalism is coterminous with the mainstream gay and lesbian agenda for same-sex marriage.

On a slightly less structural level, but also not distinct from it, these performers and performances are of interest to me personally. I have layered and complex relations with Miller and Goltz as artists and as men. My audiencing and analyses of these performances, particularly through and alongside one another, expose the tensions among

proximity and critical distance for the friend/critic, while at the same time reveals the messiness and overlap among queer politics in activism and theory. These tensions, rather than foreclosing analysis, can be especially productive (see Román, *Acts*; Dolan, *Feminist*). In the remainder of this section I introduce the performers and their performances.

### Tim Miller's (Still) Queer Body? *Lay of the Land*'s Relational Investments

I was at the premier of Tim Miller's *Lay of the Land* at Highways Performance Space in Los Angeles in 2009 and audienced it again in February 2010 in Chicago. *Lay of the Land* is a performance about the same-sex marriage movement. Through Miller's personal narratives that reflect back on, at times through vivid imaginaries and scene-scapes, he argues that marriage is a civil right, the right of every citizen, and to deny these rights is to locate the queer—gay and lesbian—outside the nation. These arguments are not unfamiliar in the arena of same-sex marriage talk. They circulate widely and in the mainstream. What renders Miller's argument separate is the aesthetic, the personal. We may have heard these arguments, but in performance, these arguments are attached to a body, Tim's body, and Tim's story. Miller's story is his story, and at the same time we are invited into the story as listeners, establishing a relation (see Langellier and Peterson). It is through this relation that the audience is touched to consider the personal at stake in the fight for same-sex marriage. In this story, marriage is the privileged relation. Other relations are not so much excluded as they are not present. Through this narrative, the audience is interpellated into the discourse of the assimilationalist move of neoliberal relationality, of same-sex marriage. Though this is a single-axis argument—sexuality and

gay rights—there are multiple strands informing this performance and the relations it establishes, forecloses, and taps into in its doing that are worth considering further through the performance. It begins with the non-beginning interruption of convention and relation among performers and audiences.

As often happens in Miller's performances, it is difficult to pinpoint the moment Miller's performance begins. Rather than make an appearance from behind a curtain, Miller is present in the lobby or the audience of a performance space before the assigned start time. He greets people by name and introduces himself to others. While this generates a feeling of intimacy and blurs the boundary between performer-audience and backstage-front stage, it also provides Miller with improvisational tools during the performance.

The audience members he greets before the show are likely to be called by name during its duration, as examples or touchstones. These tactics personalize the event and implicate the audience within its politics. We join the discussion. At times, this has the effect of producing audience as community. The audience is being hailed by the performer and called to bear witness to, be interpellated into, an argument and a politic: same-sex marriage as an equal right. While audiences are performers that the performer on stage depends upon, audiences generally follow conventions and do not take issue with a performer on stage. Audiences do not often "talk back" in the moment. Even when they are invited to, as Miller often does, the conventions of staged performance dictate a certain kind of decorum. Toward what end? What does this agreement accomplish? The performer and audience agree to suspend dialogue and give the performer the floor, even if a member might want to probe further, for or against. Although this provides a certain

agency and emergent subjectivity for marginalized subjects—the speaking performer—other things may simultaneously be happening.

Unlike other types of performance discussed in other chapters that position a more open relation and direction, this type of scripted performance situates the author-performer in a position of some authority and power. It is worth considering this kind of power in the service of defining a politic and agenda. In *Lay of the Land* Miller narrates a memory of his participation in a political protest, a same-sex marriage rally. Through the narration, the audience becomes part of the protest standing with the marchers in relations to the passers-by who are against them. Only two positions are represented, which is often consistent with media representations that rarely include queer critiques of marriage. Even rarer are feminist critiques of marriage included. This didactic approach produces an us/them binary. Dissent or critique is absent. Marriage is not only a good thing, it is the thing. However much performance accomplishes relation in this way, queer intimacy provides us the opening to account for multiple voices and subject positions. In this way queer intimacy exceeds even the most didactic performances for awareness of difference and to ask how relations are constituted.

The kind of intimacy and belonging that audience members might find themselves involved in during Miller's performances are not limited to linguistic interpellation. Performance relies upon and calls attention to bodies in space and in relation. Miller has a reputation for using his body quite deliberately as a character and a costume. Though he is not in *Lay of the Land*, in previous performances he has often been naked. Audience members, suspecting or not, have functioned as intimate props as Miller places himself in a lap and directly addresses the person. Frederick Corey ("Tim Miller's Body") writes



across Miller's "Body (of Work)" with an eye on both his corporeal body and his corpus of performance. Corey writes that Miller's physical body—soft, white—fosters both familiarity and intimacy with audience members. Corey does not use Miller's body to discredit his work. Rather, the privileges of white and male bodies might mean that for some audience members Miller's body is a site of consumption, of recognition, and authority.

For others, this same body functions as a point of departure from *queerness*, as a rigid and privileged site of *gayness*. Peggy Phelan writes in response to Miller's *My Queer Body* that "It's not that young white men can't be queer—it's just that maleness and whiteness don't disappear at the drop of a name" (31). More specifically, Phelan takes aim at Miller's penis, both as a character in the performance and as an unsheathed presence. Miller, seated naked on an audience member, repeatedly commands his penis to 'get hard because...' (62). David Román reads Miller's present and public penis as politicizing desire, particularly in a moment of HIV/AIDS. For the naked male body to be present, public, visible, and potentially hard calls attention to the ways HIV/AIDS reroutes the pleasure and visibility possible in gay relations. Sex is political and performance can serve as a reminder of what is at stake when we collectively remember, mourn, and invest in sex. The naked body, the present penis, is a political site in a historical moment.

At the same time the penis may be radically political, it, like its whiteness, never strays far from its relation to masculinity, phallogentrism, and privilege. Whereas Phelan's essay does not ceremoniously celebrate Miller's performance or body, penis included, Corey and Román both perhaps demonstrate the politics of audiencing from

subject positions that intersect with the performer and issues crafted through the performer's body and narrative as they are situated in larger political issues. While Phelan is clearly invested in a queer politic, as a woman and feminist she might also be more suspect of Miller's male body. This critique by women that queer theory relies too much on the visibility of gay men is not Phelan's alone (see also J. Rodríguez; Cvetkovitch, *Archive*) nor is it to suggest that gay men do not also invest in feminism and female visibility. Rather, it is to underscore the nuances of queerness and the politics of audiencing, critique, relation, and political investments; of the ways queer intimacy in performance accounts for the multiplicity of audiencing.

In *Lay of the Land*, Miller's body remains clothed throughout the performance. What does it mean for Miller's body to remain clothed? Does clothing—shorts, boots, tank top—keep the aging gay body from the gaze? Is it no longer an object for political display? Or does the naked body not serve the politic of the performance? Is the naked body perhaps incongruous with meanings of gay marriage? Does Miller's familiarly naked body now clothed communicate a different agenda, one that needs to be clothed to be taken seriously, as seriously as the naked body once was? Is the public penis that calls for public intimacy inconsistent with the intimate public sphere of neoliberalism, whose very public image is the private and monogamous couple? Though gay sex does make its way into Miller's narratives, the naked body does not. Although the naked gay white body may not be the same kind of spectacle on stage as it once was, may no longer name the kind of politic that was present in the early days of HIV/AIDS, the clothed body speaks just as loudly, particularly in a moment of late liberalism and in the fight for same-sex marriage.

Within the performance, Miller anchors his clothed body in the performance space and in relation to his audience through his participation in an anti-Proposition 8 march in Los Angeles. Throughout the performance the march functions as the framing and touchstone from which Miller departs and returns. Experiences during the march prompt other memories and narratives. Together, the march and the other moments in Miller's life collectively stitch together a multifaceted argument for the legalization of same-sex marriage. For example, the passerby in an SUV who yells, "Fuck that marriage license! You can stick that where the sun don't shine," reminds Miller of his childhood experiments with yoga in the California sun (Miller, *Lay*). As Miller opens his asshole to the sun to see if there are really places where the sun does not shine, he demonstrates something special for the audience: that he can link and transform just about anything, including discursive and communicative violence, to his own sexual pleasure. That everything is, or can be, about pleasure refuses to separate political activism from pleasure and also locates Miller within a queer political activist lineage that includes performance.

Miller was a sexually active gay man in the early days of HIV/AIDS, an epidemic coterminous with and also shaped by the rise of neoliberalism. These collectively provided an assault to gay men and lesbians on the heels of the previous civil rights era that would ultimately give way to further social movements (Treichler). These responses, including organizations such as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), are important for the ways they were able to swiftly mobilize bodies in public action (Schulman; Gould). This kind of actions taken at times meant that people were susceptible to arrest and other state violence. In his book *1001 Beds, Lay of the Land*, and

other performances, Miller often recounts this type of activism. As I have shown above, Miller's politic layers violence with pleasure. At times, he portrays arrest as a badge of honor and an opportunity for sex. The jail cells fill with protesters, maybe strangers, who are soon making out.

Though Miller's politic complicates state responses and extends the political resistance of a protest through acts of same-sex public sex, it is also important to ask whose bodies are doing the resisting, how, and what they rely on to do so. In this instance, to be willing and able to be arrested, to be able to turn the jail cell into a cruising site, Miller must have knowledge of and trust the legal and political system in which he participates. To resist the state in this way is to also recognize the state, to recognize, accept, and rely on citizenship. Miller places his body on the line because he can. Below I develop this further to indicate the nationalism embedded in this logic. Here I want to point out the ways in which citizenship gets deployed in the service of same-sex marriage. Miller relies on his citizenship and white privilege to be arrested (and released in a reasonable amount of time) while simultaneously deploying the threat to his citizenship that marriage rights would repair. While during HIV/AIDS these tactics might have been seen as worth it because bodies literally had everything to lose—lives disappeared in numbers yet to be recognized publicly by the state (Schulman)—in same-sex marriage bodies seemingly have everything to gain.

At what cost are the gains of same-sex marriage to be had? HIV/AIDS activism meant coalitions of issues and bodies across difference; it was a broad public that was generated through trauma (Cvetkovitch, *Archive*). Same-sex marriage, however, is critiqued for its narrow vision (Whitehead; Duggan; Freeman, *Wedding*). Some

arguments suggest that the narrowing of the gay and lesbian political agenda emerges from the vastness of HIV/AIDS activism and loss, as a turning away from the publicness of feeling and mourning toward the privacy of marriage relations (Schulman). The turn toward the private as a response to the kind of public and political depression must also be situated beyond the individual into the structural context of neoliberalism (Cvetkovitch, *Depression*).

What I find interesting is not that the subject of Miller's performance work reflects upon and at times fantastically re-imagines his activist work, but that his activist performance furthers narrow ends. Even as Miller's earlier work participates in and through the privileges of whiteness, and gay white maleness, he has also resisted normativity: homophobia, HIV/AIDS, access to health care, immigration policy, and more. In other words, it resists some discourses while reinforcing others. We may read Miller's earlier work as promoting a narrow agenda that centers Miller's own life and by extension the lives of white gay men, and yet his earlier work simultaneously contributes to an awareness of self, queerness and its visibility, sex-positivity, and community building (Román). Further, Miller's performance circuit that relies heavily on university sponsorship means that he often facilitates workshops with students and community members. His presence on campuses, public and private, sometimes generates the kind of controversy that sparks discussion (Miller *1001 Beds*) while it simultaneously provides younger artists the opportunity to develop their performance in relation to Miller as an older performer and renders those voices visible through public performances.

The question that I am interested in is the arguable shift that Miller's work takes, or what happens when he does take up an issue that so closely links the end of

homophobia with the promotion of nationalism and hetero- and homo-normativity. In *Lay of the Land*, while homophobia is raised as a theme alongside illegal wars (Iraq, Afghanistan)—“[the Statue of] Liberty is CHOKING. America is choking on that MSG laced piece of tough homophobia trapped in her throat”—these issues are routed not in resistance to the nation but through homonormativity and homonationalism (Miller, *Lay*). This is not to suggest that *Lay of the Land* works only in the service of normativity and labors no resistance but rather to pose the question of performance in a time of neoliberalism.

Dustin Goltz’s *Blasphemies on Forever: Pop Culture Acid Trip Imaginary*

Dustin Goltz’s performance is most familiar in local art spaces in Chicago and the Phoenix metropolitan area and within the discipline of communication studies.

*Blasphemies on Forever* debuted at DePaul University in the spring of 2009. It was performed again multiple times in Chicago and also in Phoenix. I was present for two live performances of *Blasphemies* in Chicago, once at a local queer bar with a cabaret space and again at DePaul University as part of the National Communication Association annual conference. *Blasphemies* centers the “aging gay male body,” particularly as it is constructed through and against popular cultural representations of gay men. In his monograph *Queer Temporalities in Gay Male Representation* Goltz names and reads these representations for the ways popular culture constructs or denies futures for gay men. These themes manifest in *Blasphemies* to address popular cultural representations of older gay men—predators, dinosaurs, lonely and absent meaningful relations, or dead—in opposition to and in tension with queer youth—beautiful, innocent, hustlers, and also often without meaningful relations, or dead. While representations are often bleak for gay

men's futures, they are increasingly rerouted through normativity: marriage and children. In his written and staged scholarship Goltz theorizes through and against these representations to carve out spaces of queer futurity and imaginaries of gay male aging.

In the performance, popular culture is a dominant character that shapes Goltz's life and relations and he reads his experiences through and in relation to these discourses. In contrast to Miller's activism that was not uncommon for when he came of age, Goltz's life is more definitively shaped by popular culture. This is not to position civil activism or popular culture at odds or in hierarchical relation but to distinguish the contexts of meaning-making that the different gay performers, each from different gay generations (political, temporal) feature.

Goltz enters and exits his "aging gay man" (early 30s) persona through the world of popular culture, a site that not only constructs his self-image as a "gay man" but also informs the larger world of his being, self-understanding, and relations (Goltz, "Blasphemies"). His point of entry is through Tooter Turtle, a Saturday morning cartoon that aired during the 1960s, an airing that would have preceded Goltz's birth in the early 1970s, but in the already age of reruns was an important part of his experience and imaginary. In the world of Tooter Turtle, the recurring theme is boredom and return to past experiences. Tooter Turtle's curiosity of what he might have been motivates him to ask Mr. Wizard (the lizard) to "let him try," which is to grant him permission to return to a previous experience and time (Goltz, "Blasphemies"). Mr. Wizard, embodied on stage by "the Ghost," is portrayed by Goltz's off-stage partner Jason Zingsheim. Mr. Wizard reluctantly allows the return with the ever-cautionary, "Very well, my boy. But be careful" (Goltz, "Blasphemies"). Despite his experiences of going back in time that are

repeatedly unhappy and frightening, Tooter Turtle always wants to go. Goltz as Tooter Turtle returns through and with popular culture to gaze at his past. The audiences travel with Goltz to sites of past experiences of relation, including marriage.

Goltz-Tooter Turtle's return through time feels like a pop culture acid trip. Dizzying montages of film, TV, and media representations of gay men are the background to moments of his life to which he has returned to "try." The audience does not know exactly what the plea to try is for or against, or why he would want to return and what he wants to accomplish through return. Once Goltz drops into the past the audience quickly finds itself in dominant cultural narratives of gay men and Goltz's attempts to wrestle with and open time through creativity and imaginary. The reverse interpellation that happens here is against heteronormative temporality. Goltz's return to the past is to tap its potential for re-imagining future (Goltz, *Queer*; see also Muñoz, *Cruising*). The audience's role is sometimes as distanced witness: in the dark we observe dominant discursive narratives of emptiness and failure: the old queen (Goltz in drag) desperately clinging to a tuxedo clad handsome youth, 1950s style public service announcements warning of the predatory gays that roam the streets looking for children, a montage of iconic film figures whose narratives involve desperation, loneliness, and death. With Goltz hailing these discourses the audiences, in their multiple subject positions, experience the affective surge of what it means to be a gay man.

While Goltz hails these discourses to allow us to feel the weight of homophobia, he also uses parody and narrative to hail and reclaim these same images and their effects to provide himself and the audience with strategies of resistance and redefinition. He takes us into the depths of despair but, like Miller, does not cling to a victim subjectivity.



Rather, he insists on queer agency as a form of resistance and creativity, as a means to pry open relationality. Agency is not heroic or uncomplicated. Though the audiences do encounter ironic and parodied gay superheroes, Goltz does not sanitize queer strategies of resistance.

As a Bruce Springsteen character that wears a white T-shirt and red bandana wrapped around his sweating head, Goltz rewrites the song “One Song Glory” from the HIV/AIDS musical *Rent* to the tune of “Grandpa’s Horny.” In *Rent* “One Song Glory” is the rock star character’s attempt to write a song that will outlive his HIV+ body “before the virus takes hold.” It is the character’s attempt to be visible, to make an impact before he dies. “Grandpa’s Horny” mocks the rock star’s investment in his own importance. It marks the ongoing relation among old and gay men that the “post-AIDS” moment has done nothing to change. Young gay men are still kicked out of their parents’ homes and enter into mutually beneficial relations with older gay men in which the economy of exchange is sex. The youthful narrator of “Grandpa’s Horny” ultimately tells the old man who fucked him to “fuck off” for not giving him a place to stay for the night. He embodies the kind of anti-relationality that some see as queerness (Bersani; Edelman) while simultaneously participating in queer kinship as a mode of survival and belonging.

In another scene, the audience is more directly asked to participate in gay relation and cruising. While an animated dinosaur children’s scene plays on the screen, the Ghost holds a tray of saucy chicken wings as Goltz quickly and sloppily eats his way through them. The result is a fantastically messy Goltz who, rather than toweling himself off instead walks through the audience with his saucy hands and face, telling a “once upon a time” story with a cruising theme. As the older pterodactyls and baby brontosaurus

maneuver their way through cruising rituals, ejaculating their way through pleasure and shame, Goltz's messy body hovers over audience members who lean into and away from the symbolic and literal mess. The story ends with a whisper of care between the dinosaurs as unlike most fairytales, but like most popular narratives of gay men, we do not know what happens to the characters.

The audience sifts through these types of ambivalent relations with Goltz throughout the performance as we trip together through multiple sites and narratives. This ambivalence is especially projected onto marriage. Two significant stops on Tooter Turtle's journey through remembering include best man speeches at heterosexual weddings and marriage. Goltz, as best man, writes and performs his relations to the men he stands for through popular cultural references. In these first two weddings, marriage and heterosexuality interrupt his homosocial friendships. Marriage becomes the closing off of social relations in favor of the heteronormative timeline that includes marriage as a separation that fosters reproduction. This critique of marriage gives way to questions of what might have been and what might be.

Ultimately, as Tooter Turtle does, he has had enough of the past. Overwhelmed by the weight of remembering, Goltz as Tooter Turtle pleads with Mr. Wizard to "get me out of here." With an, "Oh! Here we are again. Dweezle, dreezle, drazzle, drone. Time for this one to come home," Mr. Wizard wrests Tooter Turtle from the agony of remembering. Though the audience is left to wonder what just happened through the return to remembering queer futures, however much Tooter Turtle turns away from where he was, he emerges with insights that he brings to notions of queer relation. Goltz refuses the binary of anti-relation/marriage and instead insists on the queer marriage as a

time and location of an unknown imaginary. The final scene of the performance is another wedding, this time between two gay men. He toasts his recognition that “marriage is not new. From our first breath, it is there for us to define the future, to structure a template for the years we live in this life.” In contrast to the fixity of this institution, he offers through his toast to the two gay men, Jimmy and Brian, that gay couples “stand on the cusp of a second liminality. The queer marriage takes this courage to a radically different space.” While not advocating against same-sex marriage, neither is Goltz satisfied with marriage as it has been imagined. In Goltz’s configuration, queerness has the potential to reroute normativity, to generate a queer futurity that has yet to be imagined. The audience is invited into this imaginary not through the wedding ceremony but through a dinner party (see Pérez); instead of the happily ever after of marriage, we are instead through Kermit the Frog from the Muppets invited to “write your own ending,” thereby leaving the question as open as the wedding.

Neoliberalism shapes relations and narratives, constructing investments through performance. Through representations, arguments, and narratives, *Lay of the Land* and *Blasphemies* portray the complexity of queer relations as they are lived and imagined. They offer insights into the lived experience of queer lives in a time of neoliberalism and in the mainstream gay and lesbian fight for same-sex marriage, demonstrating both investments and ambivalence. In the final two sections, I look at specific moments in each of the performances where marriage and queer relation shape and form these investments and ambivalences.

### Inheritance Interrupted and Redone: Return to the Scene of the Child

Through his polemic against structures and symbolics of futurity, Lee Edelman outlines the space of what he calls reproductive futurity. His argument is that the figure of the Child is the recipient, the “horizon of every imagined politics” (3). Queerness, queers, resides on the outside of the horizon (Edelman), and in a different temporality (Halberstam, *Queer*; for queerness as horizon, see also Muñoz). In this heteronormative configuration, time is always looking forward, and those in time are working to protect the future for the Child of the present. The Child inherits the future, only to be in service of the then Child. This temporal calculus is woven through narratives of US culture that dangle the carrot of prosperity—in the future—to those who work hard for their children. Cultural narratives ensure this: ‘work hard so the child/ren will not have to,’ ‘we must ensure the planet for the future children.’

What of these Children? How does their protection, and labor in their service figure them? And what is being preserved for their benefit? What are they inheriting? In a neoliberal economy and relational order, those in need of protection are the innocent. In the United States, children are innocent. This has not always been the case. Prior to the rise of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, in the United States under Calvinist doctrine, children were understood to inherit original sin. In the Catholic Church, children who died before birth or baptism are in limbo. Pre-industrialization, children were laborers in their families to ease the burden of sustenance culture. With the rise of the culture and economics of slavery, white children became innocent, precious (Bernstein). White

children were the standard of innocence against blackness. This accomplishment of whiteness carries through today.

Marriage secures the innocence of children by protecting their inheritance. Inheritance can be economic or material, but it also includes cultural inheritance, the cultural/material inheritance that comes from whiteness. George Lipsitz explains that whiteness is property, and therefore is in need of protection and security. Whiteness ensures cultural belonging (Segrest). Though Edelman does not take race into his account of the Symbolic, José Muñoz (*Cruising*) generatively extends Edelman's critique to account for the ways black and brown bodies are also outside of dominant narratives of future (see also Eng). If the future is always already heteronormative, then it is also always already raced white (for the relation of race and sexuality, see Somerville; for homosexuality and economics, see D'Emilio). The material benefits of neoliberalism promised to white children route the narratives of liberalism—prosperity, opportunity, meritocracy—through privatization and self-reliance. Race, as both Bernstein and Muñoz explain, narrows the playing field of innocence and future to white children but the discourses shape the lives of all children.

While race, especially as it is informed by class, is determinant of a child's innocence and future, so is sexuality. At the core of Edelman's argument to reject the future is that queerness is outside of it. Although in their innocence, children are not understood as especially sexual, children's narratives—of themselves, of one another, and in retrospect—indicate that sexuality matters in childhood. Children, then, far from being innocent, are raced and sexualized participants in a highly competitive present with charged stakes for the future (see Somerville). The white gay men in *Lay of the Land* and

*Blasphemies*, though childless themselves, narrate childhood experiences. The children in each of these performances are not major characters; nor do these children narrate a coming out. Their childhood bodies figure as sites of the kind of re-turn and re-consideration that performance allows. Further, the presence of the child in each queer narrative does not necessarily do the same thing. Miller uses the child to trace and ultimately reclaim a lineage of liberalism, nationalism and whiteness interrupted through sexual identity. He uses the child to recuperate his location in time (future) through the legalization of same-sex marriage. Differently, Goltz uses the child to invert familiar tropes of queer isolation and read them instead for their potential. These returns to the scene of the child offer insights into the connections among, and investments in, innocence and inheritance, and race and sexuality, as they circulate through larger discourses of marriage and future.

As I describe above, the child in Miller's *Lay of the Land* is a playfully queer-identified child, open in his desires and curiosity about his and others' bodies. Violence is swiftly reverted into queer strands of pleasure and relation. In another scene, Miller narrates a memory between him and his father. Here his childhood performances of queerness demonstrate Edelman's argument of queerness as outside the horizon of belonging. Miller's young queer body is the obstacle to normative masculine belonging and also a site of discipline, danger, and potential sacrifice on the altar of heteronormativity and social obscurity.

Miller narrates the scene: his mother is at work. He is alone with his father. The two of them must fend for themselves for dinner. Initially, the scene is a familiar one in post WWII US culture. The middle-class head of the white American nuclear family, the

war veteran, can serve up “Kraft Mac-n-Cheese, Fish Fingers, and cheap cuts of meat” (Miller, *Lay*). At the dinner table, the woefully overcooked meat and potatoes (tater tots) sit between father and son. The two argue as Miller protests their impending trip to a baseball game at Dodger Stadium. Miller describes the baseball game as not “JUST A BASEBALL GAME; IT WAS A GENDER REEDUCATION CAMP” (Miller, *Lay*). In his queer consciousness of his difference, Miller “knew on some level he [dad] wanted to use that baseball bat to shape me into the boy he wanted me to be” (Miller, *Lay*). Miller resists normative masculine expectations of baseball as if it were the kind of treatment centers that pathologize and “cure” homosexuality.

During their argument about the baseball game, about male bodies in relation and in culture, Miller begins to choke on the meat his father cooked up for them. His initial response is to hide it, to dislodge it himself. As if his choking were another site of his difference, he feels shame. His father quickly takes action:

My dad stood up and squeezed me. Wanting it to pop out. Just as I imagined he wanted to squeeze the queerness out of me at a baseball game. Bent me over the table and tried to pound it out of me. I was about to die on a Formica tabletop. Flipped me on my back. Nothing worked. Then he grabbed a butcher knife and raised it above my neck! (Miller, *Lay*).

The meat stuck in Miller’s throat is simultaneously queerness and homophobia: what his father is trying to get out is also what might kill Miller. What might be seen as an all-American masculine meal quickly does them both in. In a performance about the lay of the land of marriage equality, this struggle over meaning, for survival and belonging, the father is the head of the nation in relation to the child who is the future of the nation. At

stake is the conundrum between child and queerness, which Miller locates in the same body. What must the father/nation do with this body? Can queerness/meat be cut out to secure the heteronormative future for the child? Or will homophobia/meat cut off the air supply to the child/future? What will become of this queer child?

While homophobia and queerness threaten to suffocate the future body of the child, Miller freezes the drama to address the audience and give us some context for the knife-wielding father. In Miller family lore, the threat of a tracheotomy performed by the father loomed large. As a soldier in the war he was called to perform such a procedure on a fellow soldier. He described the details for his sons and Miller, now choking, believes his father is about to slice open his throat to save his life. The fast-acting soldier further secures the father-soldier as protector of the body of the nation, doing battle against queerness.

Miller's detour through the father-soldier's skills redirects our temporality even farther back in time and with an even bigger metaphorical frame. On the screen behind Miller appears an image of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham and Isaac is an interesting story for Miller to connect with: the leader of a nation who is given a child, a son, late in life is tested. In the story, the divine instructs Abraham to take his only son and sacrifice him on a mountaintop. While Abraham anguishes over the decision, he willingly follows the divine instruction, creating an altar and placing the child on top of it, standing over the body wielding a knife to end his son's life, the ultimate sacrifice for the future.

Miller takes a beat to sexualize depictions of Isaac on the altar in the same way he sexualizes his own child self ("Isaac is always fleshy and hot and wearing a kind of thong



speedo. This is a painting I would later jerk off to”) (Miller, *Lay*). In the end, an angel intervenes to stop Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. The test is complete. The child lives and the future is his (and ours) to preserve and protect, repeat and reap. Miller’s father, too, lowers the knife and Miller coughs up the meat:

The angel descends and stops Daddy’s knife. Maybe we can rewrite these old stories. A sacrifice cancelled on that kitchen table. A gay boy began to breathe in a Formica covered kitchen. My dad lowered his knife. He kept lowering the knife. He welcomed me as a gay kid. Invited my first boyfriend when I was 17 to Thanksgiving. He knew who I was until he died when I was 25. (Miller, *Lay*)

In Miller’s retelling, the threat of queerness to the father/nation and homophobia to the child/future is dislodged. The child/nation can be synonymous with queerness.

I want our country to lower the knife...I want that gristle to get coughed up. I want the choking to stop. That mirror knife light reflecting a scared gay boy’s eyes always is in front of me. Always makes me see who I am. Always reminds me the knife is still there. As I tell my stories and take to the streets. (Miller, *Lay*)

Though homophobia remains a threat, for him a lurking phantom, Miller sees his choking as a sacrifice the nation need not make, and that through telling these stories we might dislodge. While the father-soldier is ready to risk killing the child in order to protect the nation, Miller insists that the child is the nation. Rather than rid the child-nation of the gayness, what if the child-nation simply dislodged the obstacle caught in his-its throat. The patriarchal masculinity ready to protect the child-nation even at the cost of the child-nation’s life is revealed as an unnecessary violence. Homophobia is killing the nation by cutting off the air supply to the body. Instead of critiquing the nation and resisting

homophobia, Miller positions homophobia as a foreign invasion the body must dislodge. Hence, the nation is neither homophobic nor heteronormative, homophobia is that on which we are choking; divine/father/nation can absorb queerness as/for the future/child. The queer (white) child as nation has an investment in claiming the property guaranteed through the lineage of whiteness. The child/future, the nation, free of homophobia, can now breathe free of obstruction. The audience can breathe with, and as, the child-nation as well.

If queerness is or can be absorbed into/as the nation, even if it is only as and through imaginary and narrative, what becomes of queerness as horizon, of the potentiality that resides in queerness (Muñoz, *Cruising*)? If hetero- and increasingly homonormativity have a predictable temporality that leads to marriage, what of the potentiality of queerness that directs us otherwise? However choppy or smooth the seemingly unobstructed breath of Miller and his audiences may be, Goltz's child narrative redirects us back into the space of potential, of horizon. Unlike Miller, for whom the queer child is a site of recuperation that the nation can absorb, Goltz's child is a site of loss and mourning of potential. Goltz's return to the child invites a turn away from the nation, of the inheritance and predictability of time, to mourn what was and glimpse what might have been. In the space of mourning and glimpsing resides the potentiality of other imaginaries.

This child narrative follows a series of popular cultural inversions through highly performative and active moments in the performance. In contrast to the overall performance, this narrative is one of a few times that Goltz directly addresses the audience in personal narrative, the stage quiet and stripped, the lighting low, the Ghost is

in the margins. His address begins in the nostalgic present. His nostalgia calls forth the young queer body: the thin tow headed boy that his mother's friends used to envy. He now joins these women in their envy: "My mother's friends would caress my hair and say they would give anything to have hair like mine— long, shaggy, white, consistent. I understand that now. I'd give anything" (Goltz, "Blasphemies"). His voice is laced with longing. He, we, can see and feel the once white blond hair in our collectively aging skin in the present.

In this longing, we are together in isolation. Isolation and loneliness are familiar tropes of gay male subjectivity in popular culture (see Goltz, *Queer*). In the present, the future is foreclosed. In the present, for the aging white gay man, the future has already happened. As one of the characters in a video scene who appears earlier in the performance notes, "I can't remember the future" (Goltz, "Blasphemies"). The future that Goltz has already experienced is populated with nodes of normative futures scripted for white gay men: "I wish I could move backwards. Before the crisp white Mormon shirts, the pathetic longings for white weddings, and white hospital beds drenched with tears of suicidal, shame filled, self loathing stories" (Goltz, "Blasphemies"). Not only are these moments familiar in popular cultural representations of white gay men (with exception perhaps of the detour through Mormonism for this white gay Jewish man. This particular narrative can be traced within the context of gay identity in Goltz's *Banging the Bishop: Latter Day Prophecies*), Goltz's future as a white gay man coming of age was also written in the post-AIDS era. The future available to white children is interrupted, foreclosed, through queerness.

In his mourning as an aging white gay man, this foreclosure is pried open through queer tactics of remembering and imaginary. Rather than recuperate this narrative in service of the nation, in service of reclaiming an inheritance through the property of whiteness, Goltz performs blasphemies on forever; he blasphemes against the normative script (see Pérez). He begins with isolation. With an inversion of the usual isolation of loneliness, Goltz instead wrangles loneliness as a space of freedom to explore his identity. In the moments where his brother is away from their shared bedroom, Goltz transforms the space, and himself.

In that room I would spin in circles and turn from Diana Prince into a force to be reckoned with. I'd transform into Wonder Woman and rescue major Steve Trevor, who was tied to a chair and we'd have the hottest, kinkiest sex and I'd play both parts. I would dance my Sarah Jessica Parker "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" Dance winning my rightful place as a DTV regular, and transform myself with soft yellow blankets, crisp white sheets...(Goltz, "Blasphemies")

Although the popular cultural narratives of gay men would have been available to Goltz as a child, he turns instead to the narratives of powerful and popular women. In these spaces, women—in contrast to the static and predictable temporalities available to gay men—have agency to transcend the limits of their physical and cultural selves in a patriarchal world, and are positioned to not only rescue men but also to have hot and kinky sex with them. To "play both parts," Goltz occupies both the space to gaze and to be the object of it.

His narration of this playful flexibility in the child imaginary turns into a reliving, again. As he breaks from the quietude of the narrative into the imaginary, he jumps on

top of a table and the Ghost drapes him with a white sheet and he stands alongside Belinda Carlisle “in one giant Tampax commercial that never needs to end.” Although the narrative is grounded in the reality that even aging female pop stars are reduced to, absorbed into, their body parts in the capitalist imaginary, Goltz reclaims the transcendent potential even of Belinda Carlisle by dancing his way into an alternate future, a future that through his narrative he, and the audience, are allowed to experience through the potentiality of queerness.

From the imaginary through the potentiality of queerness, Goltz returns to the present future in a moment where these temporalities converge in an intergenerational lament and dialogue.

I wish I could reenter that space again. Dance, draw, and imagine myself in the ways I once did— a fairy, a hero, and angel, a crime fighting, sequin wearing dominatrix who could have a four-person orgy all by herself. I wish I could reassure that horny and flamboyant little tow head that all the ways he doesn't fit are so fucking precious. And all the ways he will try to fit the world outside this room, and eventually will start to fit the world outside this room, come with a price. He'll surrender his creativity for a community development blueprint, sketching lines, and walls, and parameters that he cannot erase, cannot redraw, and cannot imagine a time when they weren't there. If I could go back, I'd ask that mystical tow head to draw me a different picture. The lines on his blueprints would bend and break into one another, dancing on and off the page, rejecting the margins they impose. Marker and crayon lines would faintly slide off the tracing

paper, onto the desk, off the edge and into the air, continuing their journey out of the window past that large Maple tree. (Goltz, “Blasphemies”)

It is in the magical mystical child where queer identification and potential reside, the identifications that might have provided alternate pathways had the future not interrupted. In reclaiming the future, through his narration, Goltz harnesses the potential of queerness and the violence of heteronormativity and homophobia. Both Goltz and Miller demonstrate these violences upon male non-normative sexuality, violences that intersect with race privilege and speak to the power of cultural scripts of normativity heightened through the strands of neoliberal relationality. That these imaginaries are routed through the space of children does not necessarily depend on the innocence of children. These children, with the aid of their adult selves telling the story, narrate awareness of their sex and sexuality as well as the limits placed on them. The claims to which Miller clings, the promises, Goltz rewrites. It is possible that, like Miller, Goltz’s child also seeks to recuperate the privileges of inheritance promised to all white middle class children. However, also Goltz narrates the “price” that comes with trading in those futures, even for imaginaries, is great. These are both practices of rewriting, both aims to insert the white gay male child self into and through popular imaginary. Finally, each (white, gay) man demonstrates different political investments and imaginaries, indicating there are different ways to occupy queerness and gayness. Therefore, these two men-children together interrupt the narrative of what it means to be gay, a potentially useful interruption.

### Ambivalent Allegiance and National Insistence

In the previous section, the narratives depicting scenes of the Child were used to demonstrate normative temporalities and its relation to same-sex marriage. The nation figures in narratives of the Child, as children are inherently part of the nation, especially its future. In this concluding section I focus on scenes in *Lay of the Land* and *Blasphemies* that directly engage the nation, and its relation to same-sex marriage and homonormativity.

Though in recent years as a nation we may be closer to recognizing sexual orientation as a fully protected class, queerness and nonnormative sexuality have traditionally been constructed as a threat to the nation. These constructions are exemplified in the rhetoric of the religious right in narratives such as “God hates fags” and the idea that HIV/AIDS is a punishment from God (see Cobb; Brouwer and Hess). If queerness is a threat to the nation, then the nations citizens are in need of the states protection against gays and lesbians.

In response to the state of the nation, queer, gay, and lesbian activists have struggled to articulate collective or definitive responses to themselves as threat. These myriad positions represent the multiple strands of meaning attached to queer, gay, and lesbian identities and points to the lack of cohesion among them, despite attempts to link each identity together under LGBTQ. These different positions represent idealized relations to the state and ideologies attached to these relations at different historical moments. In some moments, the interests of queer, gay and lesbian activism are practical. In early HIV/AIDS activism, for some factions of groups like ACT UP this meant

focusing on the practical/personal concerns of people living and dying from AIDS (health care, living spaces). At times it meant protesting against the state in one moment and mingling with state representatives at a social function the next (Warner, *Publics*). In the same-sex marriage movement, the concerns range from parenthood, immigration, health care and inheritance.

In relation to the personal, queer critiques of the state address more structural questions. Rather than trying to guarantee the rights of citizenship, queer critiques ask what it means to be a citizen, and whether it is desirable and compatible with queerness. At times, queer critiques of the state often struggle to translate the language of theory outside academic contexts (Duggan, “Queering”). It also means turning away from gay and lesbian politics. For Brandzel, to queer citizenship would mean to do away with citizenship all together. For Puar (*Terrorist*), investments in citizenship are an extension of the state of exception embedded in the US state. To invest in citizenship rights is to perform what Puar (*Terrorist*) calls homonationalism, to integrate sexuality (through marriage and gays in the military) as a tool of the state in the project of the war on terror.

The different forms these investments take reveal the complexity of a lived relation to the state and the imaginary of the nation. In *Lay of the Land*, Tim Miller narrates a life lived in relation to the failed promises of the nation, the expectations embedded in their symbolism and narratives. On stage throughout the performance are the US flag and the California state flag hanging neatly over a wire. Toward the end of the performance Miller brings our attention to the flags. He tells the audience that he has a “complicated relationship,” with these flags as “as a little gay boy” (Miller, *Lay*). The US flag, especially, given its symbolic representation of



martyred patriots...meant trouble. But I had always held out a particular hope for the flag with the friendly Smoky the Bear on it with the problematic co-opted Mexican colors, those colors and this land Of California, Arizona and Texas stolen in just one of many unjust American wars with Mexico. (Miller, *Lay*)

Despite the complicated relationship involving early critique of colonization, Miller was a flag monitor. Flag monitors are entrusted with the rising and lowering of flags and participate in their ceremonial folding. Flags are sacred in this country, symbols and extensions of the nation.

For Miller, the California flag represents the horizons of promise. In spite of its colonial history, the illegal sale of what would become California to the United States, in popular lore, California is the Wild West, the promised land. For Miller, narrative was planted in him through an early film in the 1960s, *How the West Was Won*. He strongly identifies with the family in the film, seeing his own family in their struggles and their travels, finally making it to California. Though the Wild West was dangerous, it also symbolized hope and freedom. Even as the promises of the nation might be slightly deferred for him, California as promise and hope is not.

California, in fact, in the form of the bear, stands in as the guiding force that can lead the nation. The California Bear travels with him—from the site of the Beverly Hills courthouse where he applies and is rejected for a same-sex marriage license, to the protests against Proposition 8, and finally to where it rests on an altar next to a bottle of lighter fluid as he awaits for the (then) pending California Supreme Court decision. He fears that it might be time to sever his relation with the nation, to send it up in the flames of queer rage.

At this point in the performance, in his rage at the failed promises of the nation, he turns his attention to the flags on stage. Even as he acknowledges a respected constitutional right to burn the flag, he hovers on the precipice of becoming a threat to the nation, a threat that might burn it down. Given the tone of the performance up to this point, with its same-sex marriage argument, this moment represents a potential an interruption of the performance's trajectory, a transgression of normativity. The wall has come down. The nation, all of its youthful promises, has failed us, queerness is incompatible with the nation. He turns to the audience, asking for direction, positioning us as a jury, as part of a public, a democracy. Should he do it? Should he burn them?

Before you decide what I would have to do is get them all flammable so we know what the stakes are. Little lighter fluid here. Write TIMOTHY and NO on H8.

Then I would wait for you the jury to decide. But whatever you decide...

I won't do it...(Miller, *Lay*)

And the queer potential is recuperated into nationalism, routed back through the promises embedded in the music of *How the West Was Won*.

This music is why I can't burn these flags. Even when I get really mad. Because at every moment I feel like I can see the whole country. That I can imagine its dimensions and future possibilities in spite of our present circumstances. (Miller, *Lay*)

Rather than rely on the potential of queerness as horizon, the nation becomes the horizon. As traveling performer, with an eye on the lay of the land, he surveys and chronicles the changes and the possibilities. What he sees is ultimately a normative vision. The remaining sequence of the performance is narrated through a fantasy

imaginary wherein the queer potential embodied in the flag burning is instead routed through familiar narratives of the nation and 1970s gay liberation rhetoric. This includes the nation without closets: an outing of Tom Cruise, Tyler Perry, and the governor of Florida. Marriage equality becomes one more stopping point on progress that includes the “Abolition of slavery, women’s rights, Marriage equality” (Miller, *Lay*). Miller gives the Statue of Liberty the Heimlich maneuver to keep her from choking, and the origins of the nation are rewritten:

Give me your fierce faggots, your strong dykes. Your huddled queer masses yearning to love free. Give me your working-class femmes with Lee press-on nails, your activist queer boys who make out in jails. Your cowboy homos in leather chaps and such, your U-hauling lezzies who cohabit so much! Give me your courage! Your hope. Your queer self-possession. Your families, your future and fierce sex transgression. I lift my lamp beside this open closet door. Come out shout out where ever you are. Welcome. We're home. (Miller, *Lay*)

Again, through his narration, Miller’s queer body refuses the separation of gay and state and uses their proximity to cast their relation through normative patriotism. He reroutes the heteronormativity written into the body of the nation by locating his queer body, and queer bodies in all their diversity, *as* nation (see also Berlant and Freeman’s essay on Sandra Bernhard’s *Without You I’m Nothing* in Berlant, *Queen* 145-174).

The queer body as nation occupies that space in the body of individual gay men. Whereas the women in Goltz’ popular culture reverie transcend their positions, the white gay men who occupy the space of the nation are figured satirically as heroes. Queerness routed through and as marriage must save the nation from itself, from its homophobia. In

this scene, it is the hero's journey to instruct the nation that gays can be just as "normal" as anyone, "if you would just let us marry" (Goltz, "Blasphemies").

In the scene, Goltz and the Ghost are dressed as gay superheroes. Goltz wears a long silver cape and sports a gay republican sticker across his chest. The Ghost stands beside him wearing an adult sized Boy Scouts uniform. The cape the Ghost wears is similar to Goltz's, in bright red. Standing together the two white aging gay bodies are a silver and red spectacle. The Boy Scouts uniform touches on several levels. The presence of an aging gay man in a Boy Scouts uniform with the then ban on gay members (the ban on gay leaders remains) still in place calls forth the future of the white child denied: his absorption into the nation through the values of the Boy Scouts is cut off from him. He has been rejected because of his sexuality. His insistence on occupying the uniform then functions as an embodied resistance to the Boy Scouts, a definitive fuck you. At the same time, the superhero Boy Scout occupies the horizon where the body can either continue the resistance, use the uniform to other queer openings, or it can insist on a space, like Miller, where the white gay body and nation occupy the same site. The superheroes begin to sing.

Throughout the song representations of normalized gay characters (*Will & Grace*; *Dawson's Creek*) and out white gay married and child rearing celebrities flash across the screen. Strands of the theme song to the 1981-83 TV show *The Great American Hero* begin to play. The *Great American Hero* tells the story of the unlikely, reticent white male hero charged by aliens with saving the world. The theme song is "Believe It Or Not" and narrates the protagonist's wonder at his freedom and power, his "walking on air." The hero's journey is one of transcendence and responsibility. The log cabin

republican standing with the Boy Scout narrate their own journey through the thick of homophobia in service of homonormativity and homonationalism. The first verse and chorus reflects the logic of the mainstream same-sex marriage movement. Gay (white) subjectivity reads normal and American:

We're just as white as can be-e

We act like the boys next door

No longer the pervert or predator

We're American to the core

(Chorus) Believe it or not,

We're straight acting gays

We never thought we could be on Must See TV

Flying away to adopt again

As normal as normal can be

If you would just let us marry. (Goltz, "Blasphemies")

Through investments in normal, gays are transformed from their familiar scripts ("pervert or predator") and reverted back in time to the Child's potential and future citizenship ("American to the core"). Through their ascendance to normal adulthood, they follow through on their promises and responsibilities, participating in the repetition of marriage ("flying away to adopt again"). The plea/refrain, "If you would just let us marry," reminds the audience that at present gays remain on the edges of discourse and that heteronormativity must make allowances to absorb the homonorm. However, these white gays are able and willing to perform the mechanics, to mimic heteronormative practices to ensure their participation once let in to the norm.

Inclusion does ensure a degree of mobility; however, as a condition of inclusion, subjects must perform assimilation or emulation. As Povinelli explains, late liberalism circulates through discourses of multiculturalism. While multiculturalism embraces “difference,” difference will always be coded as such. Difference stands alongside the norm, never on par with it. This is exemplified in the next verse of the song.

So next time you see us gays out on the street

Perhaps at the church or the mall

Wave “Hi” to these friends of America

We drive the same SUV after all.

(Chorus) Believe it or not,

We’re white WASPy gays

I never thought I could be so suburban.

Flying away to the PTA

Living our life by God’s plan

Three kids, two dogs, and my man (Goltz, “Blasphemies”)

Ultimately, the visibility of “white WASPy gays” in public reflect the norm back to itself. Mimicry is the sincerest form of flattery and through that proximity and similarity may be an underlying threat, the work of the hero is to route the performance of the norm through familiar scenes of suburban life: Christianity, the PTA, and the nuclear family. These “friends of America” are in disbelief that they could achieve such a performance of normalcy, recognizing the conditions of their belonging and difference. In the final chords of the song, the performance of gay is one such accomplishment. The threat of gay sex is subsumed through normalcy: “Our lives are really a bore; We don’t even fuck

any more” (Goltz, “Blasphemies”). Though the Ghost/Boy Scout is visibly angry at the conditions of belonging (boring lives absent fucking), the log cabin superhero holds onto the final note of the song, basking in the hero’s accomplishment, completely unaware of the Boy Scout’s hurt.

In the log cabin superhero’s unawareness there is perhaps the finest subtlety of the inherent critique embodied in the satire. Neoliberal relationality, as I discussed in the previous chapter, is a narrow form of relationality. Through the privatization of capital and governmentality, it is the individual who is ultimately responsible for himself. Even as the individual extends through the family, in the end, we are reduced to ourselves. Whether regulated through legislation or social practice, this closed relationality forecloses queer alternatives. Edelman’s queerness as anti-relational aside, queer of color and other radical queer arguments celebrate the potentials of queer kinship formation (see J. Rodríguez; R. Rodríguez; Muñoz; Weston). The Boy Scout departure refuses this foreclosure, mourning the loss of gay sex and queer relationality.

Though a relatively minor moment in the script, this satiric and highly stylized performance of homonormativity is open to interpretation by the audience. Is it a critique of or an argument for same-sex marriage? Ultimately, at the end of the performance, the gay superheroes are usurped by Brian’s and Jimmy’s wedding, a wedding that leads to an open horizon. After the wedding, at the queer dinner party, as Kermit the Frog serenades the audience, urging them to make their own choices and “write your own ending,” the media scripts are exposed and dissolved (Goltz, “Blasphemies”). One by one, frames appear and disappear on the screen behind Goltz and Ghost in tuxedos toasting the audience with champagne glasses.

In this chapter, I have placed two performances by two white gay men from different queer generations side by side. Through doing so, my interest in these sites of queer intimacy I am less able to write my own ending as much as I have engaged the complexity of same-sex marriage as a neoliberal discourse and the multiple ways to occupy queer subjectivity. In lieu of writing my own ending, I offer these final reflections. Occupying queer subjectivities weighs as heavily on the nation as it does queer investments in, ambivalences toward, and refusals of queer relations in a time of neoliberalism. Multiple discourses are pressed and challenged through bodies and at the intersections of sexuality, race, gender, and class. The narratives woven in relation to neoliberalism are grounded in these embodied subjectivities and histories. Narratives reveal complex negotiations and my aim has been to consider their conditions and effects as sites of queer intimacy. In the following chapter, we will confront the ways that the occupations of queerness weigh differently on trans bodies of color.



## CHAPTER 3

### (LGB)TALES OF THE FAMILY

In *Ramble-Ations: A One D'Lo Show*, Amma, the mother persona addresses the audience directly and reflectively in a pronounced, thick Sri Lankan accent:

Not only is she a gay, she's feeling like a little boy trapped in a woman's body. I tell you we should have never left Sri Lanka. At first it was all a shock to me because we don't have the gays in Sri Lanka. (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*).

Dressed in a bright red sari fashioned from a cloth tied to the grid on stage, Amma's movements, and therefore her narrative, stay tethered to this structure. Four items make up the structure. The centerpiece is a hefty two-tiered altar covered in white cloth on which sacred items are placed: a Ganesh statue, metal chimes, an incense burner.

Throughout *Ramble-Ations*, these items are picked up, referenced, and joined by others: photos of the dead, D'Lo. Directly above the altar hangs a white projection screen on which video sequences accompany the embodied narratives. On either side of the projection screen two bright swaths of yellow and red cloth hang folded over the ceiling grid.

This structure, these objects—the altar, projection screen, red and yellow cloths—anchor the overlapping, and at times conflicting and competing, narratives in *Ramble-Ations*. As in many performances, particularly those that narrate the tangles of diaspora and queerness, such objects function as touchstones, reminders and symbols of history, memory, and relations (Cvetkovitch, *Archive* 118). In *Ramble-Ations*, the objects that make up the structure provide D'Lo and his audiences a point of entry into, departure from, and eventually a return and remaking of what it means to do family and belonging

while living as queer and trans\*<sup>3</sup> in the Hindu, Sri Lankan diaspora in the United States. As evidenced by the quote from Amma's narrative above, these parts of D'Lo are seemingly incompatible. Amma continues:

But I know what the gays look like. I watch the TV. I see Ellen DeGeneres and Rosie O'Donnell and that tennis player, Martina Navrati—Martina Navrati—Martina Navrati [She finishes off Martina Navratilova's name with a Sri Lankan flare, a nod of certainty and accomplishment.] So you see, all those are white people and my daughter's not even fair skinned. (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*).

Ellen DeGeneres, Rosie O'Donnell and Martina Navratilova circulate in popular culture as highly visible, recognizable, white lesbians. There are few, and they co-exist in the mainstream imaginary alongside other white trans\*, trans men, and transgender men. Notable trans\* presences are Chaz Bono, especially in his short stint on ABC's *Dancing with the Stars*, as well as Stephen Beatty's self-published YouTube videos. If you find yourself unfamiliar with these transgender men, you may be more familiar with their famous parents: Cher and Sonny Bono are Chaz Bono's parents and Stephen Beatty is the son of Warren Beatty and Annette Bening. The mainstream visibility of these white

---

Transgender literature, activism, and identities utilize a range of terms to language bodies whose embodied performances and identities resist, transcend, or are not accounted for within the normative gender binary. Susan Stryker's *Transgender History* offers a historicized, politicized, and contextualized discussion of the range of these terms. Further, Jillian Todd Weiss offers a compelling and thorough account of the ways in which the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender have been used, marking the prevalence of biphobia and transphobia within mainstream gay and lesbian politics. Using term "trans\*," Julia Johnson writes that, "I follow gender activists who often use trans\* to signal gender nonconformity that includes persons who identify as women and men as well as persons who may reject or disrupt the gender binary all together" (141). Throughout this chapter, I use multiple terms to account for trans\* identity. Each iteration seeks to be consistent with the way the person being represented uses. D'Lo, the performer I write about in this chapter, uses multiple pronouns and expressions of gender and sexual identity that reflects different times in his life, as well as shifting contexts of his narratives. In honoring his choices to represent himself in language, in performance, I hope the reader identifies (as opposed to becomes frustrated) with the kind of transgender politics of recognition and queer intimacy that D'Lo's performances provide among performer, critic, and audience.

lesbians and trans men does important political work. Their privates are public. Their gender is inextricably linked to their sexuality. In her active, and astute, consuming of lesbians (“the gays”) in popular culture, Amma also refuses to decouple gender and sexuality from race. Her reading leads to the premise of the argument embedded in her narrative reflection, namely that to be gay is to be white. Therefore, in her active narrative worldmaking, it is not possible for her brown (“not even fair skinned”) child to be a gay.

In a similar move, though through a differing political trajectory than Amma, gay is often discursively conflated with white, at times subsuming and even occupying racial otherness. Consider the 16 December 2008 cover of *The Advocate*, which boldly declared in the wake of the November 2008, coterminous election of Barack Obama and passage of Proposition 8 in California that overturned legalized gay marriage, that “Gay is the New Black: The Last Great Civil Rights Struggle.” In such a move, sexuality and race are read not as shaping one another or even intersecting, but rather as discrete categories with linear and separate temporal arcs. Race, or black racialized bodies as Michael Joseph Gross’s article implies, is no longer an oppressive social category. Rather, as his headline and article suggests, race marks a civil rights struggle of the cultural temporal *past*. Race is but a temporal and cultural referent, a stepping-stone from which a gay liberation platform emerges in the *present* and harkening toward a *future* in which gay, as/like black, will no longer be a problem (DuBois 11).

Note further the implications of Gross’s choice to use “gay” as his moniker for the “new black.” While “gay,” as Amma’s use of it communicates, does circulate as an all-encompassing term for non-heterosexual people, the absence of lesbian, bisexual, and

trans\* in the headline or the article itself, in a magazine whose stories and headlines regularly specify terms or rely on the umbrella LGBT, signals a mainstream LGBT lack of an intersectional or coalitional approach to sexuality and gender. Through this parsing, the article accomplishes the separation of gender, sexuality, and race that the headline implies. Similarly, “black” erases other non-white racial subjectivities. Perhaps the inclusion of LBT and non-white racial categories alongside gay and black would have been too clunky, a less catchy headline.

In the wake of the November 2008 elections, “Gay is the New Black” quickly became a rallying cry and organizing logic for some LGBT organizations and peoples, a catalyst that revitalized a familiar, albeit decontextualized, dehistoricized, and narrow refrain of homophobia in communities of color, especially directed at African American churches, communities, and bodies (Lee; Snorton; Reddy). For others whose scholarship and activism is grounded in a queer of color and radical political approach, this anthem was only the most recent plot line in a long history of white privilege and racial invisibility in LGBT politics (C. Cohen; Moraga and Anzaldúa; Lorde; Lugones; Johnson and Henderson; Ferguson). As Richard Juang explains in his argument for a transgender politics of recognition, we must account for the ways “racism is frequently gendered, while gender discrimination is often shaped by racism” (707).

For D’Lo, at times there is a refusal in his relations to acknowledge the ways racism and gender discrimination work together. Amma’s narrative concretely portrays this refusal through the singular axis of race/culture (“brown,” “Sri Lankan”).

After the initial shock of hearing she was a gay I started to feel for her, you know?  
Gays get killed, I tell her. We didn’t leave a war torn country to come here and

get killed. But I always gave her advices, you know? Darling, don't ever get involved in US politics. Don't ever play in the front yard. And don't play with white people. Maybe I should have told her don't be a gay. (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*)

The fierceness with which Amma clings to her conviction of the incompatibility of brown and queer, mediated through popular cultural representations, reveals a diasporic and postcolonial anxiety (Gopinath). The ontological weight of Amma's calculations through a transnational politic of relation—that the gays are white and her child is gay and trans\*—threatens to collapse the bonds of diaspora, of belonging and family (see Gopinath; R. Rodríguez; Cvetkovitch). As Langellier and Peterson write, “The family's first concern is itself and its own survival” (49). Therefore, Amma's narration's must be understood through the postcolonial anxiety of survival and belonging in diaspora.

In postcolonial and diasporic contexts, the threat of familial loss can weigh heavily. Shyam Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy* demonstrates the ontological and psychic consequences of familial loss when relations of desire are pitted against family. Set in the early days of the Sri Lankan civil war, one of the storylines in *Funny Boy* features the possibility of a Sinhalese-Tamil wedding. The failed joining is cast aside in favor of familial alliances. As one of the characters pronounces, “Ultimately, you have to live in the real world. And without your family you are nothing” (76). The unrealized marriage foreshadows the aching knowing of the queer narrator in the wake of his ecstatic sexual connection with another boy that he “was no longer part of the family in the same way. I now inhabited a world they didn't understand and into which they couldn't follow me”

(278). In claiming queerness, the narrator acknowledges the resulting separation from his family, and dwells on the loss of his mother in particular.

The wrenching separation at the center of *Funny Boy*, the internal struggle and relational consequences the narrator undergoes through choosing to embody his queer desire, is a recurring theme in diasporic claims to the importance of family as well as in the separation from natal family in narratives of what it means to be queer. However, D'Lo's performances labor to interrupt these separations. One of the things his performances do is offer insights into the ways family storytelling perpetuate the queer/family binary. In this way, we can see that Amma's claim to D'Lo's identity functions as communicative strategy through family storytelling to order relations and to maintain order in her diasporic family. Though this Sri Lankan family in diaspora may not be under the same threat under which they may have been in Sri Lanka during a time of civil war, the narratives in *Ramble-Actions* reveal the ways family members rely on and embody these memories while encountering racism in diaspora. The family finds its way from Sri Lanka to Queens, New York to Lancaster, California, a site dubbed Sri Lancaster. Although Sri Lancaster, as the name implies, might be a diasporic enclave, the community is neither immune from discursive racism in the United States nor from the active KKK presence within Lancaster.

That her own internal grappling with her child's gender and sexuality extends beyond her intra/interpersonal relations to land on the vulnerability of the diasporic *and* queer/trans\* subject is present in Amma's emphasis on D'Lo's public-ity, his visibility ("don't ever get involved in US politics. Don't ever play in the front yard. Don't ever play with white people. Maybe I should have told her don't be a gay."). Later in her

narrative, she continues her advice to D’Lo, urging him to “not tell anyone” about his sexual and gender identity. However much Amma attempts to contain the excesses of D’Lo’s embodied performance as brown, queer, and trans\* through silence, D’Lo’s response that, “Amma that’s wack. They already know,” references the visual registers through which race and gender are read in public (Alcoff). Amma’s gesture of care and protection for D’Lo’s safety, again, though embedded in homo- and transphobia, must be situated in the violence of the Sri Lankan civil war and postcolonial nation (“We didn’t leave a war torn country to come here and get killed”) and the racism in the diasporic context (“Don’t play with white people”). The layers of Amma’s anxiety are complex and her strategies blend past and present, and have immense implications for understanding the politics of belonging, family, and narrative performance.

This chapter reads two performances of the trans\*, queer, Sri Lankan performance artist, D’Lo, *Ramble-Ations* and *D’FunQT*. Across these performances, D’Lo’s narratives trace his lived experiences of navigating the politics of belonging and family through the terrains of queerness, trans\*, Sri Lankan, brownness and blackness. *Ramble-Ations* traffics in the kinds of family storytelling that privilege Sri Lankan/Hindu/South Asian identities and experiences with attempts to sublimate queer and trans\*, while *D’FunQT* centers his queer of color narratives and therefore carries forward the intersections of Sri Lankan/Hindu/South Asian all the while posing challenges to white and normative LGBTQ discourses. Family, as we saw in the previous chapter’s discussion of same-sex marriage, emerges as a trope, tugged at and constructed by multiple points across political agendas, and in its narration attempts to accomplish relations in a particular way. Through D’Lo’s performances and narrations as a queer, trans\* person of color, this

chapter focuses on family as a neoliberal discourse, the doing of family, and family storytelling through performance. The next section overviews the ways that family has been constructed and deployed in shifting neoliberal contexts by different groups and the function of family storytelling in performance. Following that, I offer more detailed descriptions and analyses of *Ramble-Ations* and then *D'FunQT* to consider implications of family storytelling in performance.

### Performing Family, Telling Tales

“Family” and “family storytelling” are sites of neoliberal relationality. Though family as a cultural concept intersects with discourses of same-sex marriage and also of immigration and multiculturalism, to isolate family is one way to understand how it is deployed and navigated in narrative performance. Family is not a static concept; rather, its meanings change over time (Weston; R. Rodríguez). Family, and kinship more broadly—a site of and as social relations—is historically specific and shifts to reflect the changing needs of culture. Langellier and Peterson explain that family is embodied and performed as small group culture and within specific cultural formations in relation to structures of power (33-70).

In the contemporary neoliberal structure of power, family is a site of struggle over meaning in a battle of legal, culturally acceptable, and recognizable relations (Weston). This struggle is encapsulated in Langellier’s and Peterson’s argument that “the study of family storytelling is particularly salient at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the family is the subject of moral panic: in decline, under duress, and everywhere debated in terms of ‘family values’” (33). While normative families emerge out of discourses rooted in sexual and raced norms, what Roderick Ferguson names



heteropatriarchy, over the past forty years challenges from outside the norm to what constitutes the normative family have gained momentum and visibility and thereby fuel the struggle to maintain the norm. From the queer families who are lobbying for civil rights (Weston; Whitehead) to the citizenship struggles of immigrants (Chávez; Luibhéid, “Introduction; Luibhéid, *Pregnant*), to conservative narrations of the natural family (Jakobsen, “Homosexuals”) versus chosen families (Weston), there is no legal, moral, cultural or political agreement on what family is, means, or does.

As the discussion of Amma’s narrative that opens this chapter indicates, underlying the struggle for family is an anxiety over relations and the discursive and embodied threats to maintaining them. Further, as these struggles for meaning indicate, performing family can be put to multiple ends, to foster neoliberalism’s stronghold of narrow relationality or to resist or dismantle it. This is to say that in conceptualizing and narrating family, there is a lot at stake. The queer intimacy of performance allows us one point of entry into understanding the family in its narrations and in/as neoliberalism. I begin this section with a brief overview of the family as it has been conceptualized and conclude with a discussion of performing family storytelling.

The emergence of neoliberalism relies on the distinction between and regulation of private and public spheres (Berlant, *Queen*; Berlant and Warner; Duggan). While family circulates as a very public narrative, *the family* is a strictly bound and highly private site that orders relations; it is a site that stands in relation to its historical context, culture, and nation (Langellier and Peterson; R. Rodríguez). In examining the family under the structures of neoliberalism, it is important to acknowledge that the current iteration of family is but an extension of its previous iterations in the West, morphed to

accommodate the changing needs of capital and culture, from the Enlightenment through capitalism (see Jakobsen, “Homosexuals”; Reddy; D’Emilio).

Leading up to the current neoliberal order was the changing face of the family in the wake of World War II. The changing discourses that constructed the image of the proper, normative, middle-class family (working head of household father and the return to/stay at home mother who produce a reasonable number of children) met the needs of labor in a transnational flow of capital even as it secured the national/family borders under threat from communism. Even under external threat, the nation/family enjoyed an imaginary that included boundless prosperity. Although this imaginary was not isolated to the raced, gendered, and classed middle-class who would most prosper from and have access to it—under the myth of meritocracy, this American Dream was available to all—it was hardly an attainable reality for those who occupied sites of raced and classed otherness. The gaps between these grand narratives and those others who either wanted in or wanted a new system altogether gave rise to the civil rights movements in the wake of World War II, movements that were not isolated to the United States but were part of a global postcolonial shift in power and alternate imaginaries of relations.

The cultural backlash in response to the demands emerging from these movements from the 1950s through the 1970s in the legal, economic, socio-cultural and political realms culminated in the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, and through the stance of his administration ushered in a neoliberal agenda, an agenda that fostered what would become known as the “culture wars” (Duggan; Berlant, *Queen*; Jakobsen, “Homosexuals”). The sanctity of the family was an important site of the culture wars. From direct attacks on and exclusions of the black family (C. Cohen) and LGBT people

(Weston; Jakobsen, “Homosexuals”) to the public visibility of non-normative and critical performance art (Berlant and Warner; Binkiewicz) that which fell outside of the norm was considered to be a threat to heteropatriarchal American family values. Embedded in the culture wars, then, was the panic over the protection of the family and the preservation of “family values,” a powerful trope that yokes the secular to the Christian as quintessentially American (Jakobsen, “Homosexuals”; Cloud). “Talk of ‘family values,’” Jakobsen argues, “thus signals a reconstruction of American citizenship that regulates and distinguishes those Americans who deserve the rights and benefits of citizenship from those who do not—whether they are actually U.S. citizens or not” (“Homosexuals” 61).

The struggle over what/who constitutes family, and by extension citizenship, can be identified by whom and through what means claims to family are communicated (Weston). Following the 1970s LGBT emphases on a politics of visibility (Spade; Warner, *Trouble*), in the 1980s there emerged a more visible circulation and naming of deliberate queer kinship formations (Weston; Bernstein and Reimann). Although the mainstream LGBT rhetoric of family has been critiqued for its normative investments, Weston urges these criticisms be grounded in relation to an LGBT history of violence and exclusion. She writes, “Because family is not some static institution, but a cultural category that can represent assimilation or challenge (again, in context), there can be no definitive answer to the debate on assimilation” (199).

An important challenge to the binary that is often depicted between natal and chosen kin, between families of origin and families of choice, emerges from the acknowledgment that so many of the above discussions of family often focus on the

experiences of white people. The formation of the normative US family is premised on the idea that Ferguson's heteropatriachal family is not just heterosexual, but also white and with rights to citizenship (see also Moraga and Anzaldúa). Queers of color and queers in diaspora are especially vulnerable to the choices on either side of the binary: to choose between one's family of origin and one's family of choice is not necessarily a viable or desirable option (Luibhéid and Cantú; Moraga; R. Rodríguez; Gopinath; E. P. Johnson, "Quare"; Weston). Though, as Richard Rodríguez explains in *Next of Kin*, these familial structures are often bound in homophobia, outside of them racism and exclusion, whether from the state or white LGBT spaces, can be just as dangerous. The binary between natal and chosen kin is a symptom of neoliberal relationality. Again, this relationality is narrow and values only those relational configurations that support ideologies of privacy and self-sufficiency. Outside the binary of natal and chosen kin, then, are family structures and narratives of family storytelling worthy of attention.

Therefore, family storytelling—the practices through which families take shape in language—is a particularly salient site of understanding how individuals construct relations, both within families themselves and also in and through changing discourses. Before turning to D'Lo's performances, I briefly conclude this section with a discussion of what it means to perform family stories. As a small group cultural practice, Langellier and Peterson explain, family storytelling is a complex communication phenomenon. They explain that to tell family stories, although it is a way to record histories of events and people, is moreover is a practice of actually creating and shaping families as and within culture (39-40). In analyzing family storytelling, they underscore "*storytelling* over story, on the evaluative over reverential function, on performance over text" (40, emphasis

added). Therefore, it is the performative, embodied aspect of family storytelling where meaning is made and relations are ordered (Langellier and Peterson 40). Storytelling within individual families is dependent on that particular family: there are stories for particular situations and audiences, as well as stories that are repeated and those that are forbidden, and further still those that take on different meaning when told by different members and different generations (Langellier and Peterson 57). Storytelling, like all performance, is a fragile and dangerous practice that is as disciplinary and persuasive as it is potentially resistant or transformative (Langellier, “Two”).

While family storytelling within families is somewhat bound by conventions and audiences, performing family storytelling on the stage may not be as firmly bound by the same constraints. Linda Park-Fuller (“Absence”) suggests that performance is a space where narratives that might otherwise be taboo are crafted for public consumption, and therefore opens the space of resistance and remaking of culture. Any form of family storytelling depends on the strategies of the teller. Langellier and Peterson write that

Family facts do not always stay in place; *family bodies do not always stay in line.*

Against the forces of coherence and closure, family storytelling remains open to the contingencies and messiness of ongoing lives. Families live in narrative (67, emphasis added).

As “families live in narrative,” so performers and audiences live in relation in performance. To perform family stories for an audience is to interrupt the intimacy and privacy of the familial context and to extend, to relocate it to the queer intimacy of performance in public. How does family storytelling in public turn back on the culture making practices of family storytelling? What does it mean to tell family stories in

public? How do the storytelling practices of a trans\*, queer, Sri Lankan performer turn back on the constraints placed on those categories and their intersections?

### Out of Line? D’Lo’s Family Storytelling

Let me see your tickets please! Throw ’em up in the air! That’s what tells me you got in here and not for free. My name is D’Lo and I will be your tour guide for tonight. What these tickets allow you to be for tonight, and just for tonight, is South Asian and queer. (D’Lo, *Ramble-Ations*)

Thus begins *Ramble-Ations*. Even as D’Lo embodies the tour guide, he addresses the audiences as himself, as D’Lo. When I audienced the 2008 premier of *Ramble-Ations* at Highways performance space in Los Angeles, California, D’Lo, dressed in low-slung long nylon basketball shorts and matching long sleeved zip-up top and black high top sneakers, embodies the basketball/hip-hop aesthetic with which he identifies and gives off in affect. Small in stature and with a shaved, bald head, D’Lo’s self-proclaimed slightly feminine voice rubs against his butch/stud/trans\* masculinity. That night the audience was filled with the kind of brown affect that spills beyond the constraints of mainstream theater (Muñoz, “Feeling Brown”). Not only was the audience primarily made up of South Asians—queer and not—the buzz of the audience facing the empty stage bounced around the space, anticipating the potentiality of the stories (Muñoz, “Stages”) promised in the program about what it means to be D’Lo, to be queer, trans\*, and Sri Lankan.

The brown affect was most evident in the immediate moments preceding the show: the director, Adelina Anthony took the stage to introduce the performance. The conventional hush over the audience swiftly gave way to a cacophonous stir the *second*

time Anthony said “he.” The first time Anthony referred to D’Lo using the masculine pronoun could be overlooked, a mispronunciation or perhaps an oversight, even as it evoked disorientation throughout much of the audience. However, the second time felt more punctuated, underscored, deliberate. The audience, many of whom were connected with D’Lo in some way, overlapping networks of his chosen and natal kin, spoke back: stirrings of “what did she say,” “he?!” “who’s *he*,” “D’Lo’s a *he*?!” “doesn’t she mean she?” darted around the room.

This being my first introduction to D’Lo I turned to my friend Sheena who had introduced me to D’Lo’s work and urged me to make the trek to Los Angeles as part of my research. I asked her if she had heard the “him” and if she knew “him” as “him” or was “he” a “her.” As the pronouns spill clumsily out of my mouth, in response Sheena retorts with her lovely, familiar smile, accompanied by the side-to-side Indian head bob that across the ten years of our friendship I have come to understand as a reply to myriad situations, a response that implies neither a yes or a no, but rather, simply, an acknowledgment, a recognition, a relation. Anthony silently lulls the audience back into silence, reacting to and rectifying none of our confusion, as she finishes her introduction and beckons D’Lo to the stage. Unsettled, disoriented, at the ready, we are indeed an audience in need of a tour guide.

At other times and in other performance spaces, dependent on audience, time, and space, D’Lo might substitute other terms for the “South Asian and queer” that I audience that night at Highways. Rather than South Asian and queer, D’Lo might pronounce his audiences temporarily (“just for tonight”) Sri Lankan, gay, trans\*, and vegetarian. The particular pronouncements he uses in any given staging of *Ramble-Ations*

reflects an awareness of the makeup of his audiences even as it simultaneously reflects D'Lo's own shifting, contingent, and intersectional identities of race, culture, gender, and sexuality. D'Lo's performative narration interrupts the stability of these categories and further, his pronouncement hails the audience, does something interesting: rather than emphasize differences across the bodies present, asking them to consume his difference or latch on to those identities that mirror their own, D'Lo's hailing temporarily suspends the audiences' embodied subjectivities and *transitions* them into a complex and intersectional collective. Depending on the spaces from where they are being hailed, the audiences' movements into the temporary subject locations may be partial and subtle or jarring and a big leap.

D'Lo's hailing of his audiences as Sri Lankan/South Asian, gay/queer/trans\*, and vegetarian, for one night, for this time, feels as impossible as it feels necessary, and most definitely a risk. A risk as identity tourism, whether virtual (Nakamura 87-100) or transnational (M. J. Alexander; Roy), can be an act of erasure and violence, the privileged mobility of "First World", or in this case also cisgendered or non-brown subjects. Identity tourism can result in an over-identification and cultural appropriation. As a tour guide, embodied in temporary subjectivities, D'Lo's audiences, though active participants, are also tethered to convention. Familiar with the conventions of performance and tourism, the audience through their presence and affect constitute a relation and know to not talk back to the performance in ways that interrupt its narrative flow. While the audiences are subjects, granted an occupation of a temporary subjectivity, we are not speaking subjects, we are listeners. As listeners in silence, only the ephemeral affect of performance



gestures toward what might be happening, and this is open to interpretation, to collapse, and is therefore somewhat of an impossibility.

D’Lo’s hailing of the audience into the intersectional subject positions of South Asian/Sri Lankan and queer/trans\* is impossible because it requires audiences to dislodge themselves from their familiar and embodied subjectivities. Though like in all performance, *Ramble-Ations* audiences encounter the familiar convention, the expectation to suspend belief, to evacuate the present in order to enter into the imaginary the performer conjures for us, in *Ramble-Ations* audiences are hailed into that imaginary through suspending their own subjectivities. Though individuals may not be able to fully disembody or even reasonably set aside their selves and experiences, audiences are nonetheless actively called into being as co-participants, ontologically and epistemologically familiar with and similar to the experiences D’Lo will communicate through his narrative performance. This im/possible familiarity, accomplished through the dual hailing and suspension, is paradoxically necessary.

The necessity of such a move is part of *Ramble-Ations*’ performativity: in the narrative doing of the performance that seeks to bring together the parts of him that threaten to pull him apart, that which the audience is invited to witness, is also being done to them. D’Lo’s labor—through the narrative and in relation to the audience—both circumvents and centers the very vulnerability to which he calls our attention. The vulnerability inherent in placing a culturally marginalized body (queer, trans\*, South Asian) at the center of a performance for audiences who may identify with parts or none of the whole is to either over-identify with similarity or to divert away from or consume and appropriate that which is different. The risk of partial identification, consumption,

aversion, appropriation, or even fetishization in narrative performance is an uneasy danger. However, D'Lo, through the content of his narrative and his hailing of the audience, reroutes these risks by calling attention to them. This strategy, of combining form and content to call attention to the means of discursive production of identity alienates the audience from what is familiar and opens the potentiality of a politics of consciousness, resistance, and transformation (Willett). In particular, this mode of alienation in *Ramble-Ations* calls the audience's attention to the fragility of an intersectional politic; intersectionality depends on maintaining, rather than sublimating, the multiplicity of identity categories or collapsing under the weight of any one of them. D'Lo's hailing of the audience actualizes the kind of reverse interpellation (Sandoval) in performance that I described in chapter one: instead of defining himself and his audiences in relation to the norm—whiteness, heteronormativity, US settler colonialism and citizenship—his hailing is a reverse interpellation that centers the complexity and simultaneity of queer and trans\*, Sri Lankan and South Asian and also enjoins the audience into that subjectivity alongside him.

At the intersectional subjectivity of South Asian/Sri Lankan and queer/trans\* the audience is hailed into this otherwise marginalized subject position. In centering the margin, the audience is hailed into a subject position and relation through which we are collectively able to disidentify with whiteness and open the potentiality of queer worldmaking (Muñoz, *Disidentifications*). While Muñoz describes queers of color out of whose performances emerges the potentiality for queer worldmaking, in *Ramble-Ations* through his hailing, D'Lo accomplishes the relation in the bounded space of the performance. Therefore, he is not alone in it, presenting himself to us; rather, we

temporarily occupy this space together in a queer intimate relation. Though in the queer intimacy established through hailing the audience into a somewhat tenuous relation, D’Lo positions himself as our tour guide. Simultaneously distanced (on a tour) and belonging (we are all South Asian/Sri Lankan and queer/trans\*), the potentiality of our queer intimacy unfolds in the doing of family storytelling.

### Touring Family Tales

Through their narratives, tour guides manage our experiences through exhibits. On display, that which is familiar or strange is rendered more nuanced, de- and/or re-contextualized. Throughout *Ramble-Ations*, D’Lo is both tour guide and embodied exhibit. The embodied exhibits in the form of personas audiences encounter throughout the performance that D’Lo transitions in and out of to communicate different family stories include variations on D’Lo, Amma, a grandfather, a spiritual leader, a cousin, and a butch/stud/trans\* custodian. Upon orienting us to our temporary subjectivities and relations, we embark on the tour of family stories.

A thorough tour guide, one of our first stops is an orientation to the homeland. The projection screen lights up with a map of Sri Lanka, an island off the coast of India. As D’Lo narrates the pertinent historical facts, we are privy to our first insider joke: that Sri Lanka is the “fart that India let off the side of its ass” (D’Lo, *Ramble-Ations*). This is the first insider joke and is one that depicts the kind of postcolonial ambivalence routed through humor (Bhabha 121-131) that here infers Sri Lanka’s tense relation to India. The now-hailed and settled audience is invited to laugh alongside, rather than at, the joke; it is an easy laughter that brings us into our bodies, calling attention to the ease of our response in a way that foreshadows the potential dis-ease with future narratives in the

performance. Continuing our orientation into Sri Lanka and its history, we are re-minded that it is “a small island with big ass issues” (D’Lo, *Ramble-Ations*). We continue to settle into an overview of the island’s colonial history, including the colonizer’s penetrating presence and lingering leftovers: the fervor for cricket inherited from the British and the hybridized form of *baila* (dance) derived from the Portuguese.

With Sri Lanka as our touchstone, we move next into the Sri Lankan diaspora, with sparse details of the exact conditions of the family’s migration. D’Lo and several other narrators reference the move from Sri Lanka to Queens, New York. Without it being the object of the story, as a referent, the migration functions to move other narratives forward, such as D’Lo’s status as firstborn in the United States. The absence of a migration narrative underscores his self-proclaimed hybrid identity as Sri Lankan-American, a spatial identity that marks distance from the homeland, a site that from diaspora is always retroactively imagined and constructed (Axel).

Some narrators, like Amma, the grandfather, and cousin Vanathi, reference Sri Lanka more directly, perhaps because of their direct experience with it, but these narratives are more directly routed through distance and their direct construction and direction of D’Lo’s gendered and sexual identities, as in Amma’s claim that “We didn’t leave a war torn country to come here and get killed” (D’Lo, *Ramble-Ations*). Rather than narrating the migration from Sri Lanka, here Amma envelopes Sri Lanka into a cautionary narrative of progress. She seems to imply that the family left so they wouldn’t be in danger, and D’Lo’s embodied performances are putting him/them in danger. In this instance, the postcolonial trauma of a war torn country, diaspora, and queer and trans\* overlap and threaten to undo the family (Cvetkovitch, *Archive* 118-155).

Within these narratives are embedded the family's (un)known place in Sri Lankan history. Like much of the rest of the colonized world in the wake of World War II, Sri Lanka began a bid for its independence from the then weakened British Empire (Clifford). First called by the name Dominion of Ceylon, Sri Lanka kept a relation to Britain as a Commonwealth through the early 1970s, at which point it became known as the Republic of Sri Lanka. Independence did little to curb the cultural and religious tensions between the two dominant groups in Sri Lanka, namely the majority Sinhalese who are predominantly Theravada Buddhist and the minority Tamils, mostly Hindu. In the early 1980s a bloody civil war broke out between the two groups (see Winslow and Woost; see also De Votta). Given D'Lo's and other characters' cultural referents to the Civil War throughout the show, we can infer that the family moved sometime around the beginning of the clash; being Tamil Hindus they were likely under threat of violence.

After our brief history lesson, D'Lo moves offstage behind the structure as the stage lights dim, giving way to a video projected onto the screen above the altar. The video unfolds as a sequence of photos and text that further introduce us to the family and D'Lo's place in it. The family, we are told, moved from Sri Lanka to Queens, New York, where D'Lo was born. "The Second," as D'Lo is here referred to, references his birth order in line after his older sister. The Second narrates his birth into a female body with the embodied awareness that he was a boy. Other people, inside and outside of the family, also recognized The Second as a boy—until puberty. In the complex onslaught of puberty, between the fourth and sixth grades, a classmate asks The Second if s/he was gay and a teacher in the Christian academy s/he attends introduces homosexuality and declares it a sin. Though D'Lo's Hindu religious beliefs somewhat inoculate him from

the ideas of Christian sin, the gravity of the declaration does its work: The Second's early and strong identification with his gender and sexuality propel him to transition from the boy he knows he is into the girl he knows he must perform. He masks his true identity (boy) up to the time s/he leaves for college, at which time the distance from his natal family coupled with the cultivation of a queer family of color, permit him to transition back into a boy, but not without a haircut that allows him to transition back into a female performance when returning home.

The choice to narrate The Second's awareness and deliberation of his embodied performances in his progression from childhood through early adulthood in such a disembodied documentary style provide the audience with a tender, if hollow, glance backward. The distance with which the documentary-style footage is portrayed harkens toward a foreclosed potentiality of the queer and trans\* child. Even so, replete as it is with photos of young D'Lo that the audience audibly oooohs and aaaaahs at, there is the risk of sentimentality is high. However, these identifications with the innocence projected onto children is tempered by D'Lo's later fully en fleshed narrations of the more recent present, stops on the tour that with a visceral and present affect communicate the mundane dangers, frustrations, and pleasures of his brown, queer and trans\* embodiment (encounters with the police, witnessing another trans\* person's tired and hurried protective stance of isolation on the train).

The child's acute awareness of his otherness is reflected in his strategic masking of his sexual and gender identity at the moment in which his perfected, albeit awkward, performance is expected. Up to the moment of adolescence, the racial and sexual innocence of children permits their playful bodies a certain degree of public and private

leeway (Bernstein). In the early stages, as in D'Lo's situation, his/her performance was legible to others through the culturally acceptable lens of a tomboy. However, the expectation projected onto Sacred Children (Edelman) means that they must grow up and assume the heteronormative roles that prepare them to reproduce the heteropatriarchal family. D'Lo's awareness of his expected female performance, even as a person of color, in the trajectory of his unfolding adolescence is simultaneously reflected in his multifaceted transitions and performances as well as in his use of documentary to represent it as family storytelling. His disembodied mode of narration through documentary in the circuit of family storytelling functions to place performative distance between D'Lo's body in the past and the present, marking that temporal separation while remembering the nodes of transition. Transition, trans\*, then, is accomplished not in a linear progression from one gender to another, but as multiple points of switchback, transitioning among gendered performances for different audiences and making the transition visible and public again and again.

#### Dis/Embodied Claims

The documentary distance is foreclosed, however differently, as D'Lo the tour guide returns to the audience through a series of familial personas, both real and imagined. As referenced above, the family storytelling in *Ramble-Ations* unfolds through these multiple characters. Amma, grandfather, cousin Vanathi, D'Lo himself, and Nick, a black butch/stud/trans\* custodian are all personas/exhibits whose competing narratives vie to lay claim to who D'Lo is, to comment on the parts that make him up, to order his place in the family, and through performance to reflect back on and remake the family.

This chapter opens with some of Amma's narratives, and she is an important persona/exhibit throughout *Ramble-Ations* and *D'FunQT*. As the center of her South Asian diasporic family, and in close proximity to D'Lo, Amma's narratives of D'Lo performed by D'Lo as Amma situate the multiple strands of their reciprocal investments in one another. Her presence, as a character and as a focus in narration, again and again, indicates D'Lo's unwillingness to succumb to the fracture of the natal/chosen kin binary. Rather than abandon Amma in favor of a queer belonging and kinship, D'Lo maintains this relation by re-presenting family stories through performance for him and his audiences to collectively contemplate.

Though D'Lo clearly reveres Amma, his narratives and embodiments of Amma slip into neither sentimentality nor parody. They neither romanticize nor rip her apart through critique. Instead, D'Lo's portrayal allows his audience to dwell in the uneasiness of intersectionality and family ties. As D'Lo emerges from behind the structure, his transition is initially quite jarring as his body's movements and stylized performance of the feminine is so strikingly different from the masculinity through which he rendered the audience familiar with through the introduction up until now. The red cloth hanging over the grid, which remains tethered to the structure, is wrapped around D'Lo's body and fashioned into a sari. The black wig covering his bald head is made of thick hair which is twisted into a long braid hanging down his back. A prominent bindi is placed between his eyebrows and large earrings dangle from his lobes. When he opens his mouth to form a thick Sri Lankan accent the transformation is complete.

Bordering on spectacle, the audience picks up on the critical play with which in D'Lo embodies Amma. Amma's narrative reflection attempts to contain and discipline



D'Lo's past and ongoing transitions and reroute them into a progression that makes sense to her. The tomboy who is allowed to over-identify with her/his father, pretend shaving alongside Appa in the mirror with shaving cream on the end of a toothbrush, matures into the young woman whose menstruation marks a different, more separate relation to neighborhood boys.

Amma's attempts to isolate the origins, the cause, a site on which to lay blame for D'Lo's failed female performance are not unfamiliar discourses that circulate in the logic of cultures of heteropatriarchy and biological determinism, as well as within D'Lo's own family. However, instead of embracing D'Lo's self-expression and identification, these biological, cultural and familial narratives re-route the locus of attention from D'Lo's agency and through the narrative of the Sacred Child and her/his place in a heteropatriachal family, a family in which the mother (Amma) is responsible for ushering her children into appropriate performances in adulthood. The diasporic layers of this expectation are woven through Amma's insistence that D'Lo grow out her/his hair ("even one inch"), her lament that with longer hair there might be a wedding:

And what mother doesn't want to see their child getting married. It is undoubtedly the happiest moment in a mother's life. It is a sign from the gods that the mother has finished the earthly duties and now the child must go with the husband's family. (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*).

D'Lo's failed performance interrupts Amma's own fulfillment of her cultural role as a woman. While Amma's words might sting, reflecting a seemingly unwavering heteronormativity embedded in cultural expectation thwarted in diaspora, Amma's narrative finishes with an ironic twist that pries it apart through reluctant acceptance:

Maybe it is good that D'Lo is like a boy because, you know, whenever we go traveling D'Lo is the one to drive and carries all the bags. If we were in Sri Lanka she would have made a great servant boy. (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*)

In the doing of family storytelling, this aspect of the narrative routes D'Lo's trans\* body once again into an appropriate gendered labor. The labor of masculinity allows him to maintain proximity to the family, albeit in a significantly altered order.

While Amma's narratives easily coax laughter from the audience, there is also a tenderness underlying their struggle to define family. D'Lo's embodiment is careful, pushing at the edges of parody without crossing the line into spectacle. This tension is most underscored when placed in relation to additional documentary-style videos projected onto the screen later in the performance. Across these sequences, video footage shows Amma in her own body, first being interviewed by D'Lo and then with the two of them together. D'Lo, off screen, interviews Amma, asking her to explain the Hindu puja ceremony, Hindu gods, and aspects of Sri Lankan and Hindu culture. The videos show the two of them interacting, sitting closely together, touching, playing, lovingly telling the other family stories, primarily around Hindu and Sri Lankan culture.

While each maintains her and his body and performance of self, in one sequence, in a reversal of the performance aesthetic, D'Lo, again off-screen, asks Amma to embody aspects of D'Lo. Amma, who does speak with a pronounced Sri Lankan accent, starts speaking D'Lo's language: "I'm going with my fools to the club," she repeats over and over, laughing and stumbling over the lines. "You know how it is, cold chillin'," Amma utters, urged on by D'Lo off screen as they both erupt into laughter. Amma finishes with her own rendition of rap artist Khia's "My Neck, My Back (Lick It)," a sexually

evocative song that conjures cunnilingus, anilingus and other sex acts. The audience laughs at the dis/comfort of witnessing an older Sri Lankan mother stumble over the lines. Whether she is aware of the meanings or circulation of her utterances, mothers are often cast outside the realm of sex acts, particularly sex in public (Berlant and Warner). Therefore, our laughter is quite layered as we witness this otherwise private moment in the home in the public venue of performance. Again, while D'Lo's filming of Amma runs the risk of spectacle, it instead offers an intimate and at times unsettling glance into the relation between mother and child negotiating gender, sexuality, and culture, constructing family.

Further weight is put on the relation between mother and child through the absence of D'Lo's older sister who died while D'Lo was a teenager, leaving the family with one child. In Amma's narrative of D'Lo, she references the death of her other child as part of her karma, as some kind of retribution from the gods. The sister's absence casts a pall over other characters' narrations as well, generating a strong feminized and cisgendered presence that contrasts D'Lo's trans\* embodiment, putting pressure on him as the only child they know as female. The first of these narrations is through D'Lo's cousin Vanathi, who was close to his sister.

Immediately following a video projection, D'Lo once again emerges from behind the structure completely transformed. In another wig, this time shorter and fashioned into a highly stylized Western feminized haircut, wearing a knee length pencil skirt, matching suit jacket and high heels, Vanathi speaks with in a stereotypical California Valley girl accent holding a picture of D'Lo's sister. Her self-centered eulogy narrates the two women's relation across time and space, including a trip to Sri Lanka. It is unclear

whether the two were in Sri Lanka together as part of an aid mission to help children or to visit family, but Vanathi is clearly invested in promoting the pair's distance from native Sri Lankans through their superior fashion sense and attractiveness—their diasporic privilege and Western sensibilities.

Similar to his embodiment of Amma, D'Lo's portrayal of Vanathi teeters perilously on parody. However, the somber tone one expects with a eulogy, even a one grounded in deep vanity, is undermined through Vanathi's insistence that "The She" (her nickname for D'Lo's sister) would have wanted them to dance and party rather than mourn her in any other way. What is most striking about Vanathi's narrative that invokes the presence of the absent sister is the absence of D'Lo himself. In the family stories that Vanathi is telling about herself and The She, D'Lo makes no appearance. His absence from the narration of the life of his highly feminized sister once again calls attention to D'Lo's order in the family, to narratives that do and do not get told.

D'Lo makes more of an appearance in the narrative of a grandfather who appears later in the performance. This time, D'Lo emerges from behind the structure with his bald head uncovered, round wire specs on his face, a white sheet fashioned around his loins and waist, his hunched and bare-footed figure supported by a cane, also with a heavily accented Sri Lankan lilt. His address is not to the audience, but to Vanathi. He discovers her with a boyfriend that she wishes to disguise from her parents.

In telling her he cares not for who she is with, he chastises her for her lengthy and public mourning the death of D'Lo's sister, telling her he is going to make her "feel guilty" for "crying over one dead girl" (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*). The death of "one dead girl" over whom "not even the dogs are bothered" is couched in a matter-of-fact

description of the victims of a Civil War and the kinds of interpersonal violence (sexual abuse, spousal abuse) that is common in the context of a war torn country, violence that is bound to be repeated generation after generation. He contrasts the everyday violence of colonialism and civil war with the freedom in the United States to be anti-whatever you want.

His “anti-shmanti” characterization of the United States gives rise to his argument that D’Lo and other family members must be whatever they want to be. The elder male figure is the only character D’Lo embodies who refers to him using the male pronoun. He tells Vanathi that while D’Lo risks being “beaten by the police for his big brown head,” that being gay he at least won’t get beaten by a man/husband in his day-to-day life. He insists that D’Lo, and all other members of the family, should “do whatever the hell you want to do,” and supports it with a declaration that “lots of peaceful leaders have been homos” (D’Lo, *Ramble-Ations*).

The subdued portrayal of the elder male in D’Lo’s life whose narrative centers personal agency and tolerance stands alongside the other family narratives. Grandfather’s story of D’Lo is not in contrast to the others, but instead portrays the myriad investments in shaping the intersections of brownness and queerness in diaspora. The push-pull between what is familiar and what is/can be spoken, lived, and ordered in familial relation provides a public glimpse into how diasporic queerness is lived and negotiated (Gopinath; R. Rodríguez; Cvetkovitch, *Archive* 118-155). This negotiation is neither smooth nor finished, and is being un- and re-done as the narrations accompany one another and allow for, shape, and reflect back on D’Lo and his relational order in belonging and kinship formations.

The one representation of a character who is not a member of the family, is the female spiritual leader whom Amma invites into the family home to exorcise the queer and trans\* from D'Lo's body. Wrapped in the yellow cloth, though not tethered to the structure, the spiritual leader, a woman who speaks in a hokey New Age voice and a crisp British accent, assures D'Lo that a male spirit has possessed her/his body:

Your spirit picked your body for a reason. A male gendered spirit picked your body for a reason. Your past lives dictated that there was some karma for you to reconcile and this male gendered spirit knew he would burn this karma by entering your female body so that he wouldn't have to come back here again. So D'Lo you must focus your energy with a discipline and fight the urge to become male identified. Oh no, D'Lo, trust the spirits that are talking through me. Grow your hair long, you'll be so happy with a man. (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*)

D'Lo's embodiment of this character is different from his other representations. It has a harder edge to it, rubbing against the grain of representation and risking crossing over into spectacle, almost as if D'Lo is talking back to her as much as he is re-presenting the story of what happened. The violence of trans\*- and homophobia, though present in every other narrative, through this character D'Lo resists harder, calling attention to the harshness of her role and casting more of a narrow boundary around the diasporic family unit.

The portrayal of this character gives way to D'Lo as himself as the final exhibit on the tour. From his resistant representation of the spiritual exorcism that attempts to pray away the gay, D'Lo emerges to communicate directly with the gods. In front of the audience he strips from the yellow cloth down to his shorts and a plain white short-

sleeved T-shirt, his breasts bound. Though we have laughed at the spiritual leader's intrusive attempts into D'Lo's body, here his anger and frustration are visceral and the audience accompanies him in tight, uneasy silence. Though the audience has been hailed into belonging, in this moment, after all the narrations and family stories, D'Lo appears alone before us, stripped bare in his appeals to history, the gods, and belonging. He pleads for his place in a broader lineage of trans\* belonging and re-claiming of bodies, from berdaches to two-spirit peoples.

For a brief moment D'Lo turns away from his family, betraying their betrayal, this time not through humor and sensitivity, but through boldly declaring that, "My Amma sold me to white people. My Amma of a Hindu faith that secularly doesn't have a place for gay but has never said that spirits have a gender" (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*). The moment is tense, but D'Lo's commitment allows the audience space for neither tears nor breath. Instead we are meant to witness this tight performance of agony and loneliness. He appeals to the gods, hailing them as he has hailed the audience, insisting that they "Tell me I'm not wrong. If nothing else, then being how I am rings like bell in my body. If this life ain't right, take me home" (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*). In hailing the gods and turning away from his family, D'Lo inverts the familiar suicidal trope that emphasizes the selfish actions of an individual; rather than succumbing to him being wrong he instead re-locates the onus of responsibility, laying claim to a home and belonging that is elsewhere.

The spiritual reclaiming gives way to other narratives that center D'Lo's trans\* and queer embodiment and movement through the world. His final narration, our final stop on the tour, pays homage to the stage and the home D'Lo finds in performance. As the lights dim, D'Lo exits a final time behind the structure. Strands of Michael Jackson's

P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing) softly caress the empty stage as Nick, short for Nicole, moves across the stage, walking a push-broom and sweeping up the detritus of the performance. Nick, D'Lo transformed a final time, is dressed in custodial blue work pants and work shirt, wearing a baseball cap. A self-identified butch/stud/transman, Nick, the final persona, is not a natal family member, but imaginary kin who narrates us out of the performance, accomplishing a final re-centering of trans\* and queer belonging. He narrates to us that the performance is over and that he is just cleaning up before he meets up with his girlfriend and his boys. Nick's stories portray the complexities of queer belonging and kinship in the container of a homophobic structure that at times weighs heavily on queer relations, but that are sites of pleasure, ecstasy, and home.

Nick's quiet exit from the stage gives way to a final documentary projection, this time a home video of a Hindu ceremony that centers an older man and woman. The ceremony depicts a loving family with the heterosexual couple at the center and slowly fades to black, marking the end of the performance. The final documentary located next to Nick's narrative offers an uneasy conclusion to *Ramble-Ations*. The lingering family with the heterosexual couple in the center risks recuperation into the normative family structure, even as the distance provided by the documentary poses the question of where and to whom D'Lo belongs. In the end, we are left with more questions than answers, and is perhaps then a fitting conclusion to the ongoing construction of family through the locus and intersections of brown and queer/trans\*.

Coterminous with the end of the tour/occupation into our hailed subjectivities and queer intimate relations, the audiences are released back into our selves. Audience members may be altered as a result of our temporary relation, develop alternate



understandings of and proximity to South Asian/Sri Lankan, gay/trans\*/queer, but we are no longer the coeval subjects we were with D'Lo for the duration of the performance. Our differences reemerge and in the aftereffect of queer intimacy, we are left to actively construct queer worldmaking, belonging, or differences, however, we do so with the traces of this embodied hailing and our memories of it. Through the many stops on the tour that are laced with alienation, in our queer intimacy we sense the imperative of belonging.

### Feeling D'FunQT!

In *D'FunQT* (pronounced defunct), D'Lo continues to rely on the themes of the Sri Lankan and South Asian migration and diaspora, queer and trans\*, and belonging and family relations. However, one marked difference in the performances is that in *D'FunQT* D'Lo is the sole narrator, moving from experience to experience to narrate a queer politics of belonging and relation. Whereas *Ramble-Ations* centers primarily around the Sri Lankan diasporic family and the ways in which family is made, undone, and re-made at the intersections of diaspora and queer/trans\*, *D'FunQT* centers queer and trans\* of color embodiment and experience. The family and family storytelling make featured appearances in *D'FunQT*—Amma remains a recurring character—but they are not speaking narrators. In some ways, *D'FunQT* picks up where Nick left off in *Ramble-Ations*, and from the beginning of the performance the audience is oriented to the uptake.

Whereas in *Ramble-Ations*, where the title implies D'Lo's im/mobility, his rambling from body to body to narrate all the people and parts that make him up or threaten to split him apart, *D'FunQT* implies a different kind of performative, a playful undoing and remaking. Similar to *Ramble-Ations*, I read *D'FunQT* as participating in the

kind of disidentificatory performance described by Muñoz (*Disidentifications*). Rather than his multiple identities leaving him defunct—from the latin de-, meaning discharged, dead and functus, performed—D’Lo instead integrates these parts of himself and his communities/families/belonging, putting the D’ (D’Lo) and the Fun back in defunct. Further, he highlights the complex proximity and often in/visibility of the Q and the T that are often silenced in the LGBT[Q] acronym. Given the mainstream LGBT politics that often erase trans\* and queer politics, their absence in the title *D’FunQT* and in its narratives attempts to repair and reimagine queer and trans politics through centering what often gets left out. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of *D’FunQT* and the implications of these performances doing.

D’Lo struts onto the stage wearing grey sneakers with bright orange laces, a grey sarong tied around his waist with a plastic toy gun tucked in the front of his waist. Under a grey blazer pops a coral button down top with a white T-Shirt underneath. Sunglasses cover his eyes and his head, no longer bald, is fashioned into a black mohawk. Hip-hop beats accompany his highly stylized entrance, rainbow lights flashing as he dance-struts across the stage, hailing the audience into being as his voice drops an octave or two lower than his everyday range, “How you all doing? Everybody feel good? All the ladies looking good,” he purrs at the audience (D’Lo, *D’FunQT*). He stops quickly, begins to laugh and admits that this is not how he talks. He quickly takes up a different posture as he re-orient us into the performance.

I don’t really talk like that. I know, I know. Some of ya’ll who don’t know me are like, wait. Is that a girl who looks like a man or a boy who looks better than my man. Should I bash it or fuck it? (D’Lo, *D’FunQT*)

In his hailing of the audience in this way, calling attention to the public vulnerability of trans\* folk in which violence and desire are in such close proximity, D'Lo establishes a multifaceted relation. Here our queer relation is quite mobile, and it is up to us to decide. The audience for this performance is a queer performance space in New York, and the laughter that the introduction invokes is one that establishes recognition and belonging in its reflection of the lived reality.

D'Lo's hailing pries open the potentiality of a queer intimate relation among D'Lo and his audiences by bringing together a transgender politics of relation with a queer of color transnational politic, without compromising or hierarchizing any one over the other. Through his body and narrative, D'Lo constitutes with what Richard Juang describes as a transgender politics of relation. Juang describes this politic of relation as one that can "address the discriminations and prejudices targeted not only against gender, but against racial and ethnic differences" (707). Grounded as a politics of *recognition* emphasizes the legal and cultural standing of what counts as human (Juang; Butler, *Undoing*). Recognition encompasses what makes a livable life (Butler, *Undoing*) and surpasses the politics of visibility that is central to the mainstream gay and lesbian rights movements (Spade; Valentine). While visibility is not in and of itself an unproductive politic, it has often been used and read as a gesture of assimilation, couched in the logic of similarity (Juang; Spade). Instead of being absorbed in visibility, a politics of recognition accounts for and maintains the particularities of difference as well as the multiplicity of expression and desire of trans\* bodies that are often eclipsed under the LGBT umbrella (Juang; Spade).

Hailed in this way, the audience is not invited to settle back and consume the performance, nor are we called into temporary subject positions. We maintain the selves we bring as audience members, but not passive ones. D’Lo again calls our attention to the means of performance as he begins, establishing the relation as interdependent. In the center of the stage is a small table covered in black cloth, on it is a rainbow colored boa and to the right a stool. Walking from one spot to the next, each lit up by a rectangular spotlight, he names each space. The rectangle stage right is his “random space.” He moves here to narrate seemingly tangential anecdotes that accompany other stories (dating woes, facts about places, observations of queer and straight people). Stage right is the “rant space.” In the rant space D’Lo’s anger and frustrations come through (trans\* people and health care, racism and other normative behavior in gay and lesbian spaces, the differences between queer and gay, polyamory). Center stage near the table is the “fuck you” space. While the other two sites cue the audience into a spatial relation to the stage, the fuck you space breaks the fourth wall with the audience. If he moves into the fuck you space, it means the audience has not responded appropriately to a joke or a story and are therefore subject to glares and the toy gun pointed their way.

Woven in between these spaces are the stories in *D’FunQT*. Again, D’Lo situates his family history in the Sri Lankan diaspora. Rather than hear about his transitions and performances of boy and girl throughout his childhood, the ways his natal family members might narrate D’Lo’s order, here D’Lo steps outside of the normative genre of childhood to communicate more directly about the challenges of not belonging in his gender in his family. He narrates failed suicidal attempts, and the feeling of suicide as the option as a response to not belonging not in somber and isolated tones such as was

portrayed in *Ramble-Actions*, but through humor: the rainbow feather boa slides around his neck to form the noose of his undoing. When the boa becomes a fashion accessory he procures a large plastic knife from behind the table, mimicking slashing his wrists and throat. Finally, the toy gun emerges from his waistband and is placed against his temple. At this repeated failure he admits, “That’s when I realized I was bad at something. And that suicide was so [pauses] gay” (D’Lo, *D’FunQT*).

There are many ways to read this scene. Suicide stories are not a familiar genre that would circulate in public natal family circles. They instead tend to be the kind of hushed stories that are whispered outside of normative spaces, tales of warning, gossip, or to communicate an otherwise unspoken of absence, death, or scar. However, in queer and trans\* families, these are precisely the kinds of stories that are often aired publicly and stand alongside coming out and other types of queer narratives that also traffic in queer and trans\* belongings. Queer and trans\* families are spaces where the privatized experience of suicide and suicidal attempts circulate simultaneously to underscore the isolation of queer and trans\* embodiment as well as to undo that isolation in public belonging. Though suicide stories can and are routed in mainstream publics in ways that interpellate gay and lesbian subjects into normativity and progress narratives (Puar, “Cost”), in spaces like this, they stitch together the reality of queer lives. They can be audienceed as touching, humorous, or otherwise, and further underscore the relation among violence and death, pleasure and ecstasy in queer and trans\* lives.

Into the queer and trans\* family storytelling depicted throughout *D’FunQT* D’Lo’s natal kin make appearances, sometimes interrupting and re-interpellating the storyteller back into normativity. At times, these stories replicate the conventions of

queer and trans\* storytelling but with a South Asian diasporic center. One such story involves a phone call from D’Lo’s father where he enthusiastically tells D’Lo that he has found two suitable mates for him, two potential suitors in an arranged marriage. Appa’s enthusiasm is swiftly deflated and rerouted into confusion when D’Lo comes out to them. A raucous game of telephone ensues when Amma gets wind of the conversation and his parents try to make sense of their child as “a gay.” In this narrative, the natal family interrupts and intrudes upon the queer life D’Lo is leading. Their reluctant acceptance is curbed again when they find out D’Lo is dating a non-Sri Lankan/South Asian/Hindu white Christian woman. Why can’t you date a nice Hindu girl, is the implication of this particular clash. The family and its ordering are always in transition.

At other times, as in the concluding scene of *D’FunQT*, D’Lo repairs the order of trans\*/queer or South Asian family stories and brings them together through the genre of a story that can be labeled “the first time.” Part of the first time story is the exchange between D’Lo and Amma of his top surgery. In the first part of the narrative that unfolds in the kitchen as Amma is cooking, D’Lo struggles to come out to Amma about his choice to remove his breasts. He has already done it, and he wants her to know. In his hedging, Amma cuts him off. She wants the story:

Amma: No, I already know. You’re planning on having surgery.

D’Lo: Well kind of Amma, but I already had surgery.

Amma: You already [pause]—who was with you!

D’Lo: [says who was with him]

Amma: Are you taking injections?

D’Lo: No not yet, but—

Amma: No, don't do it it's not safe!

D'Lo: Amma, it's safe for the most part but—

Amma: Are you sure—

D'Lo: Well you know, but, I don't know, but. OK, we can talk about this another time. But are you OK, Amma?

Amma: Yeah.

D'Lo: Amma, are you sure you're OK? You're not mad?

Mother and child overlap in this uneasy exchange that culminates in Amma's insisting that she has run out of ginger and that they must go to the store. There is no ending to part one of the story and they emerge at Trader Joe's for ginger and hot cocoa. Neither can find the hot cocoa and as D'Lo goes off to find it, Amma does double duty, enlisting a clerk to also help her find the same item.

As D'Lo comes upon Amma and the clerk he announces that he has located the cocoa and has it in his hand. Amma turns to the clerk and says, "he's already got it for me" (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*). It is a mundane use of the masculine pronoun, but Amma's first. As they move to the checkout line, D'Lo turns to Amma accusingly, declaring, "Amma! You just called me *he!*" Uncertain, Amma is immediately flustered. She delivers a frustrated, "You're confusing me," as she playfully slaps him across the face (D'Lo, *Ramble-Ations*). In her new location in D'Lo's extended and re-ordered family in the making, Amma is no longer an interruption or obstacle but part of the order.

The queer intimacy established through the direct address in *D'FunQT* does not enable the same kind of identification as *Ramble-Ations*. Neither performance produces an easy identification or belonging, but in *D'FunQT* there is a much harder and less

sentimental edge to this performance and these stories that also include queer and trans\* reproduction, violence against queers and trans\* people from within and outside these communities.

This is not to suggest that natal family storytelling has soft edges and stories of chosen families among queer and trans\* people are hard. Rather, the aesthetic and the rhythm that centers queer and trans\* people of color calls our attention to the gaps in belonging between these spaces, to the uneasy overlap between natal and chosen kin and the discursive and intra/interpersonal isolation that often produced under the conditions of these gaps. That the stories in *D'FunQT* continue to refuse the separation, calling attention to the ways in which he coaxes them together, in pleasure and in pain, exposes the realities that do not often circulate around either space. Bringing these stories together, placing these performances alongside one another in this way, for and with an audience, re-flects, re-turns, and re-makes family and belonging.

While Chapter Two looks at the arguments and ambivalences surrounding same-sex marriage and the imaginaries and narratives that participate in and also resist that narrow, privatized relationality, this chapter instead focuses on the ways in which queer intimacy in performance might be put to work as part of a reimaginary and reordering of family through public family storytelling. I read D'Lo's performances as fostering queer intimacy with the audience as the kind of coalitional practice that narrative performance can actualize, and the resistance to neoliberalism through which family storytelling in public can be put to use. This is not to suggest that D'Lo's narratives, as they disidentify with the norm and center difference, are not also susceptible to, informed by, and reproduce neoliberal relationality. Indeed, one might argue that the strategies inherent in



any and all storytelling that attempt to reflect, reinforce, reorder, and shape culture (Langellier and Peterson) participate in normalizing and neoliberal project. As always, this is the risk in any performance. As I have attempted to demonstrate here in my reading of D'Lo's performances, queer intimacy can be put to many uses, to expose many things, and to construct imaginaries and belongings that neoliberal relational discourses attempt to foreclose. In the next chapter, building on same-sex marriage and trans\*/queer family storytelling, we turn our attention back in time to performance at the height of the emergence of neoliberalism, to Guillermo Gómez Peña's 1988 *Border Brujo*.

## CHAPTER 4

### FACE TO FACE IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

the day I was born

September 23 of 1955

eternity died

& the border wound became infected

the day my father died

February 17 of 1989

my last tentacle with México broke

& finally I became a Chicano (Gómez-Peña, “Border” 54)

From a stage in the United States, in the performance piece *Border Brujo*, performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña narrates neither the conditions of his departure from México nor the immediate experience of his arrival in the United States. Born in México, he left his homeland for the United States as a migrant<sup>4</sup>. In the brief excerpt above, he routes his journey through natal kinship ties—birth and death, lines of blood, genealogies of name—the ties that link him to his family and to the nation of México. As a migrant, Gómez-Peña does not give up these ties. Rather, his “tentacle” stretches across the distance, securing the relation. Upon the death of his father, the tentacle breaks. His connection to the nation is loosened and he is released into an alternate becoming, and

---

<sup>4</sup> I use the term migrant in favor of immigrant following Eithne Luibhèid’s discussion in the introduction of the edited collection *Queer Migrations*. She writes that, “‘migrant,’ then, rejects the claim that such distinctions refer to different ‘types’ of immigrants, and instead directs analytic attention to the ways that these distinctions function as technologies of normalization, discipline, and sanctioned dispossession” (“Introduction” xi). The “technologies of normalization, discipline, and sanctioned dispossession” the collection addresses and analyzes centers the intersections of immigration and sexuality, and works to join together queer and immigration scholarship in order to call attention to how sexuality is a central component of immigration policies and controls. See also the *GLQ* issue on queer migration, and especially Luibhèid’s introductory essay (“Queer/Migration”).

different modes of belonging, as the hybrid and politicized Chicano. And performance artist. It is 1989.

Twenty-five years later, in 2014 Phoenix, Arizona, a scene unfolds on a public sidewalk on Central Avenue, a major thoroughfare. A group of fifteen or so people, whose numbers expand and contract across the two week period from February 17 to March 3, stand together on the sidewalk. They hold up signs.

“Not One More/Ni Una Mas”

“Stop Deportations Now”

“Free Dad”

The sidewalk becomes a stage, the backdrop of which is the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Arizona field office. An otherwise innocuous building with a partially mirrored façade, the ICE building does nothing to announce itself. However, with the protestors in front staging a spectacle, the building becomes visible, a character in this performance to which the audience may attend. The protestors are holding a hunger strike, refusing food, as they call attention to the deportation and detainment of their family members and allies (Puente; Hendley, “People”). Like Gómez-Peña, the protestors call attention to relations with the state and modes of belonging. Differently from Gómez-Peña, who turns away from the nation into different forms of belonging, the hunger strikers route their statements directly through appeals to family, justifying their actions in favor of keeping families together (Hendley, “People”; Puente). In the space between these twenty-five years and the two sites of political protest, different political investments and negotiations of discourses of immigration and multiculturalism are represented.

The signs the protestors hold up, signs that read “Stop Deportations Now” and “Not One More,” also prominently display the face of Barack Obama. These signs, many of which are seen at immigration demonstrations across the nation, conjure two prominent aspects of contemporary immigration politics. One thing the protestors and their signs do is call attention to immigration histories. To insist that deportations stop, now, is to cite ongoing and intersecting histories of deportation and immigration, histories that range from stolen lands to stolen peoples, to policies and politics that are part of a transnational capitalism woven through a heteronormative register, on which nations and the migrations of peoples depend (Luibhèid, “Introduction” xx). These histories the protestors call attention to are not those histories that circulate widely. They are not included in the celebrated narratives of the nation, the dominant narrative that “represses the long history of how freedom and opportunity for some has generally been purchased at the expense of many” (“Introduction” xxvi). Rather, the protestors signify the “hidden” histories that narratives of progress, meritocracy, and inclusion disguise. With their bodies and signs the protestors therefore highlight an ongoing temporality of immigration politics as they render visible and unravel the grand narrative yarn.

In addition to making the past visible, the protestors simultaneously isolate the specificity of the present. In naming Obama, placing his face alongside the messages and meanings the signs craft and project, the protestors make an additional link, namely, that under the Obama administration there have been a record number of deportations (Pew, “Record”; Pew, “High”; for 2013 deportation rates see ICE). In this instance Obama, the first African American president of the United States, is the face that stands in for the nation, the face accountable for the deportations, the face being called by the protestors

with their signs, called upon to stop deportations. Now. Insisting there be Not. One. More.

As spectacle, the protestors interrupt the normative flows of space, time, and business as they attempt to hail their audiences—the nation, the witnessing publics—and call attention to relations, relations of power, relations that are enforced, and relations that are re-imagined. The force of their hailing is limited yet significant. It is limited in that their temporary presence can be ignored or dismissed. Their hailing may never reach the bodies they seek to address. In this way, they call attention to and expose the limits of the discourses that produce the boundaries of relations, from the nation’s promises of belonging and citizenship to the jagged realities of inclusion and exclusion, the discrepancy between the nation’s narratives and its policies. Regardless of the ways discourses of immigration in the United States may point otherwise, its narratives of promise and inclusion, not to mention capitalism’s dependence on certain labor forces, continue as part of the global migration of people (Luibhèid, “Introduction” xx-xxv).

While the protestors’ hailing may be limited, however, the force of their accomplishment is realized in the responses they do generate, particularly from the furthest edges of exclusion. Here I am referring to the relation that emerges from the hailing through forms of violence. In a somewhat predictable response, the state first threatened and then followed through and arrested some of the protestors on trespassing violations (Hendley, “Puente”). Here the hailing is not refused so much as it is rerouted. In response to the hailing, the state reinterpellates the protestors, using the authority of the state to discipline the protestors and reassert a hierarchical relation. Other reports tell of a burrito thrown from a passing car into the group of protestors on hunger strikes. On

the wrapper of the burrito was written “Learn English wetback” and “Wetback go back to Mexico” (Nevarez). Disturbing as it may be, this response, though it relies on stereotypes of Mexicans, like the state asserts a relation and recognition. The anonymous burrito thrower seems to be communicating that the condition of belonging to the nation, to be fed by the nation, is to maintain certain standards, to speak English, or to leave. Or to speak English and also leave. While each of these responses constitute relations of refusal, erasure and foreclosure over other possibilities raised through the protest, through their responses, the state and the public each come face to face with the protestors.

What does it mean to come face to face, to meet across difference in a relation, especially in such a politically charged context and such chasms of inequality? How might we understand the multiple lines of relation, from those that are being represented within the protest, to those that are being refused and foreclosed, all the way through those that are being witnessed in other ways, those unaccounted for in media headlines. To understand the protestors’ engagement with immigration as representing and the multiple audiences as responding, is to begin to account for a relation. The relations produced through contemporary discourses of immigration are worked through binary configurations: insider/outsider, citizen/migrant, and so on. The terms are limited and do not represent the range of experiences and identifications they signify. However, my use of them here in this way underscores how they are produced through discourse. Of the many turns in U.S. immigration policy, the onset of neoliberalism fostered another wave of understanding migrants, especially migrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Alongside, and intersecting with immigration, are shifting discourses of multiculturalism that dictate the terms of relations of difference.

The onset of neoliberalism, and in particular the intersecting discourses of immigration and multiculturalism, are the subject of this chapter. I turn to the belly of the beast of neoliberalism, to the 1980s and to Guillermo Gómez-Peña's 1988 performance piece *Border Brujo*, written in two acts in the style of epic poetry, using fifteen different highly stylized personas representing different experiences of border crossings, his own migration from Mexico City to the U.S., and his location within and engagements with the politics of migration, transnationalism, and the art world (Gómez-Peña, *New* 93-95; Gómez-Peña "Border" 49-50). My reasons for turning back in time are grounded in multiple logics. From a performance theory approach, I am propelled by José Muñoz's argument in *Cruising Utopia* that is grounded in his affective and political disappointment with the "present," the contemporary mainstream LGBT politics that seek inclusion and normativity. In contrast to the political insistence on the present, he suggests that queerness is always on the horizon, that it is "not yet here" and "we are not yet queer" (Muñoz, *Cruising* 1). Though not yet here in the "prison house" that is the present, we can nonetheless utilize queerness in service of a radical politic (Muñoz, *Cruising* 1). He routes this argument through radical queer performances of the past.

Informed by Muñoz, I am interested in the situatedness of *Border Brujo* and the historical conditions that give rise to it. The multiple strands Gómez-Peña draws from offer important insights into the lived experience, interactions, and intentional responses to neoliberalism. *Border Brujo* then, as a performance of the past, has the potential to inform tactics of resistance to performance artists in similar situations with similar politics. From a performance artist and activist whose cultural presence spans decades, Gómez-Peña in his body and his performance art provide a living, felt and documented

archive (see Cvetkovitch, *Archive*; Taylor) of what it means to live, resist, and narrate neoliberalism and to imagine relations through and beyond it. In this way, Gómez-Peña's performance from the past can inform politics, performers, and performances in the present.

In addition to the queer potential of an informed past, *Border Brujo*'s text eerily haunts the present. Reading the text and watching the video performance, the twenty-six or so years between the first iteration of *Border Brujo* and now collapses. This is not to undermine the importance of the then, the contexts Gómez-Peña narrates as he observes and lives—from the AIDS crisis to interventionist wars, political assassinations and presidential politics. As a historical text, *Border Brujo* is significant and meaningful, and has been addressed and analyzed for its political doings (Fox), for its place in Latino/a performance and history (Fusco), and identity (Holling and Calafell)<sup>5</sup>. With some exceptions, however, the issues Gómez-Peña calls our attention to in *Border Brujo*, the discourses of immigration and multiculturalism and the relational dynamics of difference, separation and exclusion, continue in the present. As a performance, *Border Brujo* as living archive remains a relevant text.

Through these trajectories, my aim here is to examine past and present, traverse a line stretching backwards and forwards, from the protestors in 2014 Phoenix to Gómez-Peña's 1988 narrations in *Border Brujo* (Gómez-Peña, *New*). I do not seek to compare or

---

<sup>5</sup> There is a significant body of scholarship across performance and Latino/a studies that addresses *Border Brujo* and Gómez-Peña. Gómez-Peña himself has published numerous books and essays that span the length of his career and contributions. While these works inform the analysis of *Border Brujo* I undertake here, my aim is not to add to the understanding of Gómez-Peña as a Latino/a performance artist, but rather to situate *Border Brujo* specifically within the context of neoliberal discourses of immigration and multiculturalism. Therefore, a more thorough discussion of these other placements and discussions of Gómez-Peña is beyond the scope of this project.



even equate these two forms of political performance, their different tactics and aesthetics, modes of communication, or even political imperatives. Rather, in traversing a line between the scenes in 2014 and 1988, my interest is in what happens when performers and audiences come face to face. Like the face to face interactions between the protestors and their audiences, so does the border *brujo* come face to face with his audiences, addressing, challenging, and inviting a consideration of the relational implications produced through discourses of immigration and multiculturalism.

My argument in this chapter is that as queer intimacy, performance offers an opportunity to come face to face. Face to face we come to terms with the modes of neoliberal relationality and are enabled to imagine otherwise. Face to face, we are present to one another and the places and times the performance takes us, the feelings it circulates among us, and in the imaginaries it provides us. Gómez-Peña describes performance as not representation, but presence. He insists that performance “it is not (as classical theories of theater would suggest) a mirror, but the actual moment in which the mirror is shattered” (*Dangerous* 9). In *Border Brujo* he “puts a mirror between the two countries then breaks it in front of the audience” (*Border* 49). When the mirror shatters, as the shards of our reflections scatter across the floor, we come face to face. There and then something may happen. In the next section I first situate and describe the shifting discourses of immigration and multiculturalism and then turn to a discussion of what it means to come face to face. Then I read Gómez-Peña’s *Border Brujo* in more detail to consider the dimensions and implications of what it means to come face to face in queer intimacy.

## Face to Face with Immigration and Multiculturalism

Immigration and multiculturalism are intersecting and ongoing discourses of neoliberalism. Together they inform my reading of *Border Brujo*. The specificities of immigration and multiculturalism are historically dependent and change over time to suit the changing needs of the political and economic ideologies guiding the nation-state, citizenship and belonging. My emphasis here will be not on specific policies and practices of immigration or multiculturalism over time. Rather, I focus on the ways neoliberalism has informed these policies, and the overarching meanings and implications these more recent historical changes have had on modes of citizenship, relation, and belonging.

Though globalization scholars disagree on when globalization “began” or whether it is simply ongoing, postcolonial critics are especially interested in the changes of globalization brought on since the wake of World War II. The significant and continuous changes in political and ideological systems, finance, technology, and media, all contribute to the increased movement of people across the globe (Appadurai). These migrations, Luibhèid argues, “have profoundly altered every aspect of U.S. social, political, economic, and cultural life in the past quarter century” (“Introduction” ix). Immigration policy has always been shaped through constructs of race, national origin, religion, sexuality, socio-economic status, material value, health, and myriad other factors undiscussed publicly. Neoliberalism’s emphasis on privatization and family units revamped immigration policy in order to ensure that migrants conform to these ideals (Luibhèid, “Introduction” xii-xiii; Lowe).

The emphasis that changes in immigration policy place on appropriate forms of relation is perhaps one of the more acute effects immigration has had on U.S. culture. Neoliberalism has greatly influenced the changes brought on by increased migrations, resulting in attempts to control and manage the presence and relations of difference (see Povinelli; Davis 41; Gordon and Newfield). It is an emphasis that reflects upon what it means to be an “American,” on what it means to belong, and the conditions of belonging. What it means to belong is an ongoing tension within the nation. There is a slippage between narratives of opportunity and freedom, the stuff of nation building, and those whose access and full participation in belonging is always held at bay, including migrants (Berlant, *Queen* 18-19). The lure of belonging is always mediated by the anxiety that comes from the threat of difference of the other; of the changes difference brings and the reflections it begs (Berlant, *Queen* 193-195).

One way to read this anxiety is through the temporality of narratives of nation and belonging. Immigration in the present references the nation’s past. The U.S. is a “nation of immigrants” goes the story, most often with a firm sense of history and pride. Embedded in this narrative logic is an erasure of America’s past—of slavery and genocide, of an economy built on migrant labor (Luibhèid, “Introduction” xx; Lowe 9; Alcoff 17). To keep the past in its place, which is also in service of securing the future, the then-immigrants of the past are narrated through a temporal arc that separates past from present, through stories that chart leaving the past behind. The giving up, partially or fully, of languages, food, customs ethnic and racial identities—culture—are the cost of belonging to the U.S. and those things that have long since been given up for citizenship and belonging in the present in the great melting pot (Alcoff 16-19). The melting pot of

U.S. citizenship and belonging “is to be anesthetized, complacent, unimaginative” (Berlant, *Queen* 199). In other words, it is to sublimate difference in order to achieve sameness. New migrants, in order to belong, are expected to conform similarly, assimilating toward whiteness through the norms of heteronormativity and participation in the economy of consumption (Puar 24-32).

The pushback on the part of those whose racial, sexual, gendered differences that were unable to be absolved and absorbed into the nation pushed back during the 1960s and asserted a “cult of ethnicity” challenged the dominant cultural narrative of belonging (Alcoff 17; see also Joseph 21-22). These early discourses of multiculturalism that espoused a more radical politic of change agitated for the visibility of difference, pushing back against its erasure and sublimation. Though this in part was responsible some changes, ranging from ethnic studies departments and higher enrollments of non-white students in universities to increased awareness and representation of difference in the arts, the mainstream audiences to which these demands were directed swiftly tired of the discussions (see Reddy 144-147; Lowe 29-30 and 84-96; Gómez-Peña, *New* 197; Fusco).

On the heels of visibility, in the 1980s and 1990s the critical impulses of multiculturalism were soon re-appropriated to meet the needs of dominant belonging. The melting pot soon gave way to a different form of multiculturalism, one that centered a universal subject. This iteration of the universal subject, rather than exorcise difference, integrated difference through emphasizing similarity and under the conditions of assimilation (Lowe 29-30). These early and continued discourses of multiculturalism subsume critical dialogue of race and racism, assigning them as a thing of the past, and replacing them with discussions of cultural diversity (Melamed; Davis 43; Avery and

Gordon 3-4; Arrizón 86). Cultural difference was now valued for its presence and visibility, integrated into an unequal belonging, insofar as their differences were assimilated toward whiteness; those representing multiple cultures were expected to embody and perform in recognizable ways (Joseph 22). Difference can also be represented in the form of objects (the food, music, and other artifacts of different cultures) through which cultural difference maintains a disembodied presence (Gómez-Peña, *New* 196). This multiculturalism functions as an inoculation against the threat and anger that people of color pose to whiteness. The distance multiculturalism places between the lived reality of difference and otherness and the hegemony of whiteness is one Angela Davis narrates as “not an inevitability,” but one wherein “multiculturalism can become a polite and euphemistic way to affirming persisting, unequal power relationships by representing them as equal differences” (44). This is the multiculturalism of neoliberalism, a multiculturalism that traffics as and in the languages of pluralism, diversity, post-race, and colorblind (racism); the multiculturalism in which difference in effect makes no difference.

While discourses of immigration emphasize difference, the lines between citizens and non-citizens, multiculturalism stresses similarities despite difference. If we locate immigration and multiculturalism as a continuum of difference, one that mediates belonging, underlying each point on the continuum are principles of separation. Understood through the logic of separation, belonging is fragile, under threat (Segrest). In *Border Brujo*, these normative logics and their conditions are hailed, exposed, and reconsidered. In *Border Brujo*, Gómez-Peña comes face to face with his audiences to present alternatives to normative forms of belonging.

Face to face is a concept I draw on from feminist theorizing, especially through the struggles in the feminist movement across differences of race and sexuality (see Anzaldúa and Moraga; Anzaldúa, *Making*; Lorde; Lugones; Mohanty; Sandoval, “Dissident”; Segrest). To address these struggles and move toward a coalitional politic, in *Pilgrimages* María Lugones offers a methodology of what it means to come together across difference to do political work. In her chapter “*Hablando Cara a Cara/Speaking Face to Face: An exploration of Ethnocentric Racism*,” Lugones argues for an understanding of racism as relational (41-51), as “an interactive phenomenon” (70). While racism is lived in relation, it is of course informed and produced by the “racial state” (50). Therefore, racism is lived at the personal and structural levels, each animating the other. When it comes to navigating chosen relations across differences of race and sexuality, Lugones argues that we must face one another.

To come face to face is to be willing to listen and witness, to be present to deep and complex feelings, including anger, and to tend to multiple histories without collapsing differences. Not to quell, but rather to sustain the intensity of being face to face and how to move through and in such a state, Lugones offers modalities of playfulness, “world”-traveling, and loving perception. She does not use these words in a fluffy or carefree manner. Rather, the politics of play, world-travel, and love bring us in touch with one another’s experience with an orientation of radical political care as opposed to hostility (Lugones 96-98; see also Segrest). Coming face to face in this way, Lugones sets up a politic of belonging (see also Carrillo Rowe, *Power*; Chávez, *Queer*).

This politics of belonging that emerges from within the feminist movement can be extended to additional struggles. In what Chela Sandoval (“Dissident”) describes as

“dissident globalization,” a mode of living in relation to hegemonic global capital emerges with which to resist forms of domination. A dissident globalization involves practices that include “reading power everywhere and always” and working toward “equalizing power among interlocutors” (Sandoval, “Dissident” 27). Face to face, these practices of and through belonging resist the kinds of neoliberal relationality fostered through discourses of immigration informed by multiculturalism.

Face to Face with the *Border Brujo*

*Brujo* is Spanish for the masculine form of witch, or shaman. In some parts of Mexican and Mexican-American cultures, the *brujo* is a revered and powerful figure, able to accomplish things others may not. The *brujo*, or the shaman, can conjure spirits, exorcise demons, and promote healing. People seek out the *brujo*, we come face to face with them, seeking wisdom, answers, action. Facing the *brujo* one enters into a voluntary relationship, a ritual, and the liminal. The intention may be clear, but the outcome is unknown. In *Border Brujo*, while the audience has come to meet the *brujo*, seeking whatever it is they seek, the *brujo* immediately hails the audience into a relation of his own making. The performance begins:

dear audience

feel at home

this continent is your home

grab a cigarette

this is a smoking world

kick back

grab the crotch of your neighbor

& allow me the privilege

of reorganizing your thoughts (Gómez-Peña, “Border” 50).

Gómez-Peña’s welcome to the audience is a double-edged sword that simultaneously invokes an un/easy relation. The instruction to “feel at home” infers a space of familiarity, of comfort, of family. For many people, to feel at home is to enter into the safety away from the world, from surveillance, and to be in one’s body in the way that feels most comfortable. The home is a site of privacy away from the world of the public.

At the same time, there is an edge that undercuts the ease of home as the double meaning slowly gives way to the uncertainty and potential defensiveness that comes with being called out on your privilege. To remind the audience that “this continent is your home,” is to immediately call attention to the colonial conditions of home, to the illegal treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that when signed in 1848 turned citizens to foreigners and home into away in an instant. While it might be fun, desirable, and even a welcome gesture to “grab a cigarette” and “grab the crotch of your neighbor,” to do so is also to recognize the global and internal masculine ordering of the U.S. that authorizes touch whether welcome or not. As the audience’s sustained presence concedes to “the privilege of reorganizing your thoughts,” from the outset there is an underlying tension as the dual meanings imply no certain direction or relation.

The “home” the audience enters into is a performative altar with its ordered and symbolic objects collectively and individually inviting the gaze while simultaneously declaring a sacred space. The altar is taller and wider than the seated Gómez-Peña, who when the audience enters is speaking in tongues as he arranges items on the altar and lights candles. The objects making up the altar range from lighted candles and to painted



skulls, to multiple figurines (an indigenous man in headdress, a Mexican policeman, gangster with slicked back hair and leather jacket holding a knife, and many more), to a Clairol shampoo bottle filled with its green liquid. A sign in the front of the altar painted in white letters declares the “Tijuana Centenaria 1889-1989.” Another sign in the back of the altar reads “Sponsored by Turismo Fronterizo” (Border Tourism). The altar both consumes Gómez-Peña and is the backdrop for the performance, its own character representing the site of the borderlands.

As a *border brujo*, Gómez-Peña presents and occupies a border subjectivity. The borderlands are conceptualized in multiple ways. There is the actual physical geopolitical border that represents the U.S.-Mexico border, a site that is often associated with physical and mental violence and cruelty, suspicion and hostility. Further, there is the borderlands as theorized by Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands* that represents the psychic site of those who occupy the borderlands. This borderlands encompasses what it is like to live in the borderlands, the experience of being made up of multiple races and cultures, genders and sexualities, and speaking multiple languages. It represents the traumatic residue of colonization, internalized and continuously projected, and emerges from the agency of that lived experience, an agency fostered through survival. This borderlands is mythical and real, straddling multiple worlds and navigating them carefully.

A *border brujo*, Gómez-Peña embodies and wears this hybridity in a highly stylized and symbolic way: he wears a black blazer covered with multiple buttons that infuse politics and popular culture from both sides of the border. A skeleton earring dangles from one lobe, another earring from the other. A chain of bullets is slung across his bare chest and multiple and layered necklaces hang on top of them, from a classic

string of pearls to teeth, to a circle of bananas. He wears his black hair long and a thick mustache covers his face. In his hybrid border *brujo* persona, Gómez-Peña embodies a postcolonial mimicry (Bhabha), but with a twist. It is a hyper-mimicry that is presented here. Taken one by one, even in clusters, the objects and jewelry seem familiar, on which the audience may ground in and grasp at to make meaning, to read in and through. Taken together, Gómez-Peña's body, covered in and surrounded by these objects is unreadable, as it refuses to rest in one site or present an experience. The implication for relations allows for the kind of mobility any border dweller relies upon for survival, inventing and re-inventing the space between self and other on the fly.

The border *brujo* presents to the audience as a border dweller. From this position, he channels multiple border crossing experiences. The personas are culled from Gómez-Peña's border crossings in costumes that represent different stereotypes of the border crosser. The personas that made it into the performance to tell their stories of their experiences are interwoven with Gómez-Peña's personal experiences and meta-commentary (Gómez-Peña, *New* 93-95). From these different personae the border *brujo* speaks to the audience in different languages: "in Spanish to Mexicans, in Spanglish to Chicanos, in English to Anglo-Americans, and in tongues to other *brujos* and border and border crossers. Only the perfectly bicultural can be in complicity with him" (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 49). Addressing different audiences in different languages generates a border experience. Moving in and out different languages at times in the same sentence, he may repeat sentiments but he does not translate. It has the effect of further undermining the security of home, playfully and tauntingly leading the audience through this curious experiment of an experience in time, feeling, and intimacy.

## Face to Face in Time

Face to face, Gómez-Peña hails the neoliberal relationality of immigration and multiculturalism. One of the ways he does so is by taking us back in time to re-consider the ways time has been harnessed through narrative to organize relations in hierarchy. After greeting the audience, scrambling the comfort of home, he turns back the clock:

dear foreign audience

it's January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1847

& the U.S. hasn't invaded Mexico yet

this is Mexico carnales!

there is no border

we are merely divided

by the imprecision of your memory (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 50)

Unsettled in the familiarity of home, the audience is also relocated in time. January 1<sup>st</sup> 1847 takes the audience nine months before the U.S. invasion of Mexico that will result in the 1848 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Although the future haunts this present ("the U.S. hasn't invaded Mexico yet"), Gómez-Peña embraces the audience as kin ("carnales," slang for brother, literally translated as flesh, carnal), ensuring the audience that it is *their* memory that is imprecise. In locating the audience on the precipice of a new year, in the gestational period of nine months, Gómez-Peña hints at the ability of the relation to reorder time and space. In the new beginnings, of a year and of an imagined life, there is the potential in this moment to reimagine what might have been. In this way, from the vantage point of the past the future is open.

To open the future is to wrestle the future from dominant narratives of time. As discussed above, through this ordering of time, other nations, as well as migrant others and the non-white other of multiculturalism are securely rendered invisible, a placeholder that can be absorbed into dominant narratives of the nation. Gómez-Peña reflects this reality back to the audience, mirroring the interdependent relationship between the United States and Mexico:

we are your product in a way

we are what you can only dream about

we hold the tiny artery

which links you to the past

the umbilical cord that goes back to the origins

from Homo Punk to Homo Pre-Hispanic

from high-tech to Aztec without missing a beat (Gómez-Peña, “Border” 53)

This is a complex narrative maneuvering, exposing and reworking past and ongoing narratives of visibility and invisibility, the smoke and mirrors of representations of U.S.-Mexico relations, immigration and multiculturalism. In dominant narrations of the nation, certain histories—the combination of stolen land and colonization—must be sublimated, rendered invisible. This ensures a hierarchical relation between the U.S. and Mexico, and the inclusion, also hierarchical, of Mexican Americans’ place in U.S. multicultural society. While the *histories* are *invisible*, the dependent nation and included others are rendered highly *visible*. The combination of the invisible histories and visible and dependent others in turn allows for the invisibility of the norm. Although the norm is unmarked as invisible, it also functions as norm as a placeholder against

which all else is measured, both whiteness and the nation (see Lipsitz; Nakayama and Krizek). Under this logic, while the norm is in a sense hypervisible in its invisibility, it is only as a referent by which marked others are measured. In calling attention to the conditions of normative invisibility, Gómez-Peña reveals this dialectic and in a way inverts the dependent narrative:

without us you would go mad  
without us you would forget who you really are  
without us you are just another tourist lost in Puerto Vallarta  
we perform, we scold you, we remind you  
'cause we are so little  
so fuckin' minute  
what else can we do? (Gómez-Peña, "Brujo" 53)

Although the now visible norm would "go mad" and be "just another lost tourist" without the presence of the other, Gómez-Peña simultaneously tempers the threat his narrative exposure poses to the norm through reminding the audience of the unequal relations of power between the two ("'cause we are so little/so fuckin' minute"). Here Gómez-Peña hovers in postcolonial ambivalence (Bhabha) about the potential his narrative has to undo and reimagine relations.

Ambivalence is an interesting postcolonial condition that denies neither agency nor oppression (Bhabha). It is a temporal condition, one that emerges in relation to the conditions of the past/present and the precipice of the imaginary. Throughout *Border Brujo* Gómez-Peña navigates these points of ambivalence. At times, he collapses into a

kind of postcolonial despair. In one narration, the “illegal alien” turns away from any potential relation. He insists:

my back is wet  
my nipples are hard  
I’m ready to fight  
I’m ready to rape  
don’t like me too much  
‘cause I’m a drug smuggling  
welfare recipient-to-be  
sexist communist care thief  
fanatically devoted to the overthrow  
of the U.S. government & the art world (Gómez-Peña, “Border” 58)

Here Gómez-Peña mirrors the stereotype of the migrant back to the audience, presenting him as a familiar threat. However, he doesn’t stay there for long and swiftly recuperates the direction of the narrative to pose the question of accountability to the audience:

no, just kiddin’  
don’t listen to me  
I’m just a deterritorialized “*chilango*”  
who claims to be a Chicano  
& I’m not even eligible for amnesty  
‘cause I never documented my work  
the only photos of my performances  
are in the archives of the FBI

& I'm a bit too shy to ask them for copies  
can anyone document me please  
can anyone take a photo of this memorable occasion?  
come on, for the archives of border culture  
for the history of performance art  
can anyone be so kind as to authenticate my existence? (Gómez-Peña, "Brujo 58-59)

In another layered narrative, this time Gómez-Peña's slippage from the stereotypical representations of the migrant to the performance artist calls attention to the multiple politics of documentation. From the relational dyads represented through discourses of immigration and multiculturalism—state/citizen, state/migrant, citizen/migrant—he instead triangulates the three, representing them as interdependent nodes in a system of relations. Through the registers of visible identities (Alcoff), the brown body is constantly being called upon to produce documentation that authenticates belonging or constitutes grounds for exclusion. The citizen generally falls outside of this relation between the state and the migrant-other.

However, through this narration, Gómez-Peña not only hails the audience into awareness of this ongoing dynamic of documentation, he simultaneously calls on the bodies of the audience-citizens to participate in it. Tongue in cheek he relies on the newly configured relation between himself and the audience, pleading with the citizen to facilitate, to perform the labor of documentation. Further, in interpellating the audience into this labor, he calls attention to both the migrant and performance artist as simultaneously a threat to the state (the FBI files that track the threat, the migrant-artist

being documented) and potential victim of an oppressive government, one who must rely on documentation to prove his victimhood and need (documentation in service of amnesty).

Audience members are put in the position to navigate the allegiances of the relation, to either document the migrant-performance artist and participate in his victimhood or threat depending on how the narrative gets presented, or to turn away from the hailing. The migrant-performance artist, in calling upon the audience to make this choice to aid him, reveals the limits of his mobility in the present. In navigating the tenuous present through the medium of documentation, Gómez-Peña directs our attention to the ways in which the dictates of the present are consistently harnessed in service of the future, for it is the migrant-performance artist's future that is at stake here.

The future of the migrant-performance artist is tied up in the temporality of the nation-state and her citizens. Although the migrant, and often the performance artist, is figured as a threat to the citizen-nation, the threat is simultaneously contained through narratives that maintain the migrant in the past.

Contemporary narratives often traffic this narrative through media representations (Carrillo Rowe, Malhotra, and Pérez), although this strategy of ordering relations can be traced back much farther in time, back to the initial representations that led to conquest and colonization. As the title of his monograph implies, José Rabasa's *Inventing America* reads the narratives and drawings of European explorers that described their encounters with the indigenous peoples in the Americas as depictions that fed the myth of discovery. The drawings rely on newly developed artistic methods of perspective to portray clothed and standing explorers in contrast to the indigenous peoples, who were partially clothed,



closer to the ground and to nature (animals, plants). The relation, one cultivated through binary significations of civilized/uncivilized and progress/backward was used as the moral and religious justification for colonization and control. Reappropriating the trope of the migrant as threat to the citizen-nation's future, through the body of the child, the nation's penultimate site of the future, Gómez-Peña undoes this narrative.

you thought Mexico represented your past  
& now you're realizing Mexico is your future  
you thought there was a border between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> world  
& now you're realizing you're part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> world  
& your children are hanging out with us  
& your children & us are plotting against you  
hey mister, eeh mister . . . mister  
& suddenly you woke up  
& it was too late to call the priest, the cops, or the psychiatrist  
*a qué pinche sustote te pegaste*  
*y en español* (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 57).

The citizen, cast out of time and out of relation, without recourse to the state or its modes of protection ("the priest, the cops, or the psychiatrist"), is left to sift through the wreckage of their feelings.

Face to Face with Feeling

I came following your dream  
your dream became my nightmare  
once here,  
I dreamt you didn't exist  
I dreamt a map without borders  
where the Latin American archipelago  
reached all the way  
to the *nuyorrican* barrios of Boston and Manhattan  
all the way to pockets  
of Central American refugees  
in Alberta & British Columbia  
& when I dream like this  
you suffer  
my dream becomes your nightmare  
& pot, your only consolation (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 50)

In the intimate public sphere, the machinations of neoliberalism render the private public (Berlant, *Queen*). In this way, the private is a highly regulated site for mechanisms of control. This does not, however, mean that the public is responsible for the management of individual feelings, especially those feelings that run counter to progress narratives. Even though in the intimate public sphere, where the visibility of one's privates are increasingly circulated (Berlant, *Queen*; Langellier, "Two"), these narratives often fall

into normative patterns, supporting the hetero- and other forms of normativity (Roof; Cvetkovitch, *Depression*).

Depression is one of those neoliberal feelings that is often relegated to and routed as private. However, Cvetkovitch (*Depression*) argues that we understand depression as a *public* feeling, one that actually is produced through the conditions of neoliberalism. For her, one of the dimensions of depression can be understood through the register of race relations (Cvetkovitch, *Depression* 115-153; Muñoz, “Down”). Cvetkovitch contends that the literature on depression and trauma, literature that centers a white and Western subject, does not allow for “feeling bad...because it doesn’t fit a life in which privilege and comfort make things seem fine on the surface” (*Depression* 115). For those who occupy whiteness, often experienced as racial lack, to be confronted with the combined emptiness of that lack and the threat to their privilege can result in the kind of deflation that depression is often experienced as.

In the above narrative that opens this section, Gómez-Peña succinctly depicts the kind of racial anxiety and depression constituted through relations of immigration and multiculturalism. For the migrant-other who narrates this passage, the carrot of neoliberalism motivates his crossing. His dream (the future) is the (white) citizen’s past. Faced with the presence of the other, the presence who poses a threat as his visibility and desire (expanding and evaporating borders) exceeds rather than conforms to the hierarchical and contained relations dictated by immigration and multiculturalism, swiftly turns into the citizen’s nightmare. Face to face in the dream of the other, the dream that reconfigures the scarcity of capitalism into an abundant borderlessness, the citizen’s privilege begins to unravel. Unequipped to either imagine differently or manage the

anxiety the threat produces, the citizen quells the rising panic by inhaling marijuana. Though ironically a depressant itself, the pot in the narrative anesthetizes the citizen, cutting the citizen off from the intensity of feeling, accomplishing a return to the lack of whiteness, performing what Segrest names the anesthetic aesthetic of whiteness. Though in this narration whiteness turns away from the relation, Gómez-Peña's narratives throughout *Border Brujo* insist coming face to face with feelings.

In the above narration, Gómez-Peña highlights the lack of feeling on the part of the white citizen, the condition of which is the threat of the migrant-other's desire to meet, exceed, or dismantle the privileges of whiteness. In other moments, he presents the hostility of the migrant-other and its implications for relations. In one scene he depicts a dialogue between a migrant-other and a marine. In service of the marine, the citizen-soldier, the migrant-other crafts a relation with the marine that separates the soldier from the citizen. He ensures the marine that he is "not blame [sic] for the invasion of Grenada," the "air-raid to Lybia," or even "the last economic sanctions to México" (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 55). Faced with the what appears to be an impossible decision in which he must either turn away from the nation or into the forgiveness of the migrant-other, the citizen-soldier

stood up

kicked the table

spit at my face

"you goddamn terrorist wetback!!!"

& began to cry like a *chihuahua*

. . . but the *mariaichis* never stopped playing

they are still playing right now

what beautiful paradox

California sinks

& the *mariachis* keep playing

can you hear them?

can you really hear them? (Gómez-Peña, “Brujo” 55)

As the *mariachis* accompany the citizen-soldier’s howls, the contested land that was once Mexico is dissolved by the citizen-soldier’s tears. Again the migrant-other is refused a relation. His position is one of narrator and witness, outside belonging.

As a performance artist, through the narrative, the migrant-other is imagined with a bit more agency. From the stage, recounting a face to face encounter with a border agent, the migrant-other-performer narrates not only anger and hostility, but an embodied point of contact in response to the surveillance of the check point.

& as I was crossing the border check point

this somewhat intelligent *migra*

confiscated a copy of this text

he read a few pages

& asked if I was a member

of the *Partido Chicano-Cardenista*

“no, señor,” I replied

“I am a member of the Tribe of the Inflamed Eyelids”

he tore my passport in half

& I proceeded to kick him in the balls

for the sake of experimentation (Gómez-Peña, “Border” 57)

Although Gómez-Peña gives no indication of what side of the border this imagined exchange occurred on, it almost makes no difference. For the migrant-other-performance artist who is always under surveillance in the borderlands, each encounter with the state is a site of potential violence. In the space of the performance narrative, it is permissible to kick a border patrol agent in the balls, to take a shot at the reproductive masculinity of the state. While it is unlikely to have happened this way “in real life,” this re-presentation of the migrant-other-performance artist’s embodied anger situates the experience of that anger face to face between the performer and his audience, who is the intended recipient of this public feeling.

From depression and anxiety to anger and hostility, I want to close this section with a discussion of fear and vulnerability. In the following narrative, written in the form of a letter to a Californian, Gómez-Peña constitutes a relation among citizens and migrant-others, and the performer and audience. Through the narration, each side of the relation is hailed. Though not depicted as equal, the dynamic is one in which fear and vulnerability are seen to interanimate one another. Gómez-Peña writes,

dear Californian

your hours are counted by the fingers of your unwillingness

to become part of the world

you must be scared shitless of the future

I’ve got the future in my throat

take me or kill me *Pochtlani*

look South or go mad

I mean it *vato*  
... & you dare ask me  
where have I been  
all these years? (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 53)

As the letter opens, the speaking migrant-other recognizes the fear of the citizen subject. In a gesture of agency, the migrant-other lays claim to the threat he poses to the citizen. Though the migrant-other does not seek to dominate the citizen, in fact he seems to welcome belonging, though a reconfiguration of the hierarchical order of belonging prescribed by immigration and multiculturalism. As he lays claim to the future through his body and voice ("I've got the future in my throat"), the migrant-other lays responsibility for the failed imaginary on the citizen, declaring to the citizen that it is "your unwillingness to become part of the world." In response to the perceived refusal to participate in this new form of belonging, the migrant-other returns the citizen to the neoliberal relationality: "take me or kill me," "look South or go mad/I mean it *vato*."

Though the series of ultimatums pose a seemingly impossible choice for the citizen—belonging with the other, murder, or madness—the migrant-other swiftly tempers the intensity of the feelings, closing his letter with an invitation:

there's really no danger tonight  
*estoy completamente desarmado*  
the only real danger lies  
in your inability to understand me  
in your unwillingness to trust  
the only real danger is in your fingers

your thumb lies on the button  
your index finger on the trigger  
you have the weapons *maestro*  
I merely have the word  
my tongue is licking your wounds  
it hurts but it makes sense  
it's up to you to dialog  
it's up to you to dialog (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 53-54)

In a retreat that highlights his ever-present vulnerability, the migrant-other retracts his hostility. While the citizen may perceive the threat as real, and the discourses of immigration and multiculturalism necessarily cast this as so, the reality is that the real threat is always to the vulnerable location of the migrant-other ("the only real danger lies/in your inability to understand me/in your unwillingness to trust/ the only real danger is in your fingers and threat"). Through this narration, the migrant-other-performance artist again reroutes the discourses of immigration and multiculturalism, placing them within the relationship between the migrant-other-performer and the citizen-audience. The migrant-other-performer has the power of his words and calls on the citizen-audience to meet face to face not with weapons but also with words, in dialogue. In the concluding section, I further take up the imaginary conjured by the border *brujo*, picking up where this section leaves off and situating it as queer intimacy and completing the trace that leads from 1988 to 2014.

#### Face to Face in Queer Intimacy

hey, baby . . . baby, *güerita*



*duraznito en almibar, galguita descolorida . . .*

It's me, the Mexican beast  
we are here to talk, to change, to ex-change  
to ex-change images and fluids  
to look at each other's eyes  
to look at each other's mmmhhj  
so let's pull down the zipper of our fears  
& begin the . . . Binational Summit but remember  
I'm not your tourist guide across the undetermined otherness  
this ain't no tropical safari to *Palenke* or *Marinique*  
much less a private seminar on interracial relations  
this is a basic survival proposal  
from a fellow Mex-american  
in the debris of continental culture  
& all this blood is real  
the hoopla is false but the blood is real  
come taste it *mi amor*" (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 54)

In flesh, through fluids, Gómez-Peña constitutes a queer intimate relation between the migrant-other and the citizen. Like the U.S. Third World Women of Color, whose writings precede this text, Gómez-Peña refuses the usual expectation placed on the other, of the responsibility of the other to act as informant or instructor through the minefields of difference in service of the norm. Rather, depicted as a "basic survival proposal," the relation between migrant-other and citizen is woven through an erotic belonging.

Though the imagery Gómez-Peña uses depicts a graphic site of sexual eroticism, we can read the use of the erotic in multiple ways. First, a literal reading of the sexual encounters and relations described points to the very real shift in sex practices and to the panic around sex fostered through the culmination of the AIDS crisis and the public discourses of sex that circulated alongside them (see Treichler; Warner, *Trouble*; Berlant and Warner). Public discourses around sex were controlled through the logics of neoliberalism, namely, the heteronormative managing of public sex and non-normative sexual practices (Berlant and Warner). Further, the migrant-other was also interpellated into heteronormative discourses through immigration policy that governed the entry of migrants, ranging from enforcing heteronormative relational frameworks to the changing federal policies on permitting or excluding migrants who are living with HIV and AIDS<sup>6</sup> (Luibhèid, “Introduction” x; see also HIV Travel; The HIV Ban). Gómez-Peña invokes these historical realities as this particular narrative continues:

dear border lover

*Euridice Anglosajona*

the state of interracial communication

has been seriously damaged by the AIDS crisis

we are no longer fucking our brains out

no longer masturbating across the fence

---

<sup>6</sup> There is a complex and shifting history in the United States of regulating the entrance of people living with HIV/AIDS. Beginning in the 1980s, there were congressional proposals and debates insisting that HIV/AIDS be explicitly added to the list of communicable diseases, the list that mediates entry into the United States. Entry is contingent on the screening and declaration of a list of named diseases. By 1987, the “Helms Amendment” ensured the inclusion of HIV/AIDS on the list, formalizing an already in-place practice of HIV/AIDS screening. The politics of this exclusion was visibly taken up as it interfered with an international AIDS conference in San Francisco in 1990, the outcome of which led to the exclusion of the US as a site for future such conferences. By 2010, the HIV ban was no longer in effect.

no longer exchanging binational fluids  
we are merely stalking & waiting  
waiting for better times  
& more efficient medication  
we are horny & scared  
very horny & very scared  
tonight we must look for other strategies  
& place additional importance on the word  
I love you *querida amante extranjera*  
but this time you have to be content with my words  
*la palabra adivia has heridas de la historia*  
(Gómez-Peña, "Border" 54)

The imagery Gómez-Peña uses here has historical significance. In looking back from the present, to depict public sex through the constraints of words is to conjure the loss that HIV/AIDS presents to non-normative sexual practices, to the relations it makes possible (see Berlant and Warner; Freeman, *Time Binds*; Delaney). It is to engage in an act of public mourning and to situate those public feelings between the migrant-other-performer and the citizen audience. In doing so, the migrant-other-performer and the citizen audience come together in a form of queer intimate relations, one that upends the limitations neoliberalism places on public feeling in this way.

Another way to read the sexual symbolism of the imagery in the scenes that open this section is to route it through Lorde's discussion of the erotic. While it turns away from the literal depiction of sex, it similarly feeds a resistance to neoliberalism through

an emphasis on agency and relation. Lorde argues that the dominant modes of patriarchy strip women of their agency and power, particularly in relation to sex. As sex is corrupted, Lorde advocates returning the erotic through its roots in the Greek, as eros, “the personification of love in all its aspects—born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony” (55). Read as “creative power and harmony,” as metaphor alongside the literal, this take on this passage in *Border Brujo* provides another point of entry into the queer intimate relations produced through the performance.

Urged to “look for other strategies/& place additional importance on the word” the sense of crisis is heightened and weighs heavily on the relation being posed between the migrant-other and citizen. He informs the citizen-audience in direct address that “you can leave this space if you wish” but that “there’s really nowhere else to go” (Gómez-Peña, “Border” 55). In this moment, in this relation, he insists that in and through the present can there be a disruption and rerouting of the narratives of immigration and multiculturalism. Out from under these normative constraints the hierarchy begins to budge as the migrant-other begins to shift the terms and conditions of the relation:

tonight, I am the one who determines  
the exact nature of our relation  
even if only for one night  
I SAY:  
you are no longer my spectator  
you are my object of adoration  
your country is losing weight & size  
your skin is losing its privilege

your crisis is graver than mine

I SAY:

*ciudadano del mentado primer mundo*

you have a friend in me

a solid but critical friend

a friend who will never betray you

but never again will I accept

your asymmetrical conditions (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 64)

In his insistence, though temporary ("even if only for one night"), the migrant-other seems to be tap into hope, a glimpse of the potentiality of the relation culled through resistance, the result of the speaking subject. In a return to a past iteration of a multicultural politic he raises his glass in a "toast to the beginning of an era/a true multicultural society" (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 64). He seems to cautiously celebrate the dialogue this relation fosters "in your language, but conversing after all" (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 65). However, ultimately, the potentiality collapses in a return to a postcolonial melancholy.

we are still alive but . . . we failed

still awake, sort of

but kind'a clumsy & fuzzy

the food tastes like shit

the music is awful

it's all been done before

one artist replaces the other

one minority replaces the other  
& the other, other, other, others,  
next year Latinos are “out”  
& albino Romanians are “in”  
therefore my dear audience  
I’m going back to Hell  
*en camion de tres estrellas*  
*como vine*

back to the origins *maextro* (Gómez-Peña, “Border” 66)

It is possible to read the resignation of the migrant-other-performer, cast as failure, as retreat (“I’m going back to Hell...back to the origins”). It is possible to read this moment as a reappropriation of the resistive work of performance, a conciliatory acceptance and normative re-interpellation of the migrant-other-performer back through the oppressive power of discourses of immigration and multiculturalism. However much I resist such a totalizing read of this moment before exiting the stage, and potentially walking away from the relation that the performance has worked so hard to pry open, there is an allure to this read. One thing this read might allow for is the pragmatic approach Angela Davis takes in addressing multiculturalism and the limits of the labor of relation. She writes, “the notion that if we simply correct those stereotypes with knowledge of the ‘true’ cultures, we will no longer be hated and will no longer hate each other, is extremely dangerous” (46). Her sentiment here lies in a mistrust of knowledge to do the work of political change. She calls the reader’s attention to the limits of epistemology.

In this passage of *Border Brujo*, a performance that I read as being invested in the work of political change, Gómez-Peña seems to similarly underscore the limits of epistemology. Although queer intimacy constitutes a relation, the relation is temporary. The performer-audience relation is impermanent. Gómez-Peña, the migrant-other-performer has chosen the labor of performing, of crafting a narrative and presenting an argument, and the audience has shown up in their bodies to perform the labor of witnessing and listening, and collectively the performer and audience have come together face to face. Ultimately it might be dangerous, a performative risk, to locate any measure of social change directly in the site of performance and a queer intimate relation. As the relation dissolves and the migrant-other-performer and citizen-audience return to their subjectivities, the methodology of hope that Muñoz assigns to performance may ultimately be site on which we can hang any potential relation that rests in a performance politic, from *Border Brujo* in 1988 to the Phoenix hunger strike protest in 2014. Anything beyond that we might locate in a symbolic or literal willingness to give up, to leave with one another. Before I turn to the concluding chapter in which I contemplate the implications of queer intimacy, I leave the reader with Gómez-Peña's concluding remarks to the audience, to the migrant-other-performer's willingness to cart off and sift through the citizen-audience's detritus with the hope that it leaves the reader as unsettled and uncertain as it consistently does me:

but before I go back  
ladies & gentlemen  
I'm going to ask you to give me  
whatever you no longer need

please feel free to get rid of everything

you wish you didn't have:

money, IDs, ideas, your keys, your sins

your telephone number, your credit card

your leather jacket, your contact lenses, etc.

please make sure that whatever you give me

you're prepared never to see again.

Some objects I will bury right on the U.S.-Mexico border ditch.

& others will become part of my travelling altar

*damas y caballeros . . . aflogen!!* (Gómez-Peña, "Border" 66)



CHAPTER 5  
QUEER INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS, REFLECTIONS  
IN THE STATE OF PERFORMANCE

Staged Encounters

The announcement gives way to the hush. The hush competes with pounding hearts, furtive glances, and the precise movement of bodies in place. A moment of stillness. Laser focus. Thick anticipation. Expectation. Uncertainty. Electricity. On the empty stage of this performance linger the traces of the past (Muñoz, “Stages”). For this performance, for this group of twenty-five performers, what lingers are the traces of the past two weeks. It is January, 2009, in Tucson, Arizona, days before then newly elected Barack Obama will be sworn into office. The transnational stir that reflects mixtures of hope and change, of suspicion and hostility, is but one slice of the historical backdrop out of which the performance emerges and to which it seeks to engage and respond. We also concern ourselves with the Israeli occupation of Palestine; with immigration and deportations, border patrol and the wall at the border and deaths in the desert; with the racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism that circulate around and within the group we have become and that soon we will be no more. We are concerned with the stuff of neoliberalism, of time and space, and of performance. We are exploring the private that will go public, and in this chapter, I begin the journey toward the private/public dialectic through an in-depth exploration of relational processes, experienced through performance.

The group we have become and are about to be no more was hosted and partly funded by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tucson, Arizona, the organization that

hosted the performance troupe La Pocha Nostra. La Pocha Nostra (“Pocha”) is the performance troupe founded by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Roberto Sifuentes, and Nola Mariano in 1993. The core members have since expanded and the structure of the troupe is layered: the core members participate in decision making, facilitating and other responsibilities while the associates and friends of Pocha might be invited to perform with the troupe or aid in other ways depending on needs (Gómez-Peña *Ethno-Techno*). Since 2005, Pocha began holding workshops, “schools” or “institutes,” that invited groups of twenty to thirty international performance artists to train in the in Pocha performance methodology. The Pocha methodology and pedagogy is one “in permanent process of reinvention,” meaning that it develops in response to the political, geographic, and demographic context of the workshops as well as Pocha’s members (Gómez-Peña, Sifuentes, Pérez).

The workshops result in a culminating performance open to the public. Pocha works in tandem with hosting agencies, which can range from universities and museums to other art spaces, to facilitate the application process. The application is widely publicized and written in English and Spanish, inviting performance artists from multiple disciplines to participate. Applicants submit statements of interest and artist CVs and among the applicants those chosen are invited to attend. The workshops were generated by the impulse to share the Pocha methodology with other artists, across generations and disciplines (Gómez-Peña *Ethno-Techno*; Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes *Exercises*). Further, the workshops were developed in response to the changing neoliberal contexts in which funding for performance art was more likely when routed through the lens of “pedagogy” rather than “politics” (Gómez-Peña *Ethno-Techno*).

This iteration of the Pocha institute in Tucson is my third time in workshop with the group. After a one-day intensive with core members Gómez-Peña and Michele Ceballos in Phoenix, Arizona, in April 2008, I applied and was accepted to join the two-week summer school in Évora, Portugal, hosted by the Convento do Carmo and as part of the Escrita na Paisagem – Performance and Land Arts Festival (5th Edition) and facilitated by Pocha members Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes. The intensity and differences of the experiences in Phoenix and Portugal are simultaneously cavernous and minimal. While the workshops are conducted in a mixture of Spanish and English, the primary language is of the body and the visual. Tensions that arise out of cultural and linguistic incompatibility are part of the point of bringing these artists together. Our differences have been actively curated and are meant to be processed and then represented in and as performance.

In Portugal, the disorientation I felt as a displaced U.S. American was unfamiliar and welcome. This is not to say that I liked these feelings or for a moment was unaware of privileges, the benefits of nation and light skin, that enabled my mobility within the workshop and to a degree through the town of Évora. In this workshop I was one of three participants of U.S. origin. The remainder of the group of twenty-five made their way from other parts of the Americas—Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela—and from several countries across Europe, from Northern Africa, and from Portugal. As happens in Pocha workshops, in Évora our initial performative task was to negotiate the lingua franca. English is often the default, as it would be in Portugal, however, it is a hybrid linguistic performance that blends Spanish and English that materializes. When there are linguistic

instructions, there is an ever-present Babel-like overlay of translation across languages that run concurrent with them.

I struggle to coherently articulate the reasons that motivate the Pocha trifacta that Tucson accomplishes. Desire and pleasure are not words I would use to describe my experience in the workshops or the performances. Neither am I into self-punishment or pain. The workshops are grueling; they are physically, psychically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally demanding: no less than eight hours a day of embodied performance, most of which stretch into ten or more. The performance days stretch into dinners and processing over drinking in local pubs and art spaces. After a little bit of sleep, during which images from the workshops and the things they inevitably stir permeate dreams, we are at it again. For the duration of two weeks in the same space with the same people, punctuated only with field trips to local sites that immerse the group in the local politics to which we are also expected to draw from and respond to in our performance and relational work.

The Pocha methodology relies on the body as a site of knowledge through which to communicate and to represent. We are asked to eschew the spoken word in favor of getting in touch with the experiential, the tactile of self, other and object. As a communication student and scholar, a personal narrative performer, my descent into madness is swift and scary. I long for my words, I reach out for the comfort of theory, the familiarity of process. I retreat nightly and in the early morning into my journal, seek out private moments with one or two others at a time to externalize and put into words how to make sense of the meanings we are making. I talk back to the facilitators and am invited into a dialogue with them to reflect on the pedagogy and methodology, but only

after the workshop is over; until then I am invited to remain in my body and submit to the process (Gómez-Peña, Sifuentes, Pérez; Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes, *Exercises* 189-215).

Yet I am here because I want to *feel* performance from as many angles as I can. Writing is its own unfolding, a doing that does something for the writer and reader (Holman Jones). Writing about performance is a generative, complex process that reflects and constructs our relations with performers (Román), past and future temporalities (Muñoz *Cruising*), and connects the personal with the political (Langellier “Two”; Madison “Possibilities”). The writing of and writing about performance can be evocative. It can route the action on the page in and through the body of the writer and reader. We identify with texts, experience the action as if it were happening to and with us. It can distance us as catharsis or provide us with an opportunity for reflection and change. Yet the lived experience of *doing* performance on the stage and as audience underscores the role of bodies in relation, the affective charge that moves through a space. So here I am, near but outside the familiar space of academic performance. No university or theoretical language offers me refuge, as if they ever did, even as I know their rhythms. Here, this, what I am doing now, this scares the hell out of me. My muscles are burning. My bones are aching. My head is spinning. My heart is racing. I stew in the juices of my roiling feelings, the public and political feelings (Cvetkovitch, *Depression*) of my body, these relations, and this performance.

We are together on the stage we have made out of the gymnasium in the Tucson YMCA. The space has been transformed with lights and platforms, music, and our bodies. Our bodies, our relations, too, have been transformed. Through our two weeks together we have formed and broken cliques across raced, gendered, linguistic, sexual,

and political allegiances, the differences we embody and exchange. Our bodies are marked with the scars of performance—bruised from collisions with one another’s bodies and with the wheelchair of one of the artists, the proximities and distances among us, and the personas we have generated.

The personas we embody reflect it all. There is cyber *vato* who represents the tensions between the technology of future so often linked to and through whiteness and the *vato* who threatens to creep up on that future from the primitive, uncivilized past. He is a gangster, looming, leering, with his gaze piercing. The African Queen, her locked hair piled high on top of her head, sits barefoot on a stool, her legs spread wide and her head held high and her gaze direct. In front of her is a metal tub filled with water and a sign that indicates she will wash feet. Of whites only. She sits alone, looking at everything and no one. The cis-gendered, highly and normative feminized white women wander freely, balancing trays of white milk in porcelain cups scooped from metal tubs in the middle of the room that they prepare to serve to the audience.

And there I am, barefooted as I prefer to be in performance, dressed in a too pink and too feminine lacy dress, my unshaven legs and armpits spilling over the edges in excess. I lay across a wooden bench on my back ready to face the audience upside down prohibited from doing so from the strips of masking tape placed vertically over each closed eyelid. My exhaustion from the two weeks, my complete depletion, my body refuses as it meets the adrenaline and the theory that course through my veins, beating in tandem with the other hearts in the space as we await the audience, the bodies, on the other side of the door. I shudder. Bodies are sexy and repulsive. Gazes and touches can be welcome and violate. Dialectic tensions can shift in the space of a moment.

We, the performers, are about to meet the audience, who will become our co-performers in this performance “jam.” Kristin Langellier writes that “‘Audience’ names the most unpredictable and the least explicated element” of performance (“Audience” 34). How right on she is. While in this case Langellier theorizes the audience of oral interpretation of literature, an audience who are likely to follow the prescriptions of performance convention, and to behave in their seats, there is no theory that can predict how the audience will meet the encounter of any given performance, how an audience will take up, respond to, or what they will do with the performance and the relation it offers. Therefore, Langellier’s astute observations that account for the embodied presence, the agency, of the audience are an imperative that extends to the embodied unpredictability of a Pocha audience.

In this performance jam there are no seats and therefore no convention of boundary between performer and audience. Instead, audiences are invited into the performative relation through the site of the relation, to literally interact with the performers, the performance “exhibits” on display, and to co-participate in the performance jam. Although the performers have been in training to develop personas they would like to jam as, the Pocha methodology is a map with no directions and the technique serves only as the foundation from which to respond to and engage the relation in performance. The co-performer/audience are invited into the space without training, to rely on their own embodied knowledge and impulses to participate in the performance in process and to create something at the site of relation, in this bounded time and space.

What results is a highly orchestrated yet wildly unpredictable encounter in which discourses have been hailed and presented in highly aestheticized and activated personas

meant to prompt responses. Without language, performers and co-performer/audiences interact through gaze, touch, and recreation. This queer intimate relation, in its unpredictability, is both dangerous and tenuous. Judith Hamera traces this recognition and attitude toward performance back to Plato in *Ion* where he warns against performance as an “upswelling of affect [that] is contagious. It has too much influence” (Hamera, “Introduction” 3). She concludes that “anything making Plato this nervous must have something going for it” (*Opening* 1).

This is to acknowledge that what performance “has going for it,” like any modality, can be used in myriad ways. Performance is a site of the production and consumption of culture, Hamera argues (“Introduction” 5-7), and dominant forces have an investment in keeping culture under control and in their favor. In some traditions of performance, both in formal theater and ritual performance in culture, it can function as disciplinary, instructing and forming citizen-subjects to support and maintain normativity. Brecht understood the performative force of theatre well and crafted his texts in ways that would utilize that power as a site of education and resistance against the control of government. Propaganda, like ideology, may be inescapable in culture. The point here, in linking propaganda and ideology to performance, is to situate performance as an ideological doing. Again, this is to recognize that performance relies upon discourses even as it may take issue with them.

At the site of queer intimacy in the Pocha performance jam in Tucson, in our now collective “corporeal presence,” there is the risk that we will become “carried away” (Langellier “Audience” 34). What happens when through the hybrid personas that have been planned, the ones that have yet to emerge, and the ones that are created with and



through the bodies of our co-performers/audiences reproduce stereotypes? What if the man of size, draped in a toga, splayed over a platform eating grapes that he offers to the co-performer/audiences functions as an object of ridicule, reinforces the excesses of whiteness? What happens when and if the petite woman dressed in hybrid Arab garb, a combination of a hijab and American string bikini, who is performing Spanish web on the ropes suspended from the ceiling, in her attempts to reappropriate Orientalist discourses, only reinforces stereotypes of the oppressed Arab woman who must be rescued from brown men by white feminist critique? What if the live altar with the dead immigrant, the border patrol agents dressed as angels guarding his grave, this site of mourning and homage, limits itself to a cathartic release rather than raise consciousness of the daily and material ongoing reality, the conditions of migration? What if, and what if, and what if?

What if the performers/personas and the co-performers/audiences, as they literally strip off their clothes, engage personas, and create personas of their own, as the beats and rhythms of their hearts give way to the beats and rhythms of the music and the collective, what if when the lights come on and the music stops and we return to our identities, our bodies, and the time and space outside the performance? What if the unmapped and unpredictable journey of the performance, the shapes of our narratives that we mapped on and through our bodies, that took the shape of our bodies, what if our non-linear, scrambled, and scattered materiality routes us directly back to the plots on the maps from which we came? The narrative that will emerge through this encounter will be experienced, imprinted, but not repeated. There will be no words. Neither narrative preamble nor reflection can account for the imaginary about to be unleashed.

### Shattered Reflections, Embodied Refractions

In the previous chapter in which I discussed *Border Brujo*, the performance of Guillermo Gómez-Peña, I referenced Gómez-Peña's framing of performance through the metaphor of the mirror. Gómez-Peña writes that performance is a mirror that when placed between performer and audiences is "shattered" (*Dangerous* 9). I want to return to the metaphor of the mirror to begin to unpack and consider the implications and contributions of queer intimacy, of the argument that I have set out over the previous chapters, up to and including the description of the Pocha performance encounter I have just described.

The image of shattered mirrors is both exhilarating and a source of concern for queer intimacy in performance. Shattered mirrors are exhilarating as they offer the opportunity to remove the border between performer and audience. In that moment, as I have argued in the previous chapter, audience and performers come face to face. Through the speaking subject of the performer who has intentionally and performatively hailed discourses for re-consideration, we are collectively confronted with contemporary political issues. Whether we return the gaze or turn away, there is an element of witness to the performance encounter.

Situated in a relation of witness, there is the opportunity to shatter, to set aside the baggage our audiencing subjectivities bring to the performance. Through the encounter with each of the sites of neoliberal relationality under consideration in each of the previous three chapters, this has meant coming face to face with discourses that govern our experiences, access and mobility, possibility and potentiality in the present. With the

mirror shattered, this means audiences may occupy performance spaces surrounded with the shards of our self-image. What this shattering can accomplish is the container to maintain the weight of the narratives being presented, narratives that can confront the normativity of relations.

In Chapter Two, through discourses of same-sex marriage, we confront the limited access to civil rights that bans on same-sex marriage place on gay and lesbian bodies. Through the performances of Tim Miller and Dustin Goltz, audiences are confronted with a range of rhetorical devices and affective swirls, from contemplating the experience of bearing witness to, and receiving the insistent demands of, the at times normative political investments of Tim Miller and the ambivalence Dustin Goltz routed through satire and sarcasm. For the audiences in Chapter Three, D'Lo's hailing of the normative and limited discourses of family through the mode of family storytelling revealed, the shattered mirror gave way to the precarious vulnerability of belongings. He straddles the teeter totter between alienation and sentimentality as he lays bare his desires to integrate race, sexuality and gender through his body and route them through the multiple embodied and discursive sites of belonging, among diasporic, natal and chosen queer kinship formations.

In confronting the neoliberal discourses of multiculturalism and immigration through the body of Gómez-Peña, the shaman persona of the border *brujo*, audiences meet the unveiled hostility, the anger of the border crosser, the migrant whose mouth in performance is unbound from the imposed ball gag of nationalism. The shattered mirror loosens neoliberalism's grip on our inability to come face to face and provides for the possibility of the queer intimate relation, a possibility not present under the normative

conditions of our relations (for a useful discussion of possibility see Chávez 1-10). Herein lies the potential of queer intimacy, then: that through the performance texts presented through the discourses hailed by performers and presented to audiences, that a relation of witness and collective consideration is materialized. In the collective consideration there is the possibility to alter consciousness, to make interventions into the political situations the performers call our attention to. Of course, there is the possibility that the narratives presented in performance, rather than resist, reify the very discourses and norms they call our attention to. This is both the danger and the slipperiness of performance, and it is only through calling attention to the structure of narrative performance, the conditions under which our performances and relations are produced, that we can begin to sift through the doing of any given performance and queer intimate relation.

Throughout this project, I have grounded my call in the neoliberal container through which contemporary performance exists and tended to specific sites of neoliberal relationality. This potential, and the relational implications for understanding performer-audience relations pushes performance theory in its calls for, but failure to follow through on the meanings and doings of the presence of the audience and its relation to the performer. In this way, queer intimacy makes a useful contribution to performance studies, in answering the call to tend to audience (Langellier, “Voices”) and adding to those theories that do the same (Jackson; Park-Fuller; Dolan, *Utopia*; Muñoz, *Cruising*).

However, in this potential of queer intimacy, I also want to note a limitation. The limitation that I would like to point to does not undo or undermine the contribution that I have just outlined. What I want to call attention to rather, points to both the unilateral directionality of the rhetorical mode of address that is performance. While I want to, and

have attempted to demonstrate across the chapters and through the concept of queer intimacy, argued that the communication that happens in performance is constitutive, that meaning making happens in and through the relation in performance, recognizing the agency of both performer and audience in making their mutual and reciprocal contributions to the speech act of performance, as I have also laid out in the first chapter, in the convention of performance, the audience does not talk back to the performer. While the audience takes up the speech act, and does what they will in and through the queer intimate relation before during and after the moments they are released from it, there is no way to account for what audiences actually do and the meanings that are made in performance. From a critical perspective, I have read the texts and contexts of performance to call attention to the *potential* that happens through a queer intimate relation, there is no definitive conclusion that may account for the materiality of that potential. I do and have argued that performance contributes to political change and the discourses that are considered, shifted, and remade through queer intimate relations. This is the foundation through which I want to extend the metaphor of the shattered mirror.

As powerful as the effect of the shattered mirror is to allow for the kind of witnessing I have just described, out of the shattering of the norm, another possibility for mirroring arises, one that can more fully account for the presence of the audience. I want to suggest that in shattering the mirror of neoliberal relationality, another form of mirroring is made possible. This is the coalitional gesture of performance discussed in the first chapter, the emergent subjectivity as a coalitional performance subject (Pérez and Goltz; see also Carrillo Rowe), that kind of belonging in motion that is the affective and

political doing of performance. When discourses are hailed in and through performance, the opportunity exists for a queer intimate encounter.

Face to face, performer and audience mirror to one another the effect of the neoliberal condition: from the ache of longing for inclusion to the stab of exclusion. From the position of elsewhere, performers and audiences can reflect back to one another the differences performance cannot absorb or erase in the ways neoliberalism would do. It is through the steady gaze of the lens of queer intimacy, the doing of relations in public, that performers and audiences can reflect back to one another normative investments woven in and through narrative (Roof; Langellier and Peterson). This reflection provides the opportunity for refraction, to direct our collective gaze toward the horizon and the potential to imagine elsewhere. With these implications in mind, the reflections on queer intimacy, I now turn to a final encounter with performance.

#### The Currency of Encounters—Passing the Hat?

In recent years, in the wake of decreased public and state funding opportunities of performance spurred by a combination of an economic downturn and conservative political climate, performers have increasingly turned to the non-profit and private sectors to secure funds for public art (for discussions see Joseph). “Crowd sourcing” is an increasingly popular mode of art funding.

There are a number of crowd sourcing online funding sites that provide the economic facilitation of funds: sites such as Kickstarter, Go Fund Me and others are central locations through which individuals can become proprietors, benefactors of the arts. The formula involves an artist first setting up space on the site. Then the funding campaign is virtually circulated through cyberspace, via email and social media.

Individuals seeking out projects can also peruse funding sites, neatly categorized according to interests. Once an individual endeavors to support a campaign, they enter a pledge through the funding site and secure it with credit card information. The pledges follow models of public fundraising. Pledges can be at different levels and be reciprocated with material or other forms of acknowledgement: say a T-shirt identifying the individual as a supporter of a project, a coffee mug, book, or mention in the program, possibly even tickets to the performance event. Individuals or corporations can match funds. And finally, if an identified goal of the project is not met, the project may not be funded.

In 2011, La Pocha Nostra entered the online funding phenomena. They set up a Conceptual Live Art Credit Union in order to finance the goal of bringing together the core members of Pocha in order to generate a new performance project. The lens of the credit union is an interesting one. A credit union, unlike a bank, is a structure through which participants are seen as contributing members to the organization, members who receive benefits for their financial investments. In this structure there is a reciprocal, if hierarchical, dynamic to this relation. The institution, in this case, Pocha is seen as providing a value to their audience. By investing in monetarily in performance, investing in the conditions of its production, Pocha makes transparent to its audiences the cost of performance labor and seeks to involve the audience in the production. There is an element of revelation here.

Pocha's Live Art Credit Union might be read as circumventing the norms and traditions of state funding, of stepping out of the neoliberal loop and developing a grassroots movement to fund performance. There is a long and old tradition of passing

the hat in a performance to support the labor of the artist who may otherwise receive no recognition or monetary compensation from the venue. We might read this as artists and audiences entering into a relation of value, a one-to-one exchange. However, as Jackson (*Social*) argues, there is no outside of the state. There is a highly regulated marketplace through which the economy of performance occurs. The neoliberal logic of privatization then, informs this exchange. The impulse of queer intimacy in performance is rerouted back to through the private sector. The question that remains to be seen, worthy of future study, is how this privatized professionalization of performance will in turn shape the doing of performance and its effects. Is the crowd sourcing phenomenon a symptom of or response to the neoliberal conditions under which performance is produced?

#### Concluding Reflections, For Now

Looking through the modality of personal narrative performance, at sites of neoliberal relationality, this dissertation looks at the ways neoliberalism and performance interanimate one another. My argument is that in order to understand the cultural work, the resistive and relational potential, of the relations that occur in and through personal narrative performance, that we also need to understand the political, cultural, and historical conditions under which narratives in performance are produced. Underlying questions and cultural observations about the neoliberal conditions of the time in which we are living drive the study. I have been motivated to understand the lived experience of neoliberalism at the site of relation and how it informs belonging. Through performance I have asked how performers narrate and represent non-normative experiences within neoliberalism and toward what ends. And finally, I have wondered what the relations in performance, among performers and audiences, *do*.



To address these questions, I have looked at three intersecting sites of neoliberal relationality, of discourses that govern relations. These include same-sex marriage, family, and multiculturalism and immigration. My own political interests and personal experiences are what drew me to these discursive sites. There are other outstanding sites of neoliberal relationality due equal consideration that are similarly being taken up in and through performance: the reproductive rights of women, disparities in health care, education and student loan debt, and many others. The labor of criticism in our trying political times may never rest, but it must pause. In moments of reflection we may identify further encounters in need of consideration and even come face to face with other encounters when we turn away from those in the present. This is an ongoing and hermeneutic process that turns me back to the point of entry through which I began.

The point of entry into this project was a potentially bleak declaration that sought to interpellate the reader into an encounter with this project, one that we would face together. Let's face it, the project insists: neoliberalism sucks. Used in the colloquial, to say that neoliberalism sucks is to recognize the depressive and deflating tendencies of its weight, especially on bodies marked as different from the norm. While depression is often understood as a private experience, Ann Cvetkovitch argues instead we understand depression and other unsatisfied and uncomfortable feelings as public feelings, indeed as effects of neoliberalism. To tend to depression and other feelings as public and political is to counter the ways neoliberalism relegates the personal *as* private. Therefore, the personal is not only public it is also, as feminism articulates it, the personal as political.

The public-ity of feeling is in direct contrast to the neoliberal tenet of privacy, the one to one exchange between individuals, the effect of which shifts the citizen's relation

to the nation from one of inter-dependence to a redefined and increasingly rugged individualism, and through a heteronormative imperative—the things that produce narrows relations among citizens. Somewhat ironically, the privatization of the personal results in a highly visible private in the public, however it is a private public that is highly regulated and routed through normative discourses, what Lauren Berlant calls the intimate public sphere. The simultaneous privatization and governance of the personal has significant implications for those who fall outside normativity, from the hetero and increasingly homo-norm to other norms doing gender, race, and nation appropriately.

Performance is a public speech act that can present the experience of difference, of cultural others and generate relations across lines of difference. In personal narrative performance, performers do not just *tell stories*, the stories they tell are strategic hailings that call attention to discourses that produce the conditions of their exclusion and form intimate relations in public. My argument is that in and through performance *intimacy* is *queered*: it takes the private—the stuff of the personal presented as aesthetic communication—and renders that private very public. In public and through relations, performance can raise awareness and shift consciousness, reify orders of relation or generate alternate imaginaries. This is to say that a lot of different types of work are done in performance, and although performance is often seen as resistance, under the weight of neoliberalism, it is important to tend to what arguments performances are making and how in turn that shapes the relations that occur in the site of performance.

Queer intimacy offers a way of engaging performance, an analytic that considers the text of performance as well as the relational context among performers and audiences, and turns back on larger cultural questions of belonging. The two aspects queer intimacy

that I have tended to through each chapter are the relation among performer and audience, and how through the performance text neoliberal discourses are challenged, reinforced, or redone. Queer intimacy provides a lens to read performance, to tend to the conditions that give rise to and inform performance in the current historical moment. In this way, it brings together the critical impulse of critical communication and feminist cultural studies with performance studies. From a critical cultural perspective, it tends to the structural in performance. To critical communication studies it emphasizes the lived experience as narrated in performance and as communication. Coupled with the impulses of queer theory, queer intimacy offers both resisting normativity and imagining beyond it.

It may be too hopeful to suggest that the queer intimacy of performance cease the suck of neoliberalism. And yet I do not want to succumb to a politics of cynicism around neoliberalism, to acquiesce to the vampire's bite and become that which we might instead resist. The vampire still lurks and continues to suck. Neoliberalism still sucks. However, performance does and can mobilize us. It can be and is a site of coalitional relation. To consider queer intimacy in performance is not only to recognize that relations are made possible, but to tend closely to the belongings we are making.

## REFERENCES

- AIDS.org. "HIV Travel/Immigration Ban: Background, Documentation." AIDS.org, 2014. Web. 4 April 2014.
- Alcoff, Linda Martín. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.
- Alexander, Bryant Keith. "Skin Flint (Or, the Garbage Man's Kid): A Generative Autobiographical Performance Based on Tami Spry's Tattoo Stories." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 20.1 (2000): 97-114. Print.
- Alexander, Bryant Keith and John T. Warren. "The Materiality of Bodies: Critical Reflections on Pedagogy, Politics and Positionality." *Communication Quarterly* 50.3-4 (2002): 328-43. Print.
- Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005. Print.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987. Print.
- . "Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar or Island: Lesbians-of-Color Hacienda Alianzas." *Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances*. Ed. Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer. Philadelphia: New Society, 1990. 216-31. Print.
- , ed. *Making Face, Making Soul Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1990. Print.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1996. Print.
- Arrizón, Alicia. *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance*. Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 2006. Print.
- Axel, Brian Keith. "The Diasporic Imaginary." *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 411-28. Print.
- Berlant, Lauren. *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008. Print.
- . "Intimacy: A Special Issue." *Critical Inquiry* 24.2 (1998): 281-88. Print.
- . *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997. Print.

- Berlant, Lauren, and Michael Warner. "Sex in Public." *Intimacy*. Ed. Lauren Berlant. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000. 311-30. Print.
- Bernstein, Mary and Renate Reimann, *Queer Families, Queer Politics: Challenging Culture and the State*. New York, NY: Columbia U P, 2001. Print.
- Bernstein, Robin. *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*. New York, NY: New York U P, 2011. Print.
- Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1996. Print.
- Bersani, Leo, and Adam Phillips. *Intimacies*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Binkiewicz, Donna M. *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment of the Arts, 1965-1980*. Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 2004. Print.
- Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993. Print.
- Brandzell, Amy L. "Queering Citizenship? Same-Sex Marriage and the State." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 11 2 (2005): 171-204. Print.
- Border Brujo*. Dir. Isaac Artenstein. Perf. Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Cinewest Productions and Sushi Inc. Third World Newsreel, 1991. VHS.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. New York: Less Presses du Réel, 1998. Print.
- Brouwer, Daniel C. and Aaron Hess. "Making Sense of 'God Hates Fags' and 'Thank God for 9/11: A Thematic Analysis of Milbloggers' Responses to Reverend Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church." *Western Journal of Communication* 71 1 (2007): 69-90. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- . *Undoing Gender*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Carlson, Marvin. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Carrillo Rowe, Aimee. "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation." *NWSA Journal* 17.3 (2005): 15-46. Print.

- . *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. Print.
- Carrillo Rowe, Aimee, Sheena Malhotra, and Kimberlee Pérez. *Answer the Call: Virtual Migration in Indian Call Centers*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2013. Print.
- Cavanagh, Sheila L. *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination*. Toronto, Ontario: U of Toronto P, 2010. Print.
- Chávez, Karma. *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities*. Chicago, IL: U of Illinois P, 2013. Print.
- Clare, Eli. *Exile & Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation*. Cambridge, MA: South End P, 2009. Print.
- Cloud, Dana. "The rhetoric of <family values>: Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility." *Western Journal of Communication* 62 (1998): 387-419. Print.
- Cobb, Michael. *God Hates Fags: The Rhetorics of Religious Violence*. New York, NY: New York U P, 2006. Print.
- Cohen, Cathy J. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3.4 (1997): 437-65. Print.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 3-25. Print.
- Conquergood, Dwight. "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research." *The Drama Review* 46.2 (2002): 145-56. Print.
- Corey, Frederick C. *HIV Education: Performing Personal Narratives*. Tempe, AZ: Arizona State U, 1993. Print.
- . "The Personal: Against the Master Narrative." *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*. Ed. Sheron J. Dailey. Annandale, VA: National Communication Association, 1998. 249-53. Print.
- . "Tim Miller's Body (Of Work)." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23.3 (2003): 253-70. Print.

- Crimp, Douglas. *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT P, 2002. Print.
- Cvetkovitch, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- . *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2012. Print.
- D'Emilio, John. "Capitalism and Gay Identity." *The Gay and Lesbian Studies Reader*. Eds. Henry Avelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin. New York, NY: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- D'Loco Kid. "Ramble-Ations: A One D'Lo Show." D'Loco Kid Productions, 2014. Web. 1 Feb. 2014.
- D'LocoKid Productions. "D'FunQT." *Vimeo*. 8 Sept. 2012. Web. 1 Oct. 2013.
- . "Ramble-Ations: A One D'Lo Show." *Vimeo*. 7 Sept. 2012. Web. 1 Oct. 2013.
- Davis, Angela. "Gender, Class, and Multiculturalism." *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Ed. Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1996. Print. 40-48.
- Dean, Tim. *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2009. Print.
- Delaney, Samuel R. *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. New York, NY: NYU P, 2001. Print.
- De Votta, Neil. *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004. Print.
- Dillard, Scott. "Breathing Darrell: Solo Performance as a Contribution to a Useful Queer Mythology." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 20.1 (2000): 74-83. Print.
- Dolan, Jill. *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 1988. Print.
- . "Introduction: Building a Theatrical Vernacular: Responsibility, Community, Ambivalence, and Queer Theater." *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theater*. Ed. Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla. New York: New York University Press, 2002. 1-8. Print.
- . *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope in the Theatre*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005. Print.

- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Rockville, Maryland: Arc Manor Publishers, 2008. Print.
- Duggan, Lisa. "Queering the State." *Social Text* 39 (1994): 1-14. Print.
- . *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon P, 2003. Print.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004. Print.
- Ellis, Carolyn and Arthur P. Bochner. *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira P, 1996. Print.
- Eng, David. *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. Print.
- Ferguson, Roderick A. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003. Print.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. Trans. Saskya Iris Jain. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books, 1980. Print.
- Fox, Claire F. "Mass Media, Site Specificity, and the US Mexico Border: Guillermo Gómez-Peña's *Border Brujo* (1988, 1990)." *The Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts*. Ed. Chon A. Noriega and Ana M. López. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 228-43. Print.
- Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. Print.
- . *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002. Print.
- Fusco, Coco. "The Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo." *Third Text* 3:7 (1989): 53-76. Print.
- Galloway, Terry. *Mean Little Deaf Queer: A Memoir*. Boston: Beacon P, 2010. Print.



- García, Armando. "Nao Bustamante and the Coloniality of Desire, ca. 1992." *Global Queerness: Sexuality, Citizenship, and Human Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Wooster University, Wooster, OH. Conference Presentation. 6 October 2012.
- Giddens, Anthony. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford UP, 1993. Print.
- Gingrich-Philbrook. "Autobiographical Performance Scripts: Refreshment." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 17 (1997): 352-60. Print.
- Goldberg, RoseLee. *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*. 3rd ed. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011. Print.
- Goltz, Dustin Bradley. "Blasphemies on Forever: Remembering Queer Futures." *Liminalities* 8.2 (2012): 1-29. Print.
- . *Queer Temporalities in Gay Male Representation: Tragedy, Normativity, and Futurity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Gómez-Peña, Guillermo. Gomez-Pena, Guillermo. "Border Brujo: A Performance Poem (from the series "Documented/Undocumented")." *TDR* 35:3 (1991): 48-66. Print.
- . *Dangerous Border Crossers: The Artist Talks Back*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- . *Ethno-Techno: Writings on Performance, Activism, and Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- . *The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems and Loqueras for the End of the Century*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1996. Print.
- Gómez-Peña, Guillermo and Roberto Sifuentes. *Exercises for Rebel Artists: Radical Performance Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print.
- Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana. "Record Number of Deportations in 2012." Pew Research Center. January 24, 2014. Web. 1 March 2014.
- Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005. Print.
- Gordon, Avery F. and Christopher Newfield, Eds. *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1996. Print.
- Gould, Deborah. *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2009. Print.

- Gross, Michael Joseph. "Gay is the New Black: The Last Great Civil Rights Struggle." *The Advocate*. 16 Nov. 2008. Web. 15 Jan. 2014. <<http://advocate.com/>>.
- Halberstam, J. Jack. *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*. Boston, MA: Beacon P, 2013. Print.
- Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: NYU P, 2005. Print.
- Hamera, Judith A. *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference, and Connection in the Global City*. New York: Palgrave, 2011. Print.
- . *Opening Acts: Performance in/as Communication and Cultural Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage P, 2005. Print.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.
- Hendley, Matthew. "People with Family in Immigration Lockup Go on Hunger Strike Outside Phoenix ICE Office." February 18, 2014. *Phoenix New Times*. Web. 4 March 2014.
- . "Puente Protestors Arrested During Hunger Strike Outside Phoenix ICE office." February 26, 2014. *Phoenix New Times*. Web. 4 March 2014.
- Holling, Michelle A. and Bernadette Marie Calafell. "Identities on Stage and Staging Identities: ChicanoBrujo Performances as Emancipatory Practices." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 27 (2007): 58-83. Print.
- Holman Jones, Stacy. "Autoethnography: Making the Personal Political." *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed. Ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna C. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005. 763-91. Print.
- Holt, John Clifford, Ed. *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
- Hughes, Holly and David Román. "O Solo Homo: An Introductory Conversation." *O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance*. Ed. Holly Hughes and David Román. New York: Grove Press, 1998. 1-16. Print.
- Human Rights Campaign. "Marriage Center." The Human Rights Campaign, 2011-2014. Web. 13 March 2014.
- ICE. "FY 2013 Immigration Removals." ICE. Web. 1 March 2014.

- Immigration Equality. "The HIV Ban." Immigration Equality. Web, 4 April 2014.
- Jackson, Shannon. *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.
- . *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. New York: Routledge 2011. Print.
- Jakobsen, Janet R. "Can Homosexuals End Western Civilization as We Know It? Family Values in a Global Economy." *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. Ed. Arnaldo Cruz Malave and Martin F. Manalansan. New York: NYU P, 2002. 49-70. Print.
- . "Perverse Justice." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18.1 (2011): 19-45. Print.
- Jenkins, Candice M. *Private Lives, Proper Relations: Regulating Black Intimacy*. U of Minnesota P, 2007. Print.
- Johnson, E. Patrick. *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- . "'Quare' Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 21 (2001): 1-25. Print.
- . "Strange Fruit: A Performance about Identity Politics." *Drama Review* 47.2 (2003): 86-116. Print.
- Johnson, E. Patrick and Mae G. Henderson, Eds. *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005. Print.
- Johnson, Julia R. "Cisgender Privilege, Intersectionality, and the Criminalization of CeCe McDonald: Why Intercultural Communication Needs Transgender Studies." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 6 (2013): 135-44. Print.
- Joseph, Miranda. *Against the Romance of Community*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2002. Print.
- Juang, Richard. "Transgendering the Politics of Recognition." *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle. New York, New York: Routledge, 2006. 706-720. Print.
- Kennedy, Elizabeth Lapovsky and Madeline D. Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

- Khia. "My Neck, My Back (Lick It)." *Thug Misses*. Indieblu Music, 2002. CD.
- Kipness, Laura. *Against Love: A Polemic*. New York, NY: First Vintage Books Edition, 2003. Print.
- Kuppers, Petra. *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Langellier, Kristin. "Personal Narrative, Performance, Performativity: Two or Three Things I Know for Sure." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 19 (1999): 125-44. Print.
- . "Personal Narratives: Perspectives on Theory and Research." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 9.4 (1989): 243-76. Print.
- . "A Phenomenological Approach to Audience." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 3.2 (1983): 34-9. Print.
- . "Voiceless Bodies, Bodiless Voices: The Future of Personal Narrative Performance." *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*. Ed. Sheron J. Dailey. Annandale, VA: National Communication Association, 1998. 207-13. Print.
- Langellier, Kristin M., and Eric E. Peterson. *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2004. Print.
- Lay of the Land*. By Tim Miller. Dir. Tim Miller. Highways Performance Space and Gallery, Los Angeles, California. 2009. Performance.
- Lee, Wenshu. "For the Love of Love: Neoliberal Governmentality, Neoliberal Melancholy, Critical Intersectionality, and the Advent of Solidarity with the Other Mormons." *Journal of Homosexuality* 59 (2012): 912-937. Print.
- Lewis, Gregory B., and Michael Rushton. "Understanding State Spending on the Arts, 1976-99." *State and Local Government Review* 39 2 (2007): 107-14. Print.
- Lipsitz, George. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. Revised edition. Philadelphia, PA: Temple UP, 2006. Print.
- Loomba, Ania. "'Porno-Tropics': Some Thoughts on Shakespeare, Colonialism, and Sexuality." *The Queerest Art: Essays on Gay and Lesbian Theater*. Ed. Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla. New York: New York U P, 2002. 40-54. Print.
- Lopez, Mark Hugo and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera. "High rate of deportations continue under Obama despite Latino disapproval." Pew Research Center. September 19, 2013. Web. 1 March 2014.

- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984. Print.
- Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996. Print.
- Lugones, Maria. *Pilgimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield P, 2003. Print.
- Luibhéid, Eithne. "Introduction: Queering Migration and Citizenship." *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*. Eds. Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2005. Print.
- . *Pregnant on Arrival: Making the Illegal Immigrant*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2013. Print.
- . "Queer/Migration An Unruly Body of Scholarship." *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 14 2-3 (2008): 169-90. Print.
- Madison, D. Soyini. *Acts of Activism: Human Rights as Radical Performance*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge UP, 2012. Print.
- . *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage P, 2011. Print.
- . "Performance, Personal Narratives, and the Politics of Possibility." *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*. Ed. Sharon Dailey. Annendale, VA: NCA, 1998. 276-82. Print.
- Madison, D. Soyini and Judith Hamera, Ed. *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006. Print.
- Massey, Doreen B. *For Space*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage P, 2005. Print.
- Melamed, Jodi. "The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism." *Social Text* 89 24 (2006): 1-24. Print.
- Miller, Lynn C. and Jacqueline Taylor. "The Constructed Self: Strategic and Aesthetic Choices in Autobiographical Performance." *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*. Ed. D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006. 168-87. Print.
- Miller, Tim. *Body Blows: Six Performances*. Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 2002. Print.

- . *Lay of the Land*. Unpublished performance script. 2009.
- Miller, Toby. The national endowment for the Arts in the 1990s: A Black Eye on the Arts? *American Behavioral Scientist* 43 9 2000: 1429-1445. Print.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Moraga, Cherríe. "La Güera." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Eds. Moraga, Cherríe. and Gloria Anzaldúa. New York: Kitchen Table P, 1983. 27-34. Print.
- Moraga, Cherríe and Gloria Anzaldúa, Eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table P, 1983. Print.
- Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2003. Print.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York and London: New York UP, 2009. Print.
- . *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999. Print.
- . "Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho's 'the Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs).'" *Theatre Journal* 52 (2000): 67-79. Print.
- . "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position." *Signs* 31 (2006): 675-88. Print.
- . "Stages: Queers, Punks, and the Utopian Performative." *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*. Eds. D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006. 9-20. Print.
- Nakamura, Lisa. *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity and Identity on the Internet*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Nakayama, Thomas K. and Robert L. Krizek. "Whiteness: A strategic Rhetoric." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 291-309. Print.
- Namaste, Viviane. *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2000. Print.
- Nevarez, Griselda. "After 15 days, hunger strike staged outside Phoenix ICE office ends." VOXXI. March 4, 2014. Web. 5 March, 2014.

- “One Song Glory.” *Rent* (2005 Movie Soundtrack). Warner Bros, 2005. CD.
- Osun, Omi Joni L. Jones, Lisa L. Moore, and Sharon Bridgforth. *Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic: Art, Activism, Academia, and the Austin Project*. Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 2010. Print.
- Park-Fuller, Linda. “Audiencing the Audience: Playback Theatre, Performative Writing, and Social Activism.” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23.3 (2003): 288-310. Print.
- . “Performing Absence: The Staged Personal Narrative as Testimony.” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 20 (2000): 20-42. Print.
- Pelias, Ronald J. *Writing Performance: Poeticizing the Researcher’s Body*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois U P, 1999. Print.
- Pelias, Ronald J. and James VanOosting. "A Paradigm for Performance Studies." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 219-31 Print.
- Pérez, Kimberlee. “Blasphemies and Queer Potentiality: Performance and/as Relation.” *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 8 2 (2012): 1-10. Print.
- Pérez, Kimberlee, and Dustin Goltz. “Treading Across *Lines in the Sand*: Performing Bodies in Coalitional Subjectivity.” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 30.3 (2010): 247-68. Print.
- Pérez, Laura. *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. Print.
- “Performance Ethnography: A TPQ Symposium.” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26.4 Print.
- Phelan, Peggy. “Tim Miller’s *My Queer Body*: An Anatomy in Six Sections.” *Theater* 24 2 (1993): 30-34. Print.
- Pollock, Della. "The Performative "I"." *Cultural Studies <-> Critical Methodologies* 7.3 (2007): 239-55. Print.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
- Puar, Jasbir. “Coda: the Cost of Getting Better: Suicide, Sensation, Switchpoints.” *GLQ* 18 (2011): 149-58. Print.

- . *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2007. Print.
- Puente Movement. Puente Arizona. Web. 1 March 2014.
- Rabasa, José. *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism*. Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 1993. Print.
- Ramble-Ations: A One D'Lo Show*. By D'Lo. Dir. Adelina Anthony. Highways Performance Space and Gallery, Los Angeles, California. 2008. Performance.
- Reddy, Chandan. *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
- Rodríguez, Juana María. "Queer Sociality and Other Sexual Fantasies." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17: 2-3 (2011): 331-48. Print.
- Rodríguez, Richard. *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke UP, 2009. Print.
- Román, David. *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. Print.
- Roof, Judith. *Come as You Are: Sexuality & Narrative*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996. Print.
- Rosenthal, Rachel. *The DbD Experience: Chance Knows What It's Doing!* New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Roy, Ishita Sinha. "Worlds Apart: Nation-Branding on the National Geographic Channel." *Media, Culture & Society* 29 (2007): 569-92. Print.
- Rushton, Michael. "Public Funding of Controversial Art." *Journal of Cultural Economics* 24 (2000): 267-282. Print.
- Sandoval, Chela. "Dissident Globalizations, Emancipatory Methods, Social-Erotics." *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. Eds Arnaldo Cruze-Malavé and Marin F. Manalansan. New York: New York U, 2002. 20-31. Print.
- . *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota UP, 2000. Print.
- Sandoval-Sánchez, Alberto. "Politicizing Abjection: In the Manner of a Prologue for the Articulation of Aids Latino Queer Identities." *American Literary History* 17.3 (2005): 542-49. Print.



- Savran, David. *A Queer Sort of Materialism: Recontextualizing American Theater*. Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 2003. Print.
- Scarbury, Joey. "Theme from "Greatest American Hero" (Believe It Or Not)." *America's Greatest Hero*. Rhino/Elektra, 2005.
- Schechner, Richard. *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1985. Print.
- Schneider, Rebecca. *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print.
- . "Solo Solo Solo." *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*. Ed. Gavin Butt. Malden, MA: Blackwell P, 2004: 23-47. Print.
- Schulman, Sarah. *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: U of California P, 2012. Print.
- Segrest, Mab. *Born to Belonging: Writings on Spirit and Justice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2002. Print.
- Selvadurai, Shyam. *Funny Boy*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994. Print.
- Senelick, Laurence. "The Queer Root of Theater." *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theater*. Ed. Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla. New York: New York UP, 2002. 21-39. Print.
- Sharpe, Christina. *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. Print.
- Smith, Andrea. "Introduction: The Revolution Will Not Be Funded." Ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. Cambridge, MA: South End P, 2009. Print.
- Snorton, C. Riley. "Marriage Mimesis." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 6 (2013): 127-34. Print.
- Somerville, Siobhan B. *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000. Print.
- Spade, Dean. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*. Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 2011. Print.
- Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History*. Berkeley, CA: Seal P, 2008. Print.

- . "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity." *Radical History Review* 2008.100 (2008): 145-157. Print.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Tongson, Karen. *Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries*. New York: NYU P, 2011. Print.
- Treichler, Paula A. *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1999. Print.
- Valentine, David. *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2007. Print.
- Warner, Michael. *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1993. Print.
- . "Normal and Normaller: Beyond Gay Marriage." *GLQ* 5:2 (1999): 119-71. Print.
- . *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. New York: The Free Press, 1999. Print.
- Weiss, Jillian Todd. "GL vs. BT." *Journal of Bisexuality* 3:3-4 (2003): 25-55. Print.
- Weston, Kath. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print.
- Whitehead, Jay Cee. *The Nuptial Deal: Same-Sex Marriage and Neoliberal Governance*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2012. Print.
- Willett, John, Ed. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. 13th ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964. Print.
- Winslow, Deborah and Michael D. Woost, Eds. *Economy, Culture, and Civil War in Sri Lanka*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana U P, 2004. Print.