to the stultifying temporal logic of a broken-down present. My turn to Bloch, hope, and utopia challenges theoretical insights that have been stunted by the lull of presentness and by various romances of negativity and that have thus become routine and resoundingly anticritical. This antiutopian theoretical faltering is what I referred to earlier, almost in jest, as poststructuralist pieties. I have learned quite a bit from critical practices commonly described as poststructuralist and have no wish to denounce them. The corrective I want to make by turning to utopia is attuned to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's critique of the way in which paranoid reading practices have become so nearly automatic in queer studies that they have, in many ways, ceased to be critical. In queer studies, antiutopianism, more often than not intertwined with antirelationality, has led many scholars to an impasse wherein they cannot see futurity for the life of them. Utopian readings are aligned with what Sedgwick would call reparative hermeneutics.

The queer utopianism I am arguing for is a kind of anti-antiutopianism, to borrow a phrase from Fredric Jameson. Anti-antiutopianism is not about a merely affirmative or positive investment in utopia. Gay and lesbian studies can too easily snap into the basically reactionary posture of denouncing a critical imagination that does not short-sightedly deny anything but the here and now. The project of thinking beyond the moment and against static historicisms resonates with Judith Halberstam's work on queer temporality's relation to spatiality, Carla Freccero's notion of fantasmatic historiography, Elizabeth Freeman's theory of temporal drag, Carolyn Dinshaw's approach to "touching the past," and Jill Dolan's recent book on utopian performance. I would also align it with Lisa Duggan's critique of neoliberal homonormativity. Along those lines, while this writing project does not always explicitly concern race, it shares many political urgencies with a vibrant list of scholars working on the particularities of queers of color and their politics. Many of these authors fill out the table of contents for the special issue of *Social Text*, *What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?*, that I recently coedited with Judith Halberstam and David Eng. Ultimately, my theory of queer futurity attends to the past for the purpose of critiquing a present. This project depends on critical practices that stave off the failures of imagination in queer critique that I understand as antirelationality and antiutopianism.

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Note

1. I do not mean all gay white men in queer studies. More precisely, I am referring to gay white male scholars who imagine sexuality as a discrete category that can be abstracted and isolated from other antagonisms in the social, which include race and gender.

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The Antisocial Homosexual

Everyone knows that homosexuals throw fabulous parties. Far from antisocial, we are in fact adept at practicing sociability in its myriad forms. The burden of "the antisocial thesis in queer theory," which Leo Bersani formulated most decisively in *Homos*, is not that lesbians and gay men are unsociable but that some aspect of homosexuality threatens the social and that it might be strategic politically to exploit that threat. Homosexuality can be viewed as threatening because, insofar as we fail to reproduce the family in a recognizable form, queers fail to reproduce the social.

In this respect, the antisocial thesis originates not in queer theory but in right-wing fantasies about how "the homosexual agenda" undermines the social fabric. Certain queer theorists have suggested that rather than critique such reactionary fantasies and distance ourselves from them, we might expediently embrace them, take them on. In "Is the Rectum a Grave?," his precursor to *Homos*, Bersani contended that "it is perhaps necessary to accept the pain of embracing, at least provisionally, a homophobic representation of homosexuality" (209).

This line of thinking has been pursued by Lee Edelman in his recent book *No Future*, which focused much of the MLA panel's debate and disagreement. Instead of arguing against

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the viciously homophobic representation of homosexuality as sterile, unproductive, antifamily, and death-driven, Edelman insists that "we should listen to, and even perhaps be instructed by, the readings of queer sexualities produced by the forces of reaction" (16). If there is a germ of truth in homophobic stereotypes of queerness as destructive, then we might heroically identify with those negative stereotypes in order to short-circuit the social in its present form.

Embracing the homophobic alignment of queerness with the death drive, Edelman wants to harness the drive's negativity to his assault on "reproductive futurism." By *reproductive futurism* he means the dominant ideology of the social, which sees it in terms of a future requiring not only reproduction but also protection and that therefore represents futurity in the image of the innocent child. Yet Freud's theory of infantile sexuality, with its account of an original predisposition to polymorphous perversion, long ago shattered the illusion of childhood innocence. We cannot protect kids from perverts, because we cannot effectively insulate any child from him- or herself. As Freud repeatedly discovered, sexual perversion comes from inside the family home, not from outside it.

However, once the social is defined in terms of a future represented by the child, then queerness (or perverse, nonreproductive sexuality) necessarily negates that future by fissuring it from within—just as, in Lacanian terms, the real fractures the symbolic from within. According to this argument, queerness is structurally antisocial, not empirically so. By construing the sociopolitical order primarily in imaginary and symbolic terms, while simultaneously invoking the queer as real to undermine that order, Edelman's account offers too monochromatic a vision of the symbolic; it furnishes too narrow a conception of the social; and it paints an unimaginative picture of the future.

My colleagues on the MLA panel elaborated similar criticisms of Edelman's project. Highlighting the predictability of his archive, Judith Halberstam anatomized a more expansive, messier vision of the social that embraces negativity without foreclosing futurity. In his fascinating discussion of the New York School poets, José Muñoz outlined various possibilities of queer futurity in terms of utopia and potentiality. During the discussion period, I pointed to Michael Snediker's important work on queer optimism as another way of thinking about futurity beyond recent queer theoretical emphases on negativity, melancholia, and the death drive.

Reaching beyond Lacanian psychoanalytic orthodoxy, my paper focused above all on what Deleuze calls "becoming"—a ceaseless movement of being that is not coordinated by teleology and that never results in anything resembling an identity. The significance of this perspective on futurity stems from the fact that the antisocial thesis properly begins with neither Edelman nor Bersani but rather with Guy Hocquenghem—specifically, with his Deleuzian reading of Freud in *Homosexual Desire* (1972). Hocquenghem sheds light on the antisocial thesis by explaining, "Homosexual desire is neither on the side of death nor on the side of life; it is the killer of civilized egos" (150). Homosexual desire achieves that effect by shattering the imaginary identities through which we recognize ourselves and others. What I find crucial here is that the shattering of the civilized ego betokens not the end of sociality but rather its inception.

This point has been missed by many of Bersani's readers too. The movement of coming together only to be plunged into an experience of the nonrelational represents but the first step in Bersani's account of relationality. The second, correlative step is to trace new forms of sociability, new ways of being together, that are not grounded in imaginary identity or the struggle for intersubjective recognition. In my view, disrupting ego identity through "self-shattering" gives access to the productivity of the primary process, which is profoundly connective. Hocquenghem, following Deleuze and Guattari, speaks of bodies "plugging in," whereas today we might speak of "hooking up"—a visceral dramatization of the promiscuous sociability of unconscious desire when unconstrained by Oedipus.

The symbolic law of reproductive futurism is not as encompassing or determinative as Lacanians like Edelman seem to think. The theory of the unconscious is a story about the underdetermination, as well as the overdetermination, of subjectivity. Nothing is more promiscuously sociable, more intent on hooking up, than that part of our being separate from selfhood. My paper concluded by arguing that queer theory and politics need a vigorously argued antisocial thesis, in order to grasp how

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beyond the normative coordinates of selfhood lies an orgy of connection that no regime can regulate.

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Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space

Annual Meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages
29 December 2005, Washington, DC

Are You Postcolonial? To the Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Literatures

You have involved yourselves in the rethinking of Soviet studies as not only post-Soviet studies but also postcolonial studies. The first wave of postcolonial studies was based on the British empire. We have a lot to learn as that model travels out of its first contained sphere into the aftermath of old multicultural empires. Does postcolonialism lead to nationalism? Is postcolonialism appropriated by the metropolitan diaspora? Is "scientific socialism" comparable to "civilizing mission"? Is the "Other Europe" movement—in Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, the Balkans, and elsewhere—manageable within a specifically postcolonial framework? Must the post-Soviet world be thought of as a new Eurasia in order for the postcolonial viewpoint to stick, as Mark von Hagen has suggested? The argument about women as the surrogate proletariat in central Asia traveled out of Soviet studies. How will that figure?

This rethinking implies that the most emancipatory vision of the Enlightenment could not withstand the weight of the objective and subjective history of older, precapitalist empires. Our current and so-called emancipatory programs do not engage with this. There might be some use, then, in rethinking postcolonialism for this new task. But it must unmoor itself from its provisional beginnings in monopoly capitalist or mercantile colonialisms and transform itself in the process. Every postcoloniality is situated, and therefore different. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* was provoked by Kant's use of the western Australian Aborigine. How will this travel to the "European" imagination of "the Other Europe" today? How will you displace our modern notions of hybrid diasporas when you think of the restlessness of, say, Armenia?

In response to students in the Slavic department at Columbia University, I wrote as follows:

> When an alien nation-state establishes itself as ruler, impressing its own laws and systems of education and rearranging the mode of production for its own economic benefit, "colonizer" and "colonized" can be used. The consequences of applying them to a wide array of political and geographic entities would be dire if colonialism had only one model. On the other hand, if we notice how different kinds of adventures and projects turn into something that fits the bare-bones description given above, we will have a powerful analysis of the politics of progressivism, of one sort or another. How do political philosophies of social justice relate to the overdeterminations of practical politics? This venerable question receives interesting answers if we

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