

“X, Welcome!!!”

### Michael O’Rourke in conversation with Stanimir Panayotov

**Stanimir Panayotov:** Your work has been concentrated on bringing together continental philosophy and queer theory at one, with a special emphasis on Derrida.<sup>1</sup> Before we are able to assess what this truly means for *academic* philosophy, let’s speculate on the *geopolitics* of such a unity.

There exists a normalized transcontinental asymmetry for both fields: (European) continental philosophy has been radically transplanted and celebrated in the USA, and queer theory too accelerated in importance in the old continent. This inter-lodging might be in itself oppressive and colonial, but still it bears significance for the contradictory institutional status of these fields in both continents. Both are asymmetrical to the mores and likes of their society at large. So there are two asymmetries: one concerns academic geopolitics and one has to do with the mis/representation of society’s ethics.

Are these asymmetries - or, better, trans-Atlantic “mutual blackenings” - relying on any national sovereign ground(edness)? What is the importance of transplanting queer in the age of weak sovereignty (Europe) and rogue one (USA)? Assuming that queer has never had stable coordinates and has always resisted bibliographical index tied to the despotic signifier of some given ground - namely, the USA - implies that there is an inherent anti-Platonic operation at play here. And, if queer is groundless - *sans-fond pace* Deleuze - this perhaps questions the importance of the very academism and normativization of queer theory. That is to say, by resisting embeddedness, queer theory might well be a geopolitical unruly “theory of everything.”

**Michael O’Rourke:** I think it is important, Stanimir, that we begin with the question of “place” or space given that it is temporality, or more properly, temporalities in all their strangeness and disjointedness, which have preoccupied queer theorists in the last five years or so. I don’t separate myself out from this trend of course since my own work, heavily indebted in all sorts of ways to Jacques Derrida, has argued in various places that queerness is a “messianicity without messianism” and is always “*à venir* (to-come).” These questions, or concerns, are, as we shall

see, not unrelated to space or place (or to stepping out of space and time). However, it is important to note that there has been a general *topophobia* operating in contemporary queer theory (one must, of course, exempt work in geographies of sexuality from this tendency). And, it seems to me, it is crucially important that queer theory becomes more “open” both theoretically and politically (which is why your word “geopolitics,” which you quite rightly underscore, is precisely the correct one although I have also recently been using the Stengerian word “cosmopolitical” too). And this is one of the many places where speculative philosophy and queer theory can potentially meet. For example, Reza Negarestani’s work has consistently envisioned and mapped out philosophy as a science of openness and geophilosophy as a regional or “universally focused” philosophy *qua* science of openness (for example, see Negarestani 2008).

But, let me begin by talking a little bit about the *place* of Derrida in my own work, the project of which has been, as you note, to bring out (often unlikely or even unwarranted) *rapprochements* between queer theory and continental philosophy. Many figures have been prominent in this overall design including Deleuze, Rancière, Irigaray, Nancy, but Derrida has always been the philosopher around whom my work circles. I endlessly return to him as if he were my teacher (However, I only ever saw him speak once, in Dublin in 1996, where he gave a lecture which would subsequently become the chapter on the lie in *Without Alibi*). *As if*, such a Derridean locution. However, I have no formal training in philosophy (either analytical or continental) and have also placed myself outside the institutional location of philosophy (or at least what gets taught in philosophy departments). So, in a way, my entire project to bring continental philosophy (or what gets called *French Theory* in the United States) together with queer theory, is always already *outside* or I would say parergonal (to borrow a concept from Derrida’s *The Truth in Painting*) to what you call “academic philosophy.”

Now, I am not an academic, nor am I a philosopher (and I will say a bit more in a moment about my own *place* when it comes to both queer theory and the academic institution). So, perhaps this makes me either uniquely placed or supremely unqualified to comment on such matters. This is why, I imagine, I have been so drawn to speculative thinking and to the work of the authors clustered around the journal *Collapse*, who Robin Mackay (the editor of this journal of philosophical research and development) has referred to as “amateurs.” I quite like to think of myself as an amateur (apart from some grounding in classical literary theory and Enlightenment philosophy I really cannot claim to be well versed in Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel or some of the other major figures I really ought to be knowledgeable about). But I am much more drawn to, and have started to use, the term “para-academic” to describe my position in relation to academic philosophy. And I guess that I was initially seduced by Derrida because of his own status as someone hovering at the margins of philosophical respectability. And one concept in particular of Derrida’s which has come to describe or stand in for my own understanding of queer is “khora.”

And it is felicitous that this concept, or rather *quasi-concept*, of Derrida’s describes a kind of *placeless place*. Anyone familiar with Blanchot or Derrida will recognize this “x without x” structuration and queer for me is best

described in terms of this logic of the *sans*. Queer is an identity without an essence, as David Halperin famously put it. (Halperin 1995). The “X” has been a recurrent figure in my work and we might recall that an early intervention into queer theory by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner was called “What does Queer Theory Teach us about X?” (Berlant and Warner 1995, 343-349) And the X of Berlant and Warner’s title takes on a particular function for me in several ways. Firstly, the X designates the ways in which we might describe queer theory’s refusal to settle on a stable “referential content” for queer; the X stands in place of the empty or floating signifiers that are put to work in queer theory where key terms such as “queer,” “theory,” “heteronormativity” and “politics” are infinitely open to recitation and revisability; typographically, the X also allows for the kind of openness which stands at the four extreme or outer points of the letter X while also signaling the ways in which we might attempt to intertwine and knot queer theory and continental philosophy. X, then, marks the spot where my work intervenes: the conjoining, binding or setting in motion (an open gravitational mobility) of the “inter-lodging” between queer theory and philosophy. (see my essay “X,” O’Rourke 2011b, xiii-xxiv)

My X is marked by the “khora,” by the place, or non-place, called *khora*. As Derrida says in his essay of that name, *khora* “eludes all anthropo-theological schemes, all history, all revelation, all truth.” (Derrida 1995, 124) On the one hand, in the history of philosophy (the academically legitimated history of philosophy for those well versed in Plato) *khora* has a proper place *inside* philosophy. And it is little wonder that *khora* means womb or matrix (and it is hard not to think of Butler’s brilliant reading of Irigaray and the *khora* in *Bodies that Matter* here). But, the *khora* that intrigues me, the one that Derrida plays with, is the one that is an *outsider* to philosophy, to anthropo-theological schemes, to History, to Truth, and so on. This is what I mean, in various places, when I call queer theory a non-sovereign, rogue theory, a theory with no proper place. Jean-Luc Marion talks about “God without Being” and “Love without Being” (Marion 2007) and sometimes I like to call queer theory a *weak force*, a “theory without being” which means it has nothing to do with identity, affirms the fissuring of identitarian discourses (or identity politics). Queer as *khoral* (de)ontology is, as John Caputo puts it in *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (the book which, upon reading it shortly after Derrida’s death in 2004, changed *everything* for me) “neither present nor absent, active nor passive, the Good nor evil, living nor nonliving.” (Caputo 1997, 35-36) What I am arguing here, as elsewhere, is that the term queer is khorically, spectrally indeterminate. As Caputo puts it when he talks about the *khora* as non-receptacle: it is “neither theomorphic nor anthropomorphic - but rather atheological and nonhuman.” (ibid., 36) This is why queer in its very anessentiality, beyond phenomenality and beyond being, is so compatible with speculative realist thinking. It is both non-correlationist and non-anthropocentric. As Caputo also says “*Khora* has no meaning or essence, no identity to fall back upon. She/it receives all without becoming anything, which is why she/it can become the subject of neither a philosopheme nor a mytheme. In short, the *khora* is *tout autre*, very” (ibid.). In short, although I realize I have gone on for a very long time about this, queer is *wholly other*, very. *Queer is without essence, nature, or identity*. Derrida found *khora* simultaneously impossible to speak of and impossible *not* to talk about: “the singularity that interests me is that the impossibility of speaking of it and giving it a proper name, far from reducing it to silence,

dictates an obligation by its very impossibility; it is necessary to speak of it and there is a rule for that." (Derrida 1992, 107) Queer is another name, another good word, a paleonym (I will come back to this word shortly) for this wrenchingly, radically *dis*-placing place, and it is this harbored promise which my own work has tried to make good on.

Before I say a few words about the asymmetry you describe between hegemonic US queer theory and European queer theory and continental philosophy let me anatomize my own "place" in academic queer theory and academic philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

But, as I have already said, I am not entirely at ease when talking about academic philosophy or my place in it. As Avital Ronell writes in *Fighting Theory*: "if philosophy resembles in the first place a love story, then the love in question would have to be a little perverse for me to be comfortable with it." (Ronell 2010, 1) And one other name, a good one I think, for the work I try to do is *pervo-theory*. It is perverse because, as Ronell admits, "what you and I call philosophy is disappearing." (ibid., 2) It is no longer "radiant," "openly positive" or as loving as its etymology might lead one to believe. The same goes for queer theory which is neither as radiant nor as openly positive as it once was. For queer theory (like philosophy) is no longer on the side of life: "it does not guarantee a mobilizing energy, it does not affirm, it does not respond, or it no longer responds, to our vital needs." (ibid.) When I talk about the "mutual blackening" of queer theory and speculative philosophy it might mislead people about the internal velocities of my own thinking. I am, it must be admitted, an incurable affirmationist. And this is why, when I diagnosed "the roguish future of queer studies" some years ago now I talked about the need for queer theory to autoimmunize itself, to give itself over to its own interminable self-criticizability if it was to remain open to the future, to that which will arrive. (see O'Rourke 2006) What irritates me about death-driven queer theory right now resonates with Ronell's own anxieties about philosophy:

Philosophy, if it still exists, is worn out, it's threadbare. Our culture... is marked by deficit, exhaustion, chronic fatigue. Metaphorically, our culture can be said to be directly threatened by one of those autoimmune diseases that we generate ourselves, and this is what interests me: regions, territories, bodies, corpses, discourses that attack and defeat themselves. (Ronell 2010, 2-3)

While automimmunity might be taken as a negative term in Derrida's corpus, I have used it positively to imagine queer theory's future to-come, an auto-co-immunity which makes it possible to *open up* fields, to be roguishly relational. The queer theory without condition, without institutionality (or foundation) I have been mobilizing for works against the "end of queer theory" agument that we have been hearing for some considerable time now. Rather than the end, I prefer to talk of the "afterlives," the (borderline) living on, the *survivance* of queer theory, where the "end" becomes - in topological terms - not a closing off but an opening up, or a being *opened by*, in Negarestanian terms, the outside. If I talked earlier about my work as para-academic, then I would like to designate the place of queer theory itself as a *para-site*.

Perhaps this is a good place to describe my own relation to queer theory. While others have remarked that my perspective on queer thinking is unique because of its “Irish” or “non-US” positioning, I am uncomfortable. Because, this fails to recognize the ways in which my writing and thinking (my *pouvellications* to use a delightful Lacanian pun) has been routinely deligitimized over the last ten years or more by the academy here. My work has been treated like shit and this excrementalization has, perhaps perversely, spurred my interest in that which is out of place, left over, waste, exorbitantly and riskily excessive. I am intrigued by that which chafes against the so-called proper, legitimate objects of inquiry. My partiality, as with my recent writing on Black Metal Theory, has been for philial deviations and cross-breedings and most recently these pathways or back roads have been between speculative philosophies and queer theories (see for example Black Metal Theory 2011). Rather than feeling at home in either queer theory or philosophy I have always felt homeless. And that undomesticatability is where the very promise of queer theory, at least for me, resides. If it becomes institutionalized, then it becomes routinized, all too much at home, when it should be a squatter, or out on the streets, “exuding some rut” and embracing the indecorous as Berlant and Warner once so devilishly put it. (Berlant and Warner 1995, 348) I am a parasite but I would like to think that my writing is not simply destructive, but rather deconstructive in the sense that Derrida gave it, as a work of love in so far as it does justice to that which is rendered useless. For Derrida, love, justice, hospitality are undeconstructables and I have tried to add queer to that list. In any case, my own predilection is for the constant displacement of - theoretical, philosophical, geographical, disciplinary - boundaries.

But, as you say, there have been problems with the traveling of queer theories across geographical borders and boundaries. I was at a conference recently in Vienna where the theme was “import-export-transport” and the participants were invited to consider the ways in which queer theory gets exported from America to Europe and elsewhere. The traffic is almost always considered to be one-way (and to be fair English is the *lingua franca* of queer studies and there is little sense, when you go to conferences like these, that the Americans are actually reading the work that goes on here). In his keynote lecture Jack Halberstam meditated on the three terms of the conference title. Firstly, import: “What,” he asked, “do Europeans do when they bring US queer theory here?” And his answer was that the type of queer theory that gets imported back to Europe (in a strange kind of Lacanian *méconnaissance*) is heavily influenced by Franco-German continental philosophy. The examples he gave were Butler’s Hegel, Lee Edelman’s Lacan and Jasbir Puar’s Deleuze. Halberstam then proffered an entirely different model which “should” be imported and argued that there are totally different discussions going on in the US which apparently are not happening in Europe. And what is getting “lost in translation” is work on race and sexuality or what has been called “queer of color critique.” The examples of this which Jack put forward were all figures who are, of course, being read and cited here: Roderick Ferguson, Chandan Reddy, Martin Manalansan (incidentally, all three are cited in my “The Roguish Future of Queer Studies” article from some years ago...). Secondly, export: Jack asked “what does the US do when it exports?” and clearly the answer is that it has failed to export the model that it ought to in his opinion. Equally though, Jack claims that there has been a concomitant failure to “restore disorder in the US

sex/gender system” which then, in turn, given the cycles of knowledge production, gets exported to Europe. And, finally, transport: Halberstam talked about how bodies (actual bodies, theoretical bodies) travel and how one might stretch the boundaries of the easily readable (easily readable as US) sex/gender system in order to render that system politically illegible.

But, let me finish up answering this question by thinking *after* Halberstam about the ways bodies of knowledge production travel. As many of the contributors to a recent collection *Queer in Europe* (edited by Lisa Downing and Robert Gillett and published in my *Queer Interventions* series) make clear, “queer” is a term that brings problems of translation, transmission, transport and dissemination with it as it travels across borders. (Downing and Gillett 2011) Song Hwee Lim has argued, following Cindy Patton, that “the travel of queer theory, like a stealth bomber” challenges and problematizes any position which would assert a one-way globalizing traffic from the US-outward, rather than trans migratory flows of knowledge and ideas. (Hwee Lim 2009, 257) So, rather than seeing a unidirectional, transcontinental line of flight going from the US to Europe, we could argue for a constant ebb and flow. Indeed, if we go back to the etymological roots of the word queer we can find some possibilities for thinking about crossings, reborderizations, and traversals. In *Tendencies* Sedgwick is very committed to thinking about queer as meaning something different, about thinking otherwise, and about multiple criss-crossings of definitional lines. She wants the *gravitas* (by which she means also the centre of gravity) of the term to “deepen and shift.” She says there: “queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive - recurrent, eddying, *troublant*. The word ‘queer’ itself means *across* - it comes from the indo-European root - *twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*.” (Sedgwick 1993, xii.) So, however untranslatable it may be, queer has been stealthily taking root in various European countries (Poland and Germany for example) perhaps *because of* its very relation to transversality. However, rather than seeing this foreign loan word queer as a McDonalizing American exportation we could argue that the usage of queer in these countries has exciting possibilities, and not only for the development of conceptualizations of sexuality, but for broader philosophical questions too. As queer anchors itself in the transverse “quer,” in crossings, the concepts of queer theory that arise in Europe and elsewhere will emphasize more the sense of crossing boundaries and of cultural cross-fertilizations (but what became apparent at the conference in Vienna was that there are also problems in the way queer travels *within* Europe). Joseph Boone has talked about the *geopolitical* stakes of these multiple crossings. He points out that “new resonances [are] given to the metaphor of going West [which] explicitly overwrite the scenario of conquest with a global vision of frontiers and of imaginative possibility. In this vision, the West becomes a liminal space rather than a final goal or resting place, a borderland traversed on the way to a new dispensation that lies beyond the horizons of the seen or known. Queer theory and queer studies, too, may be conceived as a borderland and a frontier, a space of transition and a still largely unexplored geography.” (Boone 2000, 3)

Now, let me offer a Derridean take on these geopolitical criss/crossings and under-explored geographies. If *khora*, as I have said, has no place, is an outsider (or, as Caputo puts it, has “no place to lay her/its head” (Caputo 1997,

35)), then Derrida offers us a way to think about other headings, other transports for queer theories. Europe, too, has been conceived by Derrida, across a wide range of texts, as a “borderland traversed on the way to a new dispensation that lies beyond the horizons of the seen or known” and in *The Other Heading* he insists that Europe must set sail for a radically other (non-phallogocentric) heading. Ulrika Dahl’s chapter in the *Queer in Europe* volume takes up “geopolitical” and topological issues and she points out that queer theory in Europe is often cast as “an immigrant vested with the power of Anglo-American imperialism” which is “in need of ‘nationalization’ through translation.” (Dahl 2011, 145) This “territorialization of ideas and strategies” has, she recalls, often depended upon an “Americanization of ‘European’ philosophical traditions.” (ibid., 148) To counter this Dahl asserts that “a key part of telling queer stories thus centres on how ‘we are different from ‘them’ and, as I have shown, the imagined ‘we’ in this case are those implicitly linguistically and culturally located in the region and ‘they’ are the Anglo-Americans who simultaneously colonize ‘our’ thinking and ignore what ‘we’ are doing (but for whom ‘we’ should write).” (ibid., 154)

If telling queer stories requires Europeanizing queer, it *does not* mean installing a *Eurocentrism* in place of US homogenization. Michael Naas has explained that “the ‘Europe’ to which Derrida is referring is not simply for Europeans but for anyone in the world, whether in or out of Europe, who hears this call” and this “goes well beyond the commonly defined geographical and political boundaries of what is today called Europe.” (Naas 2008, 84) Naas goes on to say that:

It is this “Europe” that is perhaps also related to a certain “United States” that is, to *our hope*, to a “United States” that will resist the Americanism - the globalization - to which the United States might think it is beholden or destined but that is in the end merely the slogan for a program that will be global in only the worst ways, that will actually concentrate wealth and power in unprecedented ways, that will, in the end, be a betrayal of that other “United States,” of what is best about our American past in relation to the promise of this Europe. We can only hope - though, clearly, for Derrida, hope is something more than just wishful thinking. It is the very draw or *aspiration* of the future.” (ibid., 94)

Europe, for Derrida, here and elsewhere, is a paleonym, an old word with a new meaning grafted on to it. “Europe,” in quotation marks, is an old name which paleonymically remains a good name for the promise of resisting *mondialisation*. Europe is a name which Derrida thinks is still a good one to graft on to a certain hope even if, as with democracy, it is a name which might need to be revised in the future. Queer, if it is epistemologically humble, also contains within it the very name (or names) of a kind of promise or aspiration.

Derrida gives us one way to think about the topo-geo-politics of queer theory across the terraqueous globe. We can also look for some speculative solutions as to how we might cast queer theory adrift, how it might distance itself from stubborn hegemonies (the homogenization of queer as fully present, as an identity) and how it might make good on its promise to invent a new but incalculable future. In *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* Negarestani ungrounds the Heideggerian topology of the earth by developing what he calls the ( ) hole complex.

This model is a way in which to understand the earth not as a solid Whole but rather as a “destituted whole” and a “holey-mess.” As the earth becomes an insurgent, holey-mess, when it is ungrounded, the “polytical” erupts: “for every inconsistency on the surface, there is a subterranean consistency.” (Negarestani 2008, 53) What we could call Queer Theory’s ( ) hole complex would be an ungrounding, desolidifying, and destabilizing of the intact Whole body or corpus of queer thinking. Queer theory then might be reimagined as a leaky ontology or science of absolute openness: “holes prostitute themselves.” (ibid., 59)

In my opinion, one of the most promising sites or places for the re-opening of queer theory has been Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO). In his book *The Democracy of Objects* Levi R. Bryant (whose work has become increasingly vital for me in the last year although I was already familiar with him from the Lacan list-serv many years ago) looks at Lacan’s graphs of sexuation where the flow of arrows could be seen to map the endlessly reversible directionalities of queer theory from Europe to the US and back again. (Bryant 2011d) On the masculine side we see an arrow pointing from the barred subject (\$) to object a (a) and the “logic of metaphysics of presence” generates a situation in which “withdrawal is seen as a loss rather than as a constitutive dimension of being” but on the feminine side of the graph, which is on the side of object-oriented ontologies, there is a very different logic at work, a multiplicity of flows. To condense his argument, Bryant reimagines that barred other in terms of what Timothy Morton has called in various places the *strange stranger* (see in particular Morton 2010 and 2010a), a figure akin to Derrida’s monstrous *arrivant*: “the logic of desire underlying object-oriented ontology would emphasize the excess of all substances over their local manifestations (there’s always more) and *would welcome difference* or those eruptions within stable regimes of local manifestation where the strange stranger surprises and indicates this excess.” (Bryant 2011b) This is one way we might diagram queer theory’s being constitutively open to the world and constitutively open to its unanticipatable future. Because for Bryant, every “entity is a becoming that promises to become otherwise,” then this is why entities are not only strange strangers to other entities but are also strange strangers to *themselves*. Morton has extended his idea of the strange stranger to queer (hyper)objects, developing a theory of withdrawn objects beyond phallic totalization which recognizes the strange strangeness to *everything*. This flattened ontology reminds me of Michel Serres’ spread out handkerchief which he uses to describe the mapping of historical moments and periods. When the handkerchief is crumpled up moments that should be held far apart are suddenly unexpectedly adjacent. Flipping Serres’ metaphor from time to space reminds us that queer is about relation *and* non-relation, proximity *and* the impossibility of proximity. If it is “groundless” and “unruly” as you say, then queer theory is always capable of being redrawn and could be diagrammed as a *cosmopolitical* (I’m further extending your word geopolitical) theory of precisely *everything*. And I mean a “theory of *everything*” insofar as queer theory (in all its uncanny weirdness) could open up to and mesh, in Morton’s terms, with the strangeness of others, the strangeness of objects, *the strangeness of anyone and anything*. But this enmeshment will always be provisional. There will always be excess and remainder while queer theory refuses to stay in *place*.

**S.P.:** Your words provoke me to speculate a bit more on the ideatic topologies of that curvature that the enmeshing of queer theory and post-continental philosophy is. Seeing queer through - or really that it is - *khora*, a place without place, reminds me that Derrida was very keen on declaring that *khora* surpasses the logic of non-contradiction. Now, this has obviously been largely overlooked in the history of philosophy precisely as *history* and in a very deep sense queer theory and feminism did a terrifically deep excavation of the placeless: *khora* (and later on a khoral queer, or an ankhorite queer, as Caputo would put it) was revealed by Derrida and Irigaray largely as the womb welcoming contradiction, the one that gets excluded so that an *ur*-grund exclusion is made possible in order for non-contradiction to distribute spatio-temporally its tentacles over the history of ideas. The excluded was of course not the woman herself, but the very position of the other and, ontologically speaking, difference. The whole history of gay-lesbian studies so far, and to some degree of queer theory is, hence, somewhat reactive (rather than affirmative) in as much as it seeks to *date* with precision the existentials of its being-as-survival, and this almost always goes under the ghost of the exclusion. Following your own thinking, we can say that LGBT and queer studies have largely developed a tempophilia as against a predominant topophobia in order to, perhaps, ameliorate its own existence within - and here academism walks in - a simultaneity along the genealogical coordinates of the epistemological whirls from which the queer subject was excluded.

Does not this fundamental exclusion explain the *sans* you talk about? And could the *sans*, which is in fact a preposition epistemologically almost akin to the Other, be excluded even if the difference as the placeless place gets suspended? And a final question here: what is the meaning of the queer (self)ungrounding from your post-continental perspective - don't you find that even para-academism is reducible to a hidden *reproachment* of an exclusion we as queer hybrid writers would like *to forget in order to survive*? That is, is not it that from a non-correlationist view the leaky-roguish ontology of queer is its "hypothesis of repression," and is not the Derridian tinge of survival you interject complicit with a new history of forgetting and bracketing exclusion, which also partly explains the "anti-social turn?"

**M. O'R.:** I'm immediately struck by your choice of the word "curvature" to describe the topogeometries of the mutual enmeshment, or radically provisional being-with, of queer theory and post-continental philosophy. If we recall, Lee Edelman, whose name has become synecdochal with the "anti-social turn," declared in an essay in the mid 1990s (about ten years before the appearance of *No Future*) that queer "curved endlessly toward the realization that its realization remains impossible." (Edelman 1995, 346) This rather generous understanding of queer as asymptotic, aporetic, incalculable and a site of permanent (un)becoming seems quite far from the position staked out in *No Future* where Edelman is precisely *against* futurity, politics and relationality (this is why the anti-social turn also gets called the anti-relational turn; see Edelman 2004).<sup>3</sup>

In a very interesting recent essay called “Busy Dying,” the afterword to a collection called *Sex, Gender and Time in Fiction and Culture* (in which I have a little piece called “History’s Tears,” a title you can take either way), Valerie Rohy says that my argument for the “stubborn vitality” of queer theory in the face of its “death” and for its status as revenant, ghost, spectre, hauntological discourse, are “relics” of a past marked by a “radically anticipatory attitude” which actually “preceded” the “claims of queer theory’s decline.” (Rohy 2011) Rohy says this because my assertions about queer theory’s messianicity depend, in a 2005 article written on the fate of queer theory after (and without) Derrida, upon three quotations from David Halperin, Judith Butler and Lee Edelman (the Edelman quotation is mentioned above) which are dated between 1993 and 1997. (see O’Rourke 2005) I bring this up because I really do think her characterization of my work is a valid one since I have and continue to operate within this mode of radical anticipation. And I would go further and say that, for me, queerness is “inextinguishable.” (Sedgwick 1993, xii) It was Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick who made this brave claim for queer theory - during this moment of palpable utopianism which I remain cautiously nostalgic for - and I would argue now that the revenant effects I have been talking about must be understood in terms of what we might call *metaperformative temporalities*. I am riffing on, and simultaneously revising for my own ends, a classically Sedgwickian phrase in order to register how queerness is a radically anticipatory mode of letting come, of welcome, of hospitality, of openness.

But, I must admit that I have struggled a bit with the question of how to diagram or draw (as well as leaving open the possibility for rediagramming and redrawing in a visual or topological equivalent to Butler’s performativity, recitation and revisability) this *metaperformative* (and “metapolitical”) queer theory. When I spoke - via Skype - to a meeting of the Speculative Aesthetics Working Group at Duke University in March this year I began to sketch what my “queer diagrammatology” might look like and I gave the tentative examples of Negarestani’s ( ) hole complex and Levi R. Bryant’s utilization of Lacan’s graphs of sexuation for his flattened onticology. Afterwards, one of the participants asked me what a queer ontology might actually look like. And I left that question suspended. This subsequently reminded me that in *The Politics of Friendship* Derrida opens a parenthesis and remarks: “let’s leave this question suspended.” (Derrida 1997, 38) But, no matter how hard you look for it (and this does happen frequently in reading Derrida) he never ever closes that parenthesis. So, what Derrida leaves us with, what he leaves us hanging on, is an opened parenthetical mark with no closing one to match up with it. And that (“ reminds me now not so much of Reza’s ( ) hole complex which after all does have opening and closing parenthetical curves at the eastern and western ends. Rather, it reminded me of your use of the word “curvature” and of Edelman’s *unstatement* of what queer is, of what it desires. And if we think of this unclosed parenthesis in the broader terms of the so-called “deaths” or “ends” of queer theory and of my arguments for the *revenance* and *survivance* of queer theory, then the refusal to bracket things off, or to allow death to halt the asymptotic curvature of queer’s unrealizability, leaves us with an opening, a “(” whose “ending” could only ever be an unrestricted opening, an incalculable hospitality to the other, to the future, to that which comes. This is the only erotico-politics of the queer I can place my trust or my faith in because it deconstructs the oppositionalities between activity and passivity. Elsewhere, I have talked about how queer theory needs itself to be

queered if it is to survive and I have deployed the tropological figure of anal fisting to describe this gesture of lubricious opening. (O'Rourke 2007) When the hand and the *reactive* sphincter meet we can think about the conjunction between the perversely fluid and the institutionally static. If for Negarestani the Heideggerian topology of the Earth must give way to the leaky ontology of the ( ) hole complex then this neatly describes the way in which queer theory (without becoming a methodology) must re-fluidify, must open itself up, or be opened up. This encounter doesn't strike me as being simply reactive. Rather it is an affirmative opening up where queer theory is simultaneously entranced and entranced, becoming the space of wonder and surprise (in the sense of taking excessive hold over one) it really ought to be. The hand and sphincter are, in this encounter, capable of being drawn as two open parentheses "( ( " in a theoretico-erotic-political embrace which disrupts the logic of front/back, active/passive, and allows for the affirmative communication with the other precisely as other.

But, to get back to your question, the "*ur-grund*" exclusion that you talk about reminds me not of Derrida and Irigaray (although they are both very much in my thoughts when you are talking about the *khora* and difference and when I am thinking about the hand and the rectum) but of a less-recognized theorist of matrixiality who has been even excluded from much *academic* feminism and queer theory and certainly not taken up by the speculative realists: the artist, psychoanalyst and writer Bracha Ettinger. But before I say why I think Bracha's theoretical lexicon is remarkably useful for the questions you raise about the history of philosophy (or, in your rendering, the phallogocentric *history* of philosophy; in a brilliant formulation Levi R. Bryant calls this "phallosophy" and his feminist and queer ontology precisely works against the phallosophical enterprise), let me dwell a little on a phrase from very early in Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. I think it is even from the very first sentence and the phrase is "theoretical matrix." (Derrida 1974, lxxxix) The phrase, at the very opening, prefacing the work, seems crucial to me, because it sits well with the reasons why I see the queer through or as *khora*. On the one hand, readers of *Of Grammatology* (and of my queer diagrammatology) will expect him (and me) to draw or at least put forward a theoretical matrix. On the other hand, if Derrida (and me) are drawing or tracing a theoretical matrix, then we must acknowledge that such a matrix is *always already* in place, fully formed in the womb, as it were, of theoretical paradigms. And this is to say that queer maps time and that which is yet to-come. This is why I have referred to the messianic time of the queer as hauntological. It both comes from the past and from the future, so that our work with it, here and now, today, is always politically urgent and imminent (but at the same time promissory structured). As Derrida says in *Of Grammatology*, and this should bring to mind the matrix as inside and outside (like the Derridean outwork of *Dissemination*), as both forming and already formed: "reading should free itself, at least in its axis, from the classical categories of history... and perhaps above all, from the categories of the history of philosophy" (ibid.). Elsewhere, I have taken this to be indicative of a striking similarity between Jean-Luc Nancy's "finite history" and a de-essentialized or *khoral* queerness: "Finite history is the happening of the time of existence, or of existence as time, spacing time, spacing the presence and the present of time. It does not have its essence in itself, nor anywhere else (for there is no 'anywhere else'). It is then 'essentially' exposed, *infinitely exposed to its own finite happening as such.*" (Nancy 1993, 157) Queerness is *différential*, homographetic.

Now, for Bracha Ettinger matrixial bordertime is both a haunting from the past and from the future. Several of her concepts could prove useful for the discussion of “place” we have been having here. But, her idea of “jointness-in-differentiation” presses itself most acutely on me here since we are taking about short-lived and impersonal intimacies, *khora*, time, space, historicity, and queer theory as radically partial being-with. Contrary to the anti-relational turn Ettinger maintains that our subjectivity is in fact everywhere constituted by relationality, or what she calls “encounter-events.” In the space she calls the matrixial, a borderspace, “threads composed of shareable traces of joint encounter-events become transformational in and by new fragile proximity and reattunement in vulnerability.” (Ettinger 2007, 104) These are encounters with what Morton calls “strange strangers” and Tim Dean calls “unlimited intimacies” (Dean 2010) for in this matrixial space that Ettinger maps out each of us is marked by traces of encounter-events with others. For Ettinger “the non-I that is yet to come requires the living of the I” and “an *originary jointness-in-differentiating and besidedness*, rather than disappearance and death, becomes the kernel of the *feminine-maternal*.” (Ettinger 2007, 102) This jointness-in-separation and side-by-sideness, these syncopated relations and non-relations of proximity and non-proximity, make space for what Ettinger calls “co-response-ability”: “all those presubjective and sub-subjective supports are interconnected and cross-informing the I and the non-I, and revealed in and by extreme fragilization within new matrixial webs where co-response-ability, wit(h)nessing and com-passionate hospitality in jointness are re-created.” (ibid., 119) So, what Ettinger’s work tries to do, in response to your question, is re-make space for that which has been excluded (the queer, the feminine) but without “reproachment” or “forgetting.” And her post-Lacanian (or better *para*-Lacanian) formulations of matrixial borderspaces and matrixial bordertimes where Levinasian threads of connectivity can be made with others seems precisely calculated, I think, to avoid the topophobia we have been talking about.

A final word about the logic of the *sans*, of the x without x which follows, for Caputo, a “very strange syntax.” (Caputo 1997, 100) If the “anti-social turn” places the queer outside of politics and says “fuck you” to the future then this follows a certain apocalyptic logic. My understanding of the Blanchotian “x without x” takes its cues from Caputo where this weird syntax of the *sans* “is not a simple negation, nullification or destruction, but a certain reinscription of X, a certain reversal of the movement of X that still communicates with it.” (ibid.) That the reversal allows for the continued “communication with X” is pivotal and it explains the difference between the Edelman of asymptotic curving and the Edelman of *sinthomosexual* negativity. It is telling then that his own phrase, just prior to the line about endless curvature, is that queerness is “utopic in its negativity.” Caputo can best explain the divergent logics at work here: “hence the apocalypse without apocalypse, in the most precise cata-strophic sense of *sans*, is one in which a certain apocalyptic tone is struck up even as a certain tone is struck out, an apocalyptic tone *without* being caught up in the cataclysmic tones of the determinable apocalyptic revelations” (ibid.) The anti-social turn is a strong theory, an instance of what Sedgwick calls paranoid reading (Sedgwick 1997, 1-37). My queer theory as a metaperformative weak force (which comes partly from Gianni Vattimo’s *pensiero debole* as you notice in your next question, but more from Derrida and Caputo) is, however, an exercise in what Sedgwick terms reparative reading.

The difference between the anti-social turn in all its apocalyptic negativity (strong theory) and my “x without x” structuration (weak theory) is that my queerness is not one of abandonment (a striking out of the future and of politics) but one of *abandon*, of willingly, and affirmatively, gifting oneself to the other, to the future, to that which will come.

**S. P.:** Given that you say that “[i]f queer theory can ever disintricate itself from lesbian and gay studies and a focus on a problematic identitarianism it will become a place where vibrant, exciting and world-making (that is to say politically significant) thinking can happen,” (O’Rourke 2009) this seems to imply that queer as a *feld* in the socius should be reframed as a more articulate political space resisting the lure of its placing while becoming more firmly a place and distributing itself socially, through “hope.” What is at stake in your opinion when a potentially institutionalizable field moves towards the subject of spatiality but neither receives its place nor desires to?<sup>4</sup> Does that make queer a more *pure* and sincere form of (meta-)politics - on the streets, off the curb, in the nether of society while fighting to be exactly affirmatively social? Becoming a weaker force (an idea you mention which is already developed in a similar sense by Vattimo) and at the same time preparing itself to be even weaker than the primordial trans-historical jettisoning - is this the case? And if so, does that mean that the weaker the formalized social positioning of queer, the stronger its potentiality of becoming a place (lest not forget that it is precisely the potential of becoming that got subtracted from Platonic metaphysics onwards)?<sup>5</sup>

The political praxis of such a self-placing in the placeless seems quite problematic: In the context of the last more than 10 years of neoliberalizing education, even informal one gets more technocratized, and the social unrest in the Anglo-Saxon world against educational and social welfare reforms suggest that such a queer positioning is really counter-intuitive, even more so seen from the Eastern-European perspective where populations are largely reduced to a perverted game of consumerism-in-poverty and live their lives in the imaginary of a “happiness to-come” that is always postponed (and this is not a mere performative). As if we are preparing for a world worse than ever: as if we are readying to go underground and study not merely the social perversities, but devote ourselves to and embrace our own.

**M. O’R.:** You are right that I have said that queer theory needs to disintricate itself from gay and lesbian studies. And I would forcefully reiterate that point here. It has not made me very popular among queer theorists or those working in critical sexuality studies (needless to say it has made me very unpopular with those who work in lesbian and gay studies itself). But let me be clear, at the risk of further upsetting those people who I have already rubbed up the wrong way: Lesbian and Gay Studies is its own field, with its own history, and its own set of agendas (and it can get on with its own work without taking on the name of queer theory). None of those agendas seem to me to be widely applicable or capable of bringing about a world where vibrant, exciting, world-making, and politically important things can happen. If anything, lesbian and gay studies (in the academy) and lesbian and gay

activism (on the streets) has been acting in the service of neoliberal, capitalist realist (to use Mark Fisher’s term) and normativizing regimes. And, to go further, the inexorable desire to be “normal” (whatever that means) and the agendas for gay marriage and gays in the military, have already staked out what the differences are between the politically vacuous lesbian and gay studies and the politically radiant queer studies I am arguing for. Queer has, after all, from the outset, been all about chafing against all regimes of normativity and normalization. It is no wonder then that critics such as Lisa Duggan and Michael Warner have talked about “homonormativity” which is every bit as pernicious as heteronormativity. To put it succinctly, my hopeful queer theory is one which argues for the radical potential of *non-sexual* and *non-identitarian* aspects of queer thinking (which is not to absent entirely questions of gender and sexuality but simply to *de-center* them or recognize that they are but a part of a wider constellation of interests). So, within what gets called “queer politics” itself I worry about an increasingly normative swerve toward identity politics, and a narrow focus on state-sanctioned gay and lesbian marriage. Within academic work receiving the general label of “queer theory”, there is an anxiety-inducing trend to make sexuality the only proper object (in Judith Butler’s terms) of study, since such work quite often reduces understandings of sexuality to fixed identities or orientations. The institutionalization, domestication and one might even say banalization of queer theory has taken many forms both within and outside the academy, but most obvious have been preoccupations with same/sex marriage, the emergence of neoconservative agendas, and the return to an essentialist identitarianism, to a solidifiable subject. In the end, I have some serious concerns that the mainstreaming of the term queer, and the tendency to use it as a catch-all general term for the stringing together of identity categories (L, G, B, T, I, A...) may serve to make queer studies nothing more than a substitute for gay and lesbian studies. *Homos*, a “strong” early critique by Leo Bersani of queer theory, worried (but not as fervently as people believed) about the ways in which queer de-specified the properness of gay sexuality (however, *homoness* was something I always felt did not attach to the identitarian; it was a positionality anyone could take up) which leads me to wonder, some fifteen years later, about the ways in which queer theory now *de-specifies queerness*. (Bersani 1995)

I want to address your question now about the social field. In a brilliant recent article by Tomasz Sikora “To Come: Queer Desire and Social Flesh” we see this promise and danger explicitly played out. (Sikora 2011)<sup>6</sup> Sikora argues that traditional LGBT identities and politics should be understood in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari call “molarities.” They are also, he contends on the side of death, negativity, Oedipalization and institutionality. To counter this molar politics he mobilizes an understanding of queerness as molecularity, virtuality, as that which is horizontal and does not yet exist. In a sense, then, this piece is arguing for a deterritorialization of queerness which would allow it to flee or escape the molar and Oedipal structuration of both the social and the death drive (especially as that has come to grip queer politics in the wake of the so-called “anti-social” thesis). To counter the LGBT investment in the subject and the “will to institutionalization” (this term comes from Roderick Ferguson’s queer of color critique which Halberstam suggested had not translated into Euro-contexts) this dangerously contains, Sikora suggests we think of queerness in terms of the non- as opposed to the anti- social and the non-personal as opposed

to the person who dominates the current social and political terrain. An example of this multiplication he proffers is the ever-expanding acronym LGBTQIA. The shift from the person to the non-person carves open a space for an “ethics of communal sharing” and a “deprivatization of social tissue” (taken up from Guy Hocquenghem’s heavily Deleuzo-Guattarian influenced book *Homosexual Desire*). It is here that the “social flesh” of the title is introduced as he borrows Hardt and Negri’s idea of queer flesh from their *Multitude* to conceptualize a socio-politics which lies outwith social organization, institutionalization and Oedipalization. This is in many respects an admirable and persuasive essay and shares my sense that queerness is indeed something which “does not quite exist yet” and is horizontal, promissory. It does not have a delimitable political or social constituency for to suggest it does would be to molarize it and dull its political capacity to actualize its ownmost virtual capacities. I am also in complete agreement with Sikora that the recent turn in queer thinking to the death drive and anti-sociality is a dangerous one since they are potentially in service of a molar organization of the socio-political field. However, I am not convinced by the argument about the LGBT acronym as a proliferative contamination because each time a new term is added surely it does gain “ontological status.” If queer subjects “do not yet exist,” then how can this letter game help found a politics which evades institutionalization and molarization?

So, in my own work, I have turned to Jacques Rancière to look for a queerness which is yet to-come and a queer politics which is undelimitable. When I first encountered Rancière’s work some years ago I was instantly struck by the potential for staging an encounter with queer thinking. I had the expertise in queer theory but not in political theory so I wrote to Samuel Chambers who had written on both queer theory and on Rancière. He sent me several texts and I devoured almost everything of Rancière’s that was then available in English (the pace of translation of his work has now accelerated so much that it is nearly impossible to keep up) in a matter of weeks. While Sam and I both noticed that numerous queer theorists had cited Rancière we were surprised that none had taken up his ideas explicitly to develop a queer politics which would not place the sexual at the center of their inquiries. Incidentally, while Rancière has been supportive and encouraging (especially when we edited a special issue of *borderlands e-journal* on his work and queer theory (Chambers and O’Rourke 2009)) he has actively disdained the work of queer theory (and the take up of Foucault by the likes of Halperin and Hardt and Negri) for the ways that they have placed the sexual at the very heart of their thinking and their politics (and he does not see that as being the kernel of his own politics). What surprised me then, and still does, is that Rancière is a name rarely, if ever, invoked by queer theorists and this seems somewhat odd given Queer Theory’s genealogical roots in what is called (at least outside of Rancière’s France) French Theory, in queer activist and anarchic politics, and in a post-Althusserian landscape dominated by sophisticated challenges to identitarian regimes and normative police logics and apparatuses, which have largely gone under the name of heteronormativity or more properly, given their dispersive nature, heteronormativities. While as Todd May has recently claimed, Rancière is hardly a “household name” in the Anglo-American academy (May 2007, 20-36), Queer Theory has recently become more and more “at home” in the academy as the homonormative swerve I mentioned a moment ago has taken hold. The inherent danger in these

conservatizing and institutionalizing impulses within the field is that Queer Theory will become nothing more than a synonym for Lesbian and Gay Studies and Rancièrian political theory is, I think, one of the best terrains upon which to begin to try and agitate, shake up or revolutionize Queer Theory and its all-too-apparent complacencies.

The logic of the tort, of the wrong, has been at the core of Rancièrè’s politics from the very beginning (since *The Lesson of Althusser* which has just been translated into English, cf. Rancièrè 2011) and it seems apposite that the etymological roots of queer share this emphasis on torsion and that both are committed to anatomizing political subjectivation and possibilities for the emancipation of the subject. Both Rancièrè’s logic of the tort, of the wrongness and wrungness of the political order, and queerness have their roots in the latin verb *torquere* meaning twisted, distorted, the wrong way. Both are given over to the miscounted, the poor, the ones who have no part within the social hierarchy, coming from a space carved out between the police order and politics as it is currently conceived (and which does not equal radical democracy). This space, the “place” of Rancièrè’s politics, and of queer’s precarious politics, is one in which the abject subject can speak, and in which radical democracy, the emancipated subject can emerge (given that you mention education it is important to note that this emancipated subject is to be found in the perverse pedagogy of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, see Rancièrè 1991). In the partition or distribution of the sensible queers and other minoritarian subjects do not count, are mute, have no share. But, in Rancièrè’s political philosophy the paradoxical or paratactical subject, a subject falling *between* identities, is precisely from their non- or de-ontological (queer) position able to redress the wrong of so-called democratic politics. In Rancièrè’s post-politics of re-distribution of the sensible the political subject, the individual who has not been validated by the dominant order (women, queers, immigrant workers for example) polemically irrupts and has his or her speech validated. The impossible, de-substantialized subject attains their place in a regime where they have been invisible, silent, and unknowable. These queer subjects have a certain fidelity to what Rancièrè calls disagreement (Rancièrè 1999), conflicted speech situations in which certain subjects are seen and heard while others are not. Out of this conflict and incommensurability new forms of political community, new regimes of visibility and sayability, and new regimes of politics and aesthetics, surface. This radically democratic politics facilitates the eruption of valid political subjects, able to take up their share in the distribution of the sensible, however impossible their identity and speech may be, and these political subjects are created within a situation of tort, an ontological torsion, twisting, or wringing.

Andrew Parker, a queer Marxist critic who translated Rancièrè’s *The Philosopher and His Poor*, makes a similar point to my own about the homonormative turn in lesbian and gay studies and the route out of that “wrong” turn that Rancièrè affords us. Parker notes that, in *On the Shores of Politics*, Rancièrè denounces “commercial competition, sexual permissiveness, world music and cheap charter flights to the Antipodes” as reflecting “the banal themes of the pluralist society” that “naturally create individuals smitten with equality and tolerant of difference.” But, Parker asserts,

given such antipathy, it is rather ironic that one of the best approximations of what Rancière defines as “properly” political is the emergent Anglo-American model of queer politics: anti-identitarian, anti-statist, anti-normative in its emphatic swerving from the rhetoric of gay and lesbian civil rights. If “we’re here, we’re queer, get used to it” is something other than a claim on behalf of an identity, queer theorists might look indeed to Rancière’s work for its ways of posing rigorously the relation between voice and body and the impossible speech acts which bind and divide them. (Parker 2007, 75)

The most obvious place we might look for such a crossing over is in the work of Judith Butler which has consistently shared Rancière’s attention to the miscount, to equality, recognition, and to a radically democratic politics. Butler has, like Rancière, been vigilantly attentive to those whose lives (and voices, bodies) don’t count as liveable (women, queers, the transgendered, Jews, the intersexed, among others) and to fashioning a politics based not on ontologized subjects, but on those abjects lying outside (but as constitutively outside) the moral and social order. A serious engagement between Rancière and Queer Theory promises to open up new regimes of thought and the unthought and Levi R. Bryant has recently been arguing for such a “strange politics” in Rancièrian terms (which would also mine the promise of Rancièrian politics for Object-Oriented Ontology):

I argue that it follows that all politics is *queer* politics. Here I return to the original etymology of the term “queer,” extending its signification beyond the domain of the politics of sexual orientation and gender. Queer refers to the strange, the odd, that which twists, and is out of place. Insofar as politics *only* occurs in those sites where *parts* contest their status of elements, revealing the volcanic anarchy beneath every system of counting, disclosing the *contingency* of every object or system’s way of counting or producing elements, it follows that all politics is essentially queer. If queer theory initially stumbled upon questions of sexual orientation, gender, etc., then this is because these are mechanisms by which larger-scale objects govern parts and constitute elements for themselves (thereby erasing the bubbling chaos upon which they stand). It matters little whether the politics is what we ordinarily refer to as “queer politics,” whether it is Marxist insurrections of the proletariat as universal motor of history, whether it be women, people of color, or whether it be genuine eco-activists asserting the truth of spotted owls, in all cases the political moment is the moment where the queer or odd as in-apparent appears and challenges systems of constituting elements, governance, and the erasure of parts. (Bryant 2011c)

What Bryant is arguing here is that queer extends far beyond gendered and sexual politics (and the politics of identity) to include all those who have been miscounted. This redistribution of the sensible is one in which, for Bryant, queer becomes a far better name for radical democratic leftist politics than the “proletariat” because it includes rather than occludes other sites of struggle to do with class, religion, animality, ecology, and so on. So, on this account, queer politics occupies not just the site of gender and sexuality but numerous other sites of political struggle and “praxis.” Of course there is a danger, and we must take this chance, that queer theory and queer politics will fall back into place and that police orders and regimes of counting can reassert themselves. As Derrida warned in *Of Grammatology*, the future can only be anticipated in the form of an “absolute danger.” (Derrida 1974, 5) And this means that we must be prepared for whatever arrives, even if (for readers of Virilio particularly) that happens to

be the worst. But what Rancière teaches us is that the police orders which keep the “part of no part” in their place are contingent ones and the “people to-come,” if they do “embrace their own perversity,” can instantiate a “politics of literarity.” (Rancière 1994) By the politics of literarity, Rancière means that bodies (whether human, animal, objects, disciplines) which refuse to stay in their place have the “aesthetic capacity” (Rancière 2009, 8-15) to imagine new forms of life, to open up an interval (and politics for Rancière, as for Badiou, is always intermittent, rare) for promiscuous, incommensurable, excessive communications between *anyone and anything*.

**S. P.:** The insistence on democracy in your work provides a clear parallel between democratic openness and queer theory where queer is delinked from sexuality (as if anticipating a refutation of Irigaray’s “age of sexual difference”) and where democracy is more ontologically subverted by its repressed and de-intellectualized agents (thus whispering about a revolution of the “objects”). This is decidedly not the consensualist, UN, inter-governmental breed of democracy, but one that you call “voyoocracy or rogueocracy” which is “an anti-neoliberalist Resistance.” Significantly, your agalma of (Derridean) democracy as/and queer has the silhouette of a certain proletarianism. What significant difference do you foresee in the political strategies of the queer democratic, roguish proletarian? And in particular, what is the role of violence in a queer(ed) state of democracy, and precisely what sort of violence - not merely against the master signifier - you think can be legitimated from the perspective of the gradually queered, less and less homophobic Multitude?

**M. O’R.:** I do, as you quite rightly point out, draw certain parallels between queer theory and radical democracy (as the term is used by Derrida, Laclau and Mouffe, and Butler), so much so that, where Derrida used the phrase democracy to-come, I have often substituted the syntagm “queer to-come” (I have also talked about the universality to-come in Butler’s work, especially the dialogues with Žižek and Laclau). As Hélène Cixous says in an essay on Derrida and the time of the political, with the playful title “Jacques Derrida: Co-Responding Voix You:” “if one had to say ‘two words,’ as he would say, on the subject of the Politics of Deconstruction, of Deconstruction as Politics, it would of course be *à venir*, to come. This *à venir* to which he will have joined, in an unforgettable way, the word, the idea, the dream of democracy. From now on it will ne longer be possible to think Democracy otherwise than through this phrase: Democracy *to come*. And not democracy *coming*.” (Cixous 2009, 43) One could spend a long time with this essay, and I have given over most of the summer to reading Cixous’ and Derrida’s texts written for or about one another (I have called them love letters). But let me just pull out a few notable threads from the essay (while urging others, as Derrida so often did, to read every letter of Cixous’ fine text). The first thing to note would be that Derrida’s politics of deconstruction (which I consider to be the pervert twin of queer theory; there is no queer theory without deconstruction) allows for what you call the “revolution of objects” if we take objects in its most capacious (post-correlationist, non-anthropomorphic) sense. The second, and related point, would be that Derridean politics does not disavow sexual difference. In fact, as Cixous points out: “from the beginning, the deconstruction of the *properly human*, and thus of its empire, its rights, is in place. Jacques Derrida has always resisted the opposition

between the human and the animal, just as he does the opposition and thus the hierarchization between man and woman; this is the absolutely permanent, archioriginal trait of his political trajectory.” (ibid.)

I had forgotten, until you reminded me, that I have called queer theory in its more anti-neoliberalist strains a “vyoucracy.” Cixous puns on the word *voyou* which she insists on using rather than *rogue*. “I call him Voyou—but not just in French. Voyou as in Voix you, or Voie you or Vois you, Voyou, *as term with more than one tongue.*” (ibid., 47) The politically vyoucratic queer studies I have been talking about is keyed towards freeing the voices of those whose positions have been attributed and delimited. It is only by responding to the voice of the other that a radical hospitality can be arrived at. And “responsibility” as Cixous reminds us, “in its secret splendour, consists in going further than one’s own power.” (ibid., 43) This is the autoimmunitary and “this is to be lived, with difficulty, as he lived it, in the daily renewal of effort, fatigue, in a courageous insistence at the heart and core of discouragement.” (ibid.) Derrida spoke of the secret link between literature and democracy in ways which, for me, describe the amalgamation of queer theory and democracy you discern at the heart of my own engagements (just substitute queer theory where Derrida writes literature):

I am the inheritor, the depository of a very grave secret to which I do not have access ... This theme has also interested me from a political point of view. When a state does not respect the right to the secret, it becomes threatening: police violence, inquisition, totalitarianism. I take the right to the secret to be an ethical and political right. Now, literature opens this privileged place where one can say everything and avow everything without the secret having been betrayed... Literature has this political right to say everything... This right - to say everything without avowing anything - weaves a link between literature and democracy. (Cixous and Derrida 2008, 177)

This is why democracy and queerness remain *to come* and always beyond what is realizable. This is queer theory’s political “openness” as you describe it: “when something is foreseen, on the horizon, it is already over. Therefore it does not happen. This is also a political reflection: only what the available schemas fail to foresee happens.” (ibid., 175) The event, as Badiou says, is always linked to the undecidable.

I have argued that queer needs to be de-linked from sexuality (as *the only proper object*) but I would be a little wary of saying that this anticipates “a refutation of Irigaray’s ‘age of sexual difference.’” Because the queer studies we inherit in Derrida’s voice is one marked by a polyvocality which, as Cixous says, puts all the received ideas about sexual difference in question, but at the same time puts in question what is “monological in traditional philosophic discourse.” (Cixous 2009, 50) This seems to me to be at the heart of Irigaray’s work right from the early writings on the ethics of sexual difference up to the recent works on democracy between two, sharing the world with others, and *sexuate* difference. Instead of being defined, as in “monological” philo- or phallo-sophical discourse, in relation to the male, *sexuate* difference involves the cultivation of a co-responsibility and co-responsiveness between *sexuate* subjects (whether they are male or female). If *The Ethics of Sexual Difference* announced that sexual

difference was “one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age” (Irigaray 1993, 5) then *I Love to You* declares that sexuate difference is the major, if not the issue, of our contemporary moment: “to positively construct alterity between the sexes is a task for our time.” (Irigaray 1996, 62) And this new erotic-political ontology is to be discovered in Cixous, Derrida, Irigaray, and even Badiou on love, where the emphasis is on an ethical responsiveness to the other *as other*.

I had also forgotten that in the essay you refer to on the voyoucratic future of queer studies I made a plea for an ethically violent queer theory to-come. It can be quite violent to be confronted with your own words and not quite recognize them as your own. Here is what I said then:

If it seems that I go on to privilege a queer theory which is necessarily violent then it is because I believe this violence is ethically imperative if queer studies is to make any intervention into other disciplines or languages. Queer Theory is, I suggest, a lever in such alter-disciplinary and transversal moves... So, this is a call, a plea, if you will, for an ethically violent queer studies to-come. David Wills might call this a dorsal politics, a non-conciliatory dissidence, a turning away in order to challenge identitarian regimes and perspectives. A politics of dorsality (which seems a particularly apt formation for queer theory and politics) always turns violently away (or behind) in order to turn into the political. (O’Rourke 2006, 25)

I would probably still make most of these claims now. It is, after all, necessary to do violence to the other if co-responsibility, the ethical relationship, is to happen at all. Derrida himself says that violence is a contradictory concept, one which, in the logic of the autoimmunitary, is always shadowed by non-violence. So, there is a certain uncircumscribability to violence. It haunts the ethical relation, politics and even philosophy itself (I can’t help thinking of Žižek’s joke that the ultimate act of philosophical friendship would be stab Badiou in the back!). It is little wonder then that Deleuze and Derrida both frame *philosophy as politics* in terms of hostility, war, violence. Even the work of deconstruction, as we have seen, can be viewed as violent in its operations (Derrida dreamed of becoming a resistance fighter who would blow up train tracks. He also dreamed of becoming a footballer and I have always been more seduced by this image of deconstruction with its twists and turns and wrong-footings).

Similarly, paranoid reading practices, the violent hermeneutics of suspicion, always “silhouette” (to borrow your word) the more benign “reparative” modes of reading. We can never quite escape violence whether it be linguistic or physical. Even the language of queer theory as *weak* event is potentially violent in its registers. The event after all is often described as a rupture or a tearing. I talked earlier about the queer as surprise and David Mamet in *Oleanna* warned that a surprise can always be seen as a “form of aggression.” Derrida himself talked about the “irruptivity of the event” (Cixous and Derrida 2008, 176) which walks the fine tangential line between the possible and the impossible. I wonder then, if we might say that the event which is *foreseeable* depends upon a kind of mastering, an overpowering, if you like, of the event’s capacity to erupt or irrupt. But the queer event as *unforeseeable* is what I earlier called a metaperformative, a letting come which is, in Derrida’s words, *perverformative*. It perverts the

violent logics of being, time (putting it quite out of joint) and space. But, of course, as we have seen, even in the ethical relationship to the other, there will always be violence.

Derrida devoted a whole seminar series (as yet unpublished) to the performative utterance “I Love You” and the ways in which in declarations of love both the self and the other are “shattered” (this is Jean-Luc Nancy’s word). Žižek says there is always a violent aspect to this kind of love speech: “Say I am passionately attached, in love, or whatever, to another human being and I declare my love, my passion for him or her. There is always something shocking, violent in it. This may sound like a joke, but it isn’t - you cannot do the game of erotic seduction in politically correct terms. There is a moment of violence, when you say: ‘I love you, I want you.’ In no way can you bypass this violent aspect.” (Žižek, Reul and Deichman 2001) In his sideways look at violence in his short book with that title Žižek discusses three different types of violence: subjective violence is “enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds”; objective violence is “the ‘symbolic’ violence embodied in language and its forms;” and systemic violence is the “often catastrophic consequences of the functioning of our economic and political systems.” (Žižek 2008) But the twist in the tail of the book is that *extreme violence*, a redemptive divine violence, is what will get us out of our current political situation: “If one means by violence a radical upheaval of the basic social relations, then, crazy and tasteless as it may sound, the problem with historical monsters who slaughtered millions was that they were not violent enough.” (ibid., 183) Sometimes, he says, those who lack a proper place, the “proletariat” for example, within a social structure may bring about violence in order to disrupt the poise of the system and the social relations it demands. But Žižek himself is just as ambivalent (he never fully endorses it but nor does he completely condemn it—recall that elsewhere he advocates smashing the neighbor’s face or pissing on the other as the ultimate acts of love) when it comes to this violence in the face of the increasingly controlled society we live in. His hero is Melville’s Bartleby who would “prefer not to” and in the end what Žižek advocates is that sitting and waiting, having the courage to do nothing, might well be the most violent thing to do. But, in the end, I can’t see this as being a useful strategy for queer studies because it would be to misunderstand the idea of the to-come as merely endless, passive waiting.

Just another few words about violence and why I continually worry about it. A good friend of mine recently told me that my work had a trademark “perversely abrasive” reading practice. I was fine with the perverse but the “abrasive” seemed to me to be too violent a word to describe the generous spirit I have always felt my writing to have. But, of course, queering as a practice does *abrade*, and there is no denying that. However, looking at the dictionary, a favorite past time of mine, I noticed an older, now obsolete word which better captures, I like to think, my reading practices: “abraided, abrade: to awake, or rouse - to start.” Braiding, awakening, rousing, starting over and beginning by startling: these are the things that my work tries to do (whether it is successful or not).

But, you asked what particular strategies the roguish, democratic proletariat might deploy and the book which immediately comes to mind is Ivor Southwood’s *Non-Stop Inertia* (Southwood 2011) which brilliantly describes our contemporary condition of just-in-time, precaritized and immaterial labor (as a postman I know this situation

all too well!). He too turns to Bartleby as a possible way out but more interestingly he revalorizes and repoliticizes camp as a strategy for resisting our economic, social and political condition. In the “queerly seditious” practices of camp (which he de-links, I think, from its associations with gay male culture) Southwood finds room to manoeuvre, breathing spaces which stall the seemingly inexorable logic of capitalist development:

there is a need to rescue camp from the respectable realm of individualized consumption and recover its collective spirit, its sense of communicating something unspeakable. Camp could then be used as an instrument to unearth those unconscious elements which would seem to today’s immersive, supposedly all-inclusive society like archaeological artifacts: conflict, outsidership, critical detachment. Such a discovery would yield a shocking insight: that even in the current postmodern era where supposedly anything goes and everyone is in on the joke, some people are still marginalized and some things are still taboo ... [Camp’s] use of exaggeration and stylization, and its affinity with lost causes and cultural marginalia ... might therefore be directed towards revealing the stage-managed naturalness of the aspirational script, and implying an alternative imaginative space outside its rigidly defined limits. (ibid., 85-6)

Short-circuiting the cycle of non-stop inertia is never easy of course. Tellingly, Timothy Morton, has conceded that even class is a species of what he calls “hyperobjects” and this explains, he says, why it is “so difficult to shift.” (Morton and Coffield 2011) More hopefully though, he asserts that this very unbudgability is what, if we got to understand it, might be the means to subverting or shortcircuiting class. Catherine Malabou calls this “plasticity,” the term which she has used to talk about our contemporary condition: “the systemic law of the deconstructed real, a mode of organization of the real that comes after metaphysics and that is appearing today in all the different domains of human activity.” (Malabou 2010, 57) She explains how this notion of plasticity proffers ways to escape the seemingly inescapable logic of capital: “I am quite convinced with Žižek that we’re living in some kind of closed organizational structure, and that society is the main closed structure. But at the same time the structure is plastic. So it means that inside of it, we have all kinds of possibilities to wiggle and escape from the rigidity of the structure... this closed structure is not contrary to freedom or any kind of personal achievements or resistance. So I think that in such a structure, all individuals have their part to play” (Malabou and Vahanian 2007). Steven Shaviro’s book *Post-Cinematic Affect* makes a similar argument about the way in which the contemporary world “is ruthlessly organized around an exceedingly rigid and monotonous logic” and how “all structures of feeling, and all forms of life, are drawn into the gravitational field, or captured by the strange attractor, of commodification and capital accumulation.” (Shaviro 2011, 131) While he does not endorse accelerationism (“the emptying out of capitalism through a process of exhaustion”) as a political option, he does see the promise of what we might call a *weak* version of accelerationism as a “useful, productive, and even necessary aesthetic strategy today.” (ibid., 137) While Shaviro is cautious about the possibilities for resistance in this accelerationist aesthetics, he does suggest that the post-cinematic media he discusses should be valued for their “intensity” effects.

Shaviro concludes his book by quoting Whitehead who, echoing Derrida, wrote that “it is the business of the future to be dangerous.” (ibid., 139) One of the dangers Shaviro notes is the potential non-translatability of aesthetics

into politics. But this risk is taken by Zach Blas and Christopher O’Leary who curated an exhibition entitled *SPECULATIVE* in Los Angeles this summer. Their manifesto, or curatorial statement, is worth citing at length:

Today, we see the world we live in as an inviable world, and yet a world poised for radical reconfiguration. From global economic crises to pandemic panics to burgeoning forms of hatred and control to the ravaging of our earth, new borders and quarantines haunt and terrorize the world at stochastic levels of the global, nation-state, informatics, and the biological. Indeed, our world presents to us the seemingly complete commodification of life, culture, the body, the planet. Yet, we find within these very inviabilities the kernels of potential to enact and push forward new ways, worlds, and lives. In fact, we see many up-risings emerging everywhere: from the calls to action of militant groups like The Invisible Committee to the UC student protests to the insurrections of the Middle East to the digital activism of WikiLeaks and Anonymous. These all point toward living and existing in the world another way. We see the *SPECULATIVE* as the uniting force in our artwork that conjures forth the potential of the world we want, in political, cultural, social, sexual, technological, biological, economic and ecological dimensions. (Blas and O’Leary 2011)

In his contribution to the catalogue for *SPECULATIVE* Jack Halberstam talks about “Gaga Feminism” as he thinks about new possibilities for living in this inviable world of ours and ways in which we might revolutionize our critical modes and tactics of reflection imaginatively and politically to generate a more “livable future.” Jack loves the little manifesto-text *The Coming Insurrection* by The Invisible Committee which urges us to “wild and massive experimentation with new arrangements and fidelities” and that we should “organize beyond and against work” (Halberstam 2011, 26). Jack also exhorts us to think in less disciplined, more an-archic ways, to think like “speculative and utopian intellectuals” in order to refashion our political landscapes: “on behalf of more anarchy, less state, cooperative social forms and brand new sex/gender systems, I offer up Gaga Feminism - a form of feminism that advocates going gaga, being gaga, running amok, physically and intellectually, and in the process finding new languages with which to imagine, craft and implement a different way of living, loving and making art.” (ibid., 28)

So, camp, plasticity, accelerationist aesthetics, speculative aesthetics, and anarchically going gaga all seem like potentially viable strategies for the “proletariat,” the queer multitude, the people to come, as they try to make some wiggle room, and to bring about another world, a new earth, a queer planet. And I’m sure there are many, many others.

**S. P.:** The emergence of object-oriented philosophy, speculative realism (regardless of the acceleration of splinters), and theories such as Bryant’s “democracy of objects” all seem to explicitly indicate an already (t)here queer-affective onto-political framework for the progress of thinking in fidelity to the Real. This seems to be a historical event, probably a result of the sum of the personae’s socio-political conceptions symbiotized with theory. I don’t think that such a theoretical friendship has ever existed: at least not intentionally. For much of the academic world an ontological pre-inscription in *whatever* world-outlook of an ontologically evasive essence without essence such as queer would be a striking, if not heretical, enterprise. Looking ahead of our time, what exactly is this friendship’s

character: do you think that there is a premeditated vested interest or that speculative realists are simply “naturally” prone to (theoretically laid out) inclusiveness of the margins? And will it democratize more the readers of theory? In this respect I guess you could tell us more about such a mutual sensitivity and share some of your central assumptions in the on-going work you do on queering speculative realism. Besides, your editorial work at Ashgate (you are leading the *Queer Interventions* series) gives you a fresh eye on the kind of “specialization” and “(d) evolution” queer theorists develop.

**M. O’R.:** I’m very much inclined to agree with you that the appearance of Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Philosophy do “explicitly indicate an already (t)here queer-affective onto-political framework for the progress of thinking in fidelity to the Real.” Levi R. Bryant has, of course, in his theorization of the “democracy of objects” in relation to Lacan’s graphs of sexuation, carefully laid out this connection between a queered OOO and the Lacanian Real. He is, as always, worth quoting at length:

The *real*, by contrast, is something entirely different in Lacan. The real, as Lacan repeats endlessly, is not *reality* (the correlational system and synthesis of the imaginary and the Symbolic), but rather is that which is both in excess of all reality and that which evades all reality. The real is that which is *without place* in reality. It is a strange sort of placelessness, for it simultaneously 1) is invisible from the standpoint of reality, yet nonetheless 2) the “system of reality” strives to gentrify and eradicate the real (in *Television* Lacan will cryptically pronounce that “reality is the grimace of the real”), and 3) the real, despite being invisible, nonetheless appears but in a way inimical to the vector body-object system of the Imaginary and the sorting-organizing system of the symbolic. The real is a placeless appearance. It is for this reason that Lacan will say, in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, that the real is a “missed encounter.” The imaginary-symbolic system that constitutes *reality* is a system of *anticipations* in our ongoing dealings with the world. A missed encounter is precisely a *contingent* encounter that is not predelineated in any way by this anticipatory system. It is an appearance of the *impossible* (Lacan will also say that the real is the impossible) within the field of the “possible.” Of course, the possible here is that system predelineated by the “reality-system” or the synthesis of the symbolic and the imaginary. The Real is the appearance of the inapparent, of the anarchic excess beneath the reality-system, of that which has no place. It is the real, not reality, that OOO aims at. When Harman argues that objects are radically withdrawn, he is proposing a gap between any and every manifestation of objects (what he calls “sensual objects”) and their existence proper. Every object is in excess of its being-for the reality system of entities. Put differently, all objects are irreducible to their appearing-for. There is always an excess, an inappearance, that evades the correlational system of reality. And it is for this reason that objects always harbor, to use Harman’s language, a volcanic potential to surprise or to constitute a “missed encounter” or encounter that evades all symbolic-imaginary systems of anticipation. OOO is a realism of the real, not reality. OOO realism aims at what Timothy Morton has called the “strange stranger” or that paradoxical inapparent appearing, that which cannot appear at all, at the heart of all entities. It is precisely this inapparent appearing that Harman underlines in his theory of metaphor that marks the paradox at the heart of all objects: their tension between their qualities or manifestations and their being. All objects are in excess of their appearingness. (Bryant 2011a)

I would also point out that my deconstructive queer theory of the event is also in fidelity to the real or to what Caputo calls hyper-realism, the love of the things themselves. Derrida himself, in a response to Christopher Norris, who called deconstruction a “transcendental realism” says that deconstruction “has - always come forward in the name of the real, of the irreducible reality of the real - not the real as an attribute of the thing (*res*), objective, present, sense-able or intelligible, but the real as coming or event of the other ... In this sense, nothing is more realist than deconstruction.” (Derrida 2005, 96) Caputo himself glosses this - in a lengthy critique of Martin Hägglund’s radical atheist reading of Derrida - as a poetics of hyper-realism:

Derrida is certainly dedicated to dealing with what is real, with what there is (*il y a*), but he is not satisfied to say that the real is the simply present, so he always has an eye on what is real beyond the real, on the real that is not yet real, on what is coming, on the *peut-être* and the *s’il y en a*. Derrida displaces the simple primacy of the sensible-real in two ways, first, by seeing to it that the sensible-real too is the effect of the trace, and secondly, by seeing to it that the real is always haunted by the specters of the *arrivants* and the *revenants*. That is why I have described deconstruction as a hyper-realism. (Caputo 2011)

In *The Weakness of God*, Caputo explains what he means by this hyper-realism:

I mean the excess of the promise, the call, of the endless provocation of an event that calls us beyond ourselves, down unplotted paths and into unexplored lands, calling us to go where we cannot go, extending us beyond our reach. Hyper-reality reaches beyond the real to the not-yet-real, what eye has not yet seen nor ear yet heard, in the open-endedness of an uncontainable, unconstrictable, undeconstructible event. (Caputo 2006, 11-12)

Caputo has been extremely critical of some strains of Speculative Realism, most especially the materialisms of Quentin Meillassoux and Ray Brassier, but I think we can see here the very obvious potentials for “theoretical friendship” between his hyper-reality of the event and OOO, especially with Bryant’s Lacanian non-phallosophy and Morton’s Levinasian “Strange Stranger.” Having said that, there are also exciting possibilities in staging an encounter between Meillassoux’s “virtual God,” a God who might exist in the future, and Caputo’s weak God, a God to-come (“the name of God is being’s aspiration, its inspiration, its aeration, for God is not being or a being but a ghostly quasi-being.” (Caputo 2006, 9))

The theoretical friendship between queer theory and speculative realism(s) is as you say “heretical” and really quite unthinkable in many respects. Indeed, it skirts away from the model of combative philosophical friendship we were talking about earlier. (In fact, it rather emblematises a mode of theoretico-philosophical bonding which is a movement of justice, of opening, welcoming, risking, extending. However, it is still a problem - and I will return to this later - that all the major names are men and this bonding is largely *fraternal*.) But you ask:

“do you think there is a premeditated vested interest or that speculative realists are simply ‘naturally’ prone to (theoretically laid out) inclusiveness of the margins?” I’m not sure if there is some vested interest but it is possible to trace some of the influences. Of the four main Speculative Realists (Harman, Meillassoux, Hamilton Grant, Brassier) it is fairly difficult to demonstrate any predisposition for queer theory. But it is important to note that Harman championed a marginal figure like Lingis and was already in the early 1990s outlining his “*carnal phenomenology*.” With the other three, there are some shared influences with queer theory: Meillassoux’s Badiou (for whom sexual difference is undeniably important) and Grant and Brassier’s Deleuze. However, it is much easier to discern the influence of queer theory on the main OOO theorists. Morton had already published on “queer ecology” before his much publicized conversion to OOO. Bryant had written about queer theory as a privileged site for speculative thinking on his *Larval Subjects* blog long before Christopher Vitale called for a wholesale “queering of Speculative Realism.” Harman had acknowledged the importance of feminism for his Object-Oriented Philosophy and it was he who famously said more girls were welcome in SR. Bogost has been instrumental in sensitively and intelligently bringing the emergent splinter group of Object-Oriented Feminisms to a wider audience. (see O’Rourke 2011, 275-312)

It is, as you say, very true that speculative thinking is drawn to, or even takes its position, as/at the margins (even as it continually crosses performative and disciplinary borders). It has frequently brought hitherto marginal or under-read figures back into currency: Harman’s Latour, Shaviro’s Whitehead, Bryant’s Luhmann, Brassier’s Laruelle. We could also add Fernando Zalamea and Nick Land (a figure who has been shunted to the margins of academic respectability) to this list. And there are many others. It is important to note too that SR and OOO set out to create work for others which is why it has so quickly and effectively migrated into and across such a wide range of disciplines. Equally crucially, given the question of marginality, it is questionable that - as some critical voices have claimed - the main protagonists are merely adopting speculative realism as a career move. Many of the key figures work from geographically or institutionally marginal locations: Bryant works at a small college in Texas, Harman is in Cairo, Brassier is in Beirut, Negarestani is an independent scholar in Malaysia. Also, much of the exciting and burgeoning work being done in speculative realism is by graduate and post-doctoral students: Ben Woodard, Taylor Adkins, Paul Ennis, Nick Srnicek, Anthony Paul Smith, Alex Williams among many others.

You go on to ask if Speculative Realism will “democratize” the “readers of theory” and I would have to say yes, for a number of reasons. Firstly, much of the reason for the astounding popularity of the “culture” or “movement” of SR is that much of this thinking and writing happens in the blogosphere. All four of the main OOO thinkers (or five if you add Shaviro) maintain prominent and widely read blogs. Many of their ideas are initially sketched out there and most of them are open to and respond to readers’ comments. Debates between the main figures and differences in position are staked out on their blogs almost daily. Links are shared, videos and texts are uploaded. Several of the graduate students associated with SR also have blogs where they develop ideas and receive feedback.

In the backlash against SR from Ray Brassier, who initially coined the term, he has excoriated this “on-line orgy of stupidity” which for him does not constitute valid or valuable philosophical debate. (Brassier and Rychter 2011) The use of the word “orgy” has the perhaps unwanted effect of bringing the promiscuous openness of the SR blogosphere to the fore. Indeed, Ian Bogost has an SR aggregator which helpfully archives SR-related posts each day; Morton has a side bar with introductory tutorials for those new to OOO; Bryant has a dictionary of “onticology”; there is also a Speculative Realism Pathfinder which defines terms, lists the various “schools” and offshoots, and provides links to texts which can be freely accessed (from my own position as a scavenger with no access to a library or institutional infrastructures this culture of openness, generosity and sharing has been invaluable). Brassier might be even more disturbed by the role Facebook (and Twitter, and now Google +) has played in the development and dissemination of ideas (many of the scholars involved with SR and OOO also freely and willingly share their work - at various stages of development - on academia.edu). Nigel Thrift, the geographer, has made similarly positive noises about the blog-based development of SR but I do share his concerns about the archivability of many of these materials which are in very great danger of becoming arche-fossils. (Thrift 2011)

Secondly, it is crucial to note the commitment on the part of SR thinkers to open access publishing and to experimental forms of publishing (many texts are available both as print texts and downloadable pdfs). There is the Open Humanities Press, re.press, Zer0 books, Punctum Books, Oliphant Books, In Media Res and other Media Commons projects, *Continent*, *Speculations*, *Thinking Nature*, *Helvete*, and the list could go on. The medieval cultural studies journal *postmedieval* has even been experimenting with forms of peer review which would be more open and less anonymous (the word they use for this experiment is “crowd” review). The most influential journal for many of us has been Robin Mackay’s *Collapse*. I first discovered Speculative Realism when my good friend and former student Diarmuid Hester gave me issue number III (on Deleuze) as a Christmas gift in 2007, and it was this issue which contained the proceedings of the first symposium with Grant, Harman, Meillassoux and Brassier. *Collapse* also introduced me (and many others, I’m sure) to Reza Negaestani’s writings. Thirdly, unlike most philosophical fields, SR has extended into a dazzling array of disciplines: performance and theatre studies, art history, music, geography, archaeology, anthropology, architecture, political theory, medieval studies, music, food studies, queer studies, gender and sexuality studies, theology, film and media studies, international relations and security studies, science studies, sociology, financial theory, geology, psychoanalysis, mathematics, literary theory, composition and rhetoric, ecology, and this list could go on and on. As speculative realism has reached out and into these disciplines, weaponizing them to use Reza Negaestani’s words, it has come to resemble something like China Miéville’s skulltopus.

Queer theory, of course, has been, for me, the most fertile ground for this mutual “sensitivity.” I am writing a little book for Punctum Books called *Queering Speculative Realism*. It will be the first book to explore and fully work through the as yet under-acknowledged points of connection between the disparate fields of Queer Theory,

Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Ontology. The book will argue that it is their shared undefinability and provisionality which make SR and queer theory so compatible. It is my contention that it is the shared antipathy to correlationism and anthropocentrism which also unites the pair. While the earlier chapters will introduce both SR and OOO much of the book will focus on the potentials of the encounter between object-oriented ontology and queer theory. This is because of OOO’s focus on openness, democracy, affirmation and incipience. However, there will be a chapter on Negarestani’s dark vitalism and also some consideration of whether gender could be thought about in terms of Meillassoux’s “hyperchaos,” although I have not yet fully worked this out.

I think that the second half of the book will be of most interest to queer theorists and those working in critical sexuality studies and gender studies. One chapter will take a look at Object-Oriented Feminisms and I’ll be paying particular attention to the work of Elizabeth Grosz on animals and art and Karen Barad’s writing on quantum theory, agential realism and posthuman performativity (which has its own entanglements with Derridean notions of justice and hauntology). I have chosen three main queer theorists to focus on in the second part of the book. Leo Bersani’s writing on sexuality and aesthetics advances an erotic ethics which incorporates a non-violent relation to the external world that doesn’t seek to exterminate difference and even blithely ignores the intractable differences between the human and non/human. Bersani charts an impersonal aesthetic where the subject’s need to project himself on the world is not entirely necessary: “we correspond to the world in ways that don’t necessitate or imply the world’s suppression.” (Bersani 2009, 152) This “ontological passivity” or “ontological floating,” simply letting the world be, our ceaseless receptivity to the world means that ontologically the world cares for us, just as we care for the world. Judith Butler’s recent work has taken, in my opinion, a similarly ecological turn to Bersani’s. She has been extending her idea of precarious life in her attempts to formulate an ethics of global connectedness and mutual co-inhabitation of the world. I think this chapter will surprize those who have argued that Butler’s work is too enmired in the linguistic turn to have anything to say to or about objects or more vibrant materialisms. The third key figure for me is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick whose later writings were especially attuned to and fascinated by textiles, objects, breathing and the weather. I’ll be talking mostly about the as yet unpublished essay “The Weather in Proust” which concludes with these wonderful lines: “It is possible for the universe to be dead and worthless; but if it does not live, neither do the things in it, including oneself and one’s contents. So put it comparatively: the universe itself is *as* alive as anything it holds.” I’m hoping that the book will kickstart further conversations between speculative thinking and queer theories and, more importantly, that it will create work for others.

As you say, my position as the series editor for the *Queer Interventions* book series (which I co-founded with Noreen Giffney) at Ashgate Press gives me a certain perspective on evolutions in queer theory and on new turns in the field. We have published thirteen books so far and there are two more forthcoming soon. One is a collection of essays on queer futures, ethics and politics and will be the first sustained collection to come out *against* the “anti-social thesis.” It features essays by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Susan Stryker, Jack Halberstam, José Muñoz, and others.

The other is a book I am editing called *Reading Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: Gender, Sexuality, Embodiment*. As well as essays by many of her friends (including Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Lauren Berlant, Jane Gallop) it will also have exclusive full color photographs of Eve's art works which readers will never have seen before. I think, I hope, that the essays and the images will take people's breath away.

Quite a number of books have come out in the last year which have taken queer theory in new directions: Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness*, Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds*, José Muñoz's *Crusing Utopia*, and, more recently, Jack Halberstam's new book on queer failure and a collection of Gayle Rubin's writings (see Ahmed 2010; Freeman 2010; Muñoz 2009; Halberstam 2011a; Rubin 2011). And there are a few books which I'm anticipating and which will, I'm sure, alter the state of queer studies: Sara Ahmed's forthcoming book on wilfulness, Jonathan Goldberg's collection of Sedgwick's unpublished writings, to name a few examples. The future of queer studies is something I worry about and for, but there is always work which enervates me and makes me tremble with excitement, sometimes orgasmically, always stupidly.

**S. P.:** The books you just mentioned are apparently already changing queer studies. I would say they do so by transforming queer form method to something which we might merely call "position:" of the proletariat, of the revolution, of the an-human. Amid the amok of control societies and all the projects of mummifying the present's horizon (and here gay-lesbian identitarianism has a solid share with its joyous homonormativization and assimilationist boot-licking), these authors not only provide but call for some hopefulness and futurity altogether: neither the neo-liberal jouissance, nor the anti-social passé, as if prying open the field to unimaginability bordering with self-effacement. We might be in a period where queer is giving away some (sexual) materiality (whence the numerous death-watches of the field) because more and more writers realize its welcoming of more and more subjectivities to speak from its positionality of unencumberedness with "phallosophy." This is a "position" which might simply be called "hospitality." Not the somewhat defensive one a la Harman's "Girls, welcome!!!" but one that does not account for itself and gains greater volume by even refusing to rely on its forgetfulness and perishability for a secured future: a hospitability which effaces its self-consciousness, that is, queer as a khoral position - perhaps even a void? - depends on some incoming transcendentalism and immateriality, subjectless sexlessness. How sexless could it get? For it is as if queer invites: "X, welcome!!!" In fact it is the welcoming itself that enhances and maybe even produces these subjectivities of, I would say, heterologosexual thinkers. As such, welcoming/hospitality is power. If hospitality is power, then is it the power-form of queer?

**M. O'R.:** This is a very rich closing question and leaves me with much to think about. You are undoubtedly correct to say that the books I have mentioned (and the ones which I am anticipating) have in some ways already affected the shape of the field of queer studies. I was recently asked to write something on the state of queer theory for a collection called *States of Theory*. It seemed inevitable that you would also ask me what I thought about the current state of the field. But as I think about what I might say for that essay it occurs to me to ask myself: Is queer theory in

a state? If so, what state is it in? A sorry one? Or one full of “hopefulness and futurity” as you say? Does it, to come back to your opening gambit, have to belong to a state or, more precisely, to the States (the United States)?

And, these are all questions which remind me, again, of that early piece by Berlant on Warner when they too are forced to think about the state of the field (back in 1995). Given that queer theory then could barely even be said to have fully crystallized they write that “We have been invited to pin the queer theory tail on the donkey. But here we cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amazed at this poor donkey’s present condition” (Berlant and Warner 1995, 343). There are a couple of things to ponder on in these short lines. Firstly, Berlant and Warner rightly advise us to exercise caution about metacommenting on that which can barely be “said yet to exist.” And I think that advice should extend to the ways we are now beginning to think about the rapidly accelerating virtual industries of Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Ontology. Because, in many ways the directions these two new modes of thinking will take us in are radically anti-anticipatable. Secondly, I think it is noteworthy that, given the tendency to anthropomorphize queer theory (whether we are talking about its life or its death), Berlant and Warner refer to queer theory in its then “poor” condition as a “donkey.” Perhaps here we begin to see the blurry outlines of the shift you are seeing from queer form/method to position: the position of the proletariat (who are so often figured as work horses or donkeys) and of the non or “an-human.” However, I think that we might better describe this shift as being one from a phallic univocity to one of multiplicity. Levi R. Bryant’s work has consistently tried to take up feminized standpoints and his non-phallosophical approach is one which eschews totalizing phallic signifiers in favor of making a more fluidified kind of mess. And this is one reason why I’m taken with McKenzie Wark’s formulation of P(OO) (Praxis [Object-Oriented]) at the third OOO symposium in New York with all the mess that entails between the hind legs of the donkey.<sup>7</sup> But let me stand half amazed and pause over your use of the word “position” for a moment. I agree with Lee Edelman when he says that queerness can never ever describe a position but only ever disturb one. And queer theory ought not to become a position at the expense of its capacity to disturb, upend, and reframe. In a recent essay “Against Survival: Queerness in a Time That’s Out of Joint” Edelman, with characteristic brilliance, writes that:

To be queer, in fact, is not to be, except insofar as queerness serves as the name for the thing that is not, for the limit point of ontology, for the constitutive exclusion that registers the no, the not, the negation in being. Radically opposed to normativity and so to the order of identity, queerness confounds the notion of being as being at one with oneself. It attests to the impossibility of a concept’s or an entity’s survival in anything other than a state of exception to its nominal consistency. Opposing all normative logics, including those that would reify queerness as a positive and determinate identity, queerness is nonetheless central to every presentation of normativity. Metabolized and abjected as the remainder of any identity procedure, its unincorporability alone permits the consolidation of form. Thus queerness, as I have argued elsewhere, occupies the place of the zero, the nothing, that invariably structures the logic of being but remains at once intolerable to and inconceivable within it. (Edelman 2011)

And this gives us a taste of his forthcoming *Bad Education*, the sequel (as it were) to *No Future*, where queerness again is framed as a traumatically “radical encounter with the Real.” Despite being in total agreement with Edelman

that queerness confounds the notion of any entities' being at one with itself I cannot subscribe to his reading of Derrida's autoimmunitary process as "inseparable from the death drive." If Edelman is against survival, then my unconditional queer studies (remember that for Derrida the university without condition is one with the fundamental right to say *everything*) is all for it and all for the future, if there is such a thing. If Edelman is on the side of death (what I have, after Derrida, called his "Bin Laden effect" which can open on to *no future*) I am optimistically on the side of life. And, I know that I'm so paranoid that I think Edelman's essay is about me, but I cannot help thinking that everything here is responding to my readings of *No Future* which have vaunted the hopefulness of queer theory, the queer theory to-come, the *à venir*, over against the Bin Ladenism which can leave no trace. But this is not the place to go on about our respective differences.

However, I will say that this refusal of survival and of futurity is also precisely a refusal of unconditional hospitality and this is not *my* Derrida. However, this hospitality that we are talking about here is not one to be readily or too quickly associated with power. Rather, like the queer event, *hospitality is a weak force*. Caputo, who would be no theoretical friend to Edelman, since he thinks the child *as* the future, describes this kingdom of the queer:

In the world, one is always very flattered to be included on a guest list, to be part of the 'inside crowd' who have gotten an invitation, whereas on the un-principles applied in the kingdom, such an invitation might not be so flattering ... In the world, hospitality is constituted by a cozy circle of insiders, by the rules of the club, where all sorts of folks who are different need not apply. In the world, hospitality is a strong force - *hostis + potens*, having the power of the master of the house over the guest-in which one fortifies oneself against the unwelcome intrusion of the other. (Caputo 2006, 262)

I'll say a little bit in a moment about the cozy homosociality of SR and OOO in relation to this notion of hospitality and the kingdom. But, first, let me be clear why I would mobilize Caputo's hospitality against Edelman's inhospitality. To not welcome the other (the future) is precisely to not welcome that which comes (Levinas's alterity, Morton's strange stranger) which is also to stay within the circle of the *same*. In contrast, Caputo explains "when we call for the kingdom to come, therefore, we are being called upon to push against the limits, to strain against these conditions, to practice a mad and unconditional hospitality which is impossible" (*ibid.*, 262-263). If for Edelman, queerness is an encounter with the Real, for Caputo it would be an encounter with the hyper-real, with a parliament of things themselves. When we risk our own sovereignty (and Kris Coffield at the *Fractured Politics* blog is doing fascinating work on sovereignty and objects, see Coffield 2011) in the aporetics of the event we short-circuit the phallosophical logic of conditional hospitality and community. For Caputo "the kingdom is a gathering of the un-gathered, who are gathered by the event, an assembly of the dispossessed who are possessed by the event." (Caputo 2006, 263) Edelman, of course, is like Žižek, against the plasticization of the human in Butlerian queer theory and the welcoming of, or compassion for, the other. For most readers, Butler is far too attached to the subject to have anything much to say about objects. And, as Anna

Kłosowska has pointed out to me, for many who misunderstand them, SR and OOO are inhuman and anti-human and are thought to conceive of subjects as objects. However, isn’t it really the other way around? That is to say that queer theory (à la Butler), SR and OOO conceive of *objects as subjects*. Butler’s ideas of precarity and solicitation (which Edelman so resolutely critiques) are connectable to a politics of SR and OOO insofar as we might try to think of a radical democracy attuned to objects. As Eileen Joy has argued, this would allow us to think about the “dignity” of objects. Furthermore, this democratization of objects would plasticize and extend Butler’s investigations into what counts as human, as a livable life and what counts as grievable or mournable. And this links up again to Rancière - whose politics Bryant finds most in line with his ontological framework (Bryant 2011) - and his understanding of democracy (and it is notable that he still sees efficacy today in terms like democracy and proletariat): “What I am trying to convey is that democracy, in the sense of the power of the people, the power of those who have no special entitlement to exercise power, is the very basis of what makes politics thinkable. If power is allotted to the wisest or the strongest or the richest, then it is no longer politics we are talking about.” (Rancière 2011a, 79) Rancière’s politics is provisional, occasional, rare, local and unprogrammable and this is also how I have described a queer theory without condition in “The Roguish Future of Queer Studies:”

Queer Theory, too, I am asserting needs to be anterior to its own construction and its plan, autoimmunitively “open to something other and more than itself... the space and time of a spectralizing messianicity beyond all messianism,” roguishly relational in its opening to its disciplinary neighbours in “an infinite series of possible encounters, one without limit and without totalization, a field without the stability of margins, open to the other, the future, death, freedom, the coming or the love of the other.” Hence, queer theory must, as Kenneth Reinhard says, “open in infinity, endlessly linking new elements in new subsets according to new decisions and fidelities.” (O’Rourke 2006, 35-6)

Such roguish openness - which has friendship, love, democracy, justice and hospitality, all the undeconstructables, as its watchwords - would entail a swerving away from institutionalization and discipline in favor of an undisciplined and ungovernable inclining toward the auto-co-immunity (Caputo’s poetics of the kingdom rather than the correlationist circle of the same) of a queer studies to-come which believes in the solicitation of the wholly other, the *tout autre* and places its faith in the democracy to-come and the justice to-come.

I mentioned that my friend Eileen Joy has talked about according dignity to objects, a project which would not just increase what counts as an object but also what counts as lovable. Geoffrey Bennington has recently added “dignity” to the long list of quasi-transcendentals in Derrida’s writing, seeing it as a watchword for the last fifteen years of Derrida’s work, in the context of valuing the dignity of what we do. (Bennington 2010) Just like the *demi-deuil* or half-mourning Derrida often spoke of, Bennington talks about a demi-dignity, or half-dignity, which would be unconditional, less than sovereign, an unconditional sovereign to-come. This unconditional dignity lines up with the out-of-jointness of time in the “Exordium” to Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* and is axiomatic for the very possibility,

the very chance or life of deconstruction. By exposing itself - like trace or *différance* - to something outside itself, dignity is an undeconstructable. It mirrors the structural endlessness of deconstruction itself in that it can never be achieved, nor is it ever finished. Dignity is, Bennington tells us, an infinite task and an ongoing responsibility. The queer studies without condition which I have been arguing for will certainly never be achieved either but we must affirm its possibility, and there is an urgency to this, here and now, at this moment of fragile institutionality.

As Edelman rightly points out *institutions* of knowledge, including literary studies, negate the radicality of queerness and its encounter with the Real. But there is a felicitous, if often unnoticed, etymological link between literature and speculation (in the Greek *theoros* from which the Latin *theoria* derives there is connoted viewing and speculation). As Julian Wolfreys explains:

It might be argued, though it cannot be exemplified, one general affirmation concerning literature can be made: that it is 'theoretical'. It is theoretical, literature is always already *in theory*, because it gives its readers the possibility to see that which, strictly speaking, is not there materially. It offers the possibility of speculation; it presents perceptions, perspectives and opens it to view, causing some other to appear. Literature, in theory, causes the other to come, to come back, and to return in singular, often unanticipatable ways that, regardless of the predictability or programmed nature of narrative cause and effect, makes possible an event. (Wolfreys 2010, xii)

Literature, *in theory* then, is both speculative and hospitable, as well as responsive and responsible. One literary theorist who describes this hospitality in similar terms to yours as a "void" (a key feature of Reza Negarestani's weird theory-fiction too) is J. Hillis Miller. In his work - which has proven so influential for Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick and queer theory more broadly - there are numerous figures for the void: black holes, the kiss, surds, zeros. However, I want to take up one key trope Hillis Miller deploys in order to link up your two questions about the void and hospitality. *Anastomosis* is this figure and it is one Miller adopts for both non-closure and for connection. It seems wholly appropriate to use this trope to describe the lattice of networks I am trying to make between queer theory, speculative realism and object-oriented ontology. He explains that "an anastomosis makes a new mouth or opening in what is already open, a vessel in the sense of a communicating tube between one container and another." It "may be thought of either as an external link between two vessels, or as entering into a vessel it opens, so that it becomes a version of the figure of the container and thing contained. Jacques Derrida has called this 'invagination.'" (Hillis Miller 1992, 155) As a figure of speech anastomosis means inserting a qualifying word between two parts of another word, an example Miller gives being Joyce's "underdarkneath" in *Ulysses*. Anastomosis then might be another word for the kind of grafting (elsewhere I have called it a Frankensteinian meme splice) between queer theory, speculative realisms and Object-Oriented philosophies, the ways in which these discourses flow in and out of other, connect and disconnect, form regimes of attraction for each other. Also, the multiple crossings and mutual perturbations between these fields also flags up questions to do with justice and hospitality since for both Derrida and Miller this rhetorical figure of anastomosis describes the non-saturability

and permeability of borders. Anastomosis is a figure for openness to that which is to-come (justice, the future, democracy) and the other or others who may arrive as part of that future (strange strangers).

One particularly trenchant criticism of SR and OOO has been that it is inhospitable to, even antagonistic towards, feminist and queer concerns. There have been robust criticisms of the homosociality of both fields given that their leading figures are all male (and this debate has resurfaced since the third OOO symposium in New York in September of this year). Facebook discussions have referred to OOO and SR as “masculinist circle jerks” and “sausage fests” and the pugilistic form of argumentation (mostly associated with Harman) have meant that many female philosophers and thinkers have felt uneasy with SR/OOO and have understandably withdrawn from this agonistic homosocial arena (where a bunch of “dude philosophers,” as Jane Bennett recently put it, wrestle over Heidegger, Husserl and other male figures (Cohen 2011)).

However, there has been much feminist and queer-friendly work done on OOO and SR and there are many names which we might associate with developments in both areas including Patricia Clough, Tiziana Terranova, Katerina Kolozova, Luciana Parisi, Elizabeth Grosz (this list could go on). To be fair, Levi R. Bryant’s blog often discusses Luhmann, Whitehead and Deleuze in the same breath as Karen Barad and Donna Haraway and, as I have shown in ““Girls Welcome!!!”” Morton, Bogost and Harman have all shown an active interest (and at times a refreshing self/relexivity) in the affinities between feminist/queer worldviews and their own. Indeed, Harman has recently said that the original four OOO theorists now consider Jane Bennett to be one of their number.

So, while I think that critique of SR/OOO and its gender politics is important and valuable (and Sara Ahmed and Nina Power have been key voices in this respect) I would like to suggest a move away from thinking of this realm as being a homosocial one towards a space that is more *anastomosocial*. Harman has recently referred to the space where most SR thinking happens as the *blogopolis*: “the philosophy blogosphere is not another version of books and articles. It is more like a city where you can live or hang out. It is blogopolis... and that’s what the philosophy blogosphere is all about. It’s a kind of loose philosophical bohemia that keeps things stirred up and is able to transmit new currents (such as speculative realism) quickly and enthusiastically.” (Harman 2011) I would argue that Harman’s blogopolis is a hospitable kingdom as opposed to the univer-*city* as locus of increasing discipline and control. The blogopolis is one privileged space of the queer studies without condition. And if you think Harman’s “Girls Welcome!!!” sounded “defensive” (I must confess that I did not) then how about his invitation to the SR blogopolis: “Who else wants in? You’re more than welcome.” So, in the blogopolis *everyone* and *everything* is welcome: X, welcome indeed!!!

You ask, finally, if hospitality is “the power-form of queer?” I have already said that hospitality is a weak force but I want to say a little bit more about hospitality and the new materialisms, especially Bennett’s “vibrant materiality” which refuses to discriminate between the human/nonhuman, living/dead, subjects/objects. But, most interestingly,

in the face of the ascription of agency only to humans, Bennett theorizes the agency which things themselves possess as “thing-power.” (Bennett 2010, 14). You talked earlier in our conversation about “whisperings” to do with the revolution of objects and I would pick this up again to say that Bennett’s deanthropocentrizations and attention to *all* our coexistents are attempts to turn an ear hospitably toward the susurrations of the world we coinhabit. Nigel Clark’s *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on A Dynamic Planet* draws on the speculative realists - including Meillassoux, Bryant, Brassier and Harman - to explore the commonality between human/nonhuman, animate/inanimate, organic/inorganic, real/imagined and how there is a fundamental asymmetry between the human and the nonhuman given the “thing power” of earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, fires, and irrepressible climate change. (Clark 2010) But Clark follows a tradition we would associate less with certain nihilistic versions of SR and more with the affirmativeness of Derrida and Levinas insofar as he argues, like Butler, for our constitutive vulnerability and precarity. In the face of this *shared* vulnerability Clark argues for a radically democratic ethico-politics of co-responsibility and hospitality which he calls “abyssal generosity.” (ibid., 136) While there might be a danger in overemphasizing the agency or thing-power of nonhuman actants Levi R. Bryant’s “wilderness ontology” has worked hard to “maintain a rich place for antirealist Marxist, feminist, queer, and semiotic, etc., critique, while simultaneously blunting its overwhelming tendency towards erasure of the *alterity* of the world and nonhumans” (Bryant 2011e) Abyssal, ankhoral generosity might then be the ground of justice and the platform for a risky co-responsibility to all others with whom we are entangled. Jane Bennett has urged us to think more about (as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explains it):

*earthiness* (which she glossed as the sensuous specificity of everyday things) and *sympathy* (attractions and connections between similarities). Her avowedly “leftist, egalitarian” approach would attend to things as earthly forces, to *presencing* over reserve. She called this a new material sensibility, and concluded “What would it mean to start living differently, sensing differently, if we were to really believe in OOO?” (Cohen 2011)

Donna Haraway has described the challenge of Speculative Realism to feminists and queer theorists as a “dare.” And Bennett herself dares us to try to think an ethics and politics which would change our sense of the world and our relations with others. It is too early yet to say whether the sensuous encounter between speculative realisms, object-oriented ontologies and queer theories will have been an event, but dare I say it, I really believe it will have been.

## Notes:

1. Forthcoming from Palgrave Macmillan in 2012 (O’Rourke 2012).
2. As an aside, I would assert that it is perhaps true that this asymmetrical situation (between US/Euro queer theories) at least partly mirrors the analytic/continental divide, which is why I have begun to refer in my recent writing to queer theory as “post-continental” a term I borrow from Paul Ennis and John Mullarkey (Ennis 2010, Mullarkey 2006).
3. As an aside, given how critical I have been of Edelman since *No Future* came out, let me say that his earlier book *Homographesis* is undoubtedly one of the best books ever written in queer theory. I return to it again and again for its theoretical sophistication, its bold claims, and its uncompromising difficulty. I will say more about his recent work later.
4. Many authors, including you more or less, have troubled the idea of transforming queer studies in an academic field, see for example Halperin 2003.
5. This is also suggested by you when you say “The queer theory to come... is an experience of aporetic impossibility” (O’Rourke 2011a).
6. Incidentally, Poland is a place where a uniquely non-US form of queer studies has taken hold with numerous symposia, collections of essays and a peer-reviewed journal *InterAlia* which is published in both Polish and English.
7. See Wark’s talk at Timothy Morton’s blog *Ecology without Nature*. <http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com/2011/09/ooiii-video-archive-4.html> (accessed October, 1 2011).

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