

introduction: Queer and Not Now

In Nguyen Tan Hoang's video *K.I.P.* (2002), a young man faces a past that may or may not be his. The video opens with a series of grainy, flickering, blurry shots of body parts flashing across the screen; eventually it's clear that the scene shows two white men having sex. The men's shaggy haircuts and sideburns and the low-res quality of the video images suggest that the period is the 1970s or early 1980s. For the full four-minute duration of Nguyen's piece the scene skips and stutters, with dropouts, black frames, or smears of color occasionally interrupting the action. The slight distortion of the images, occasional glare, and falling static "snow" indicate that we are not seeing the scene directly but rather through the curved glass front of an old-fashioned cathode ray tube television. Reflected on the surface of the TV monitor floats the ghostlike face of a young male — the director himself, as it turns out — expression blank, glasses glinting a bit, mouth occasionally opening slightly, as if to eat, to suck, to speak, or as if simply surprised (see figure 1).

K.I.P. explicitly connects experimental video's temporal dissonance to queer sexual dissidence: it links the malleability of filmic time to the sexually experimental body. To be sure, it has any number of qualities that are merely generic to experimental film and video. Eschewing the narrative conventions of classical Hollywood cinema, this genre foregrounds the medium's status as a "time art" and emphasizes the constructedness of its images, the materiality of the production process, and/or the historical contingency of its apparatus.¹ But Nguyen's piece also speaks to mass-popular ways of using filmic temporality to expand bodily possibilities, and of using the body's rhythms to reimagine what film can say and do. The original porn tape's intended audience of home video watchers, who may or may not have been gay but were certainly participating in the stigmatized sexual practice of viewing gay sex acts, had presumably gotten their pleasures from just the kind of remix that video technology itself enables. For they could zoom the tape backward to the money shot as often as they wanted, witnessing multiple climaxes far beyond the



1. Still from *K.I.P.*

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capacity of the male body to produce them. And apparently this is exactly what these viewers did. The temporal reshufflings particular to the fragmented sex scene between the two hunky actors actually came from a specific history of consumption, rather than solely from Nguyen's manipulations at the level of production, as is generally the case with experimental film.² In his notes for *K.I.P.*, which appear on the DVD of his complete works, Nguyen describes finding a videotape titled "Kip Noll Superstar, Part I" (1981), a compilation of the then-iconic porn star Kip Noll's best sex scenes put together by the prolific pornography director William Higgins.³ Nguyen's copy of the tape, which he reports renting at Tower Video in San Francisco's Castro district, was damaged. It had apparently been rewound too many times to the most explicit sex scene, so that the images now skipped and repeated, and entire frames were blurred or erased. In other words, "the hottest part of the tape," as Nguyen's note puts it, appeared in his viewing of it as instances returning to themselves over and over, and as a series of leaps across the bodily gestures or sexual choreographies that we are ordinarily supposed to experience as smooth, continuous, and natural.

K.I.P., then, follows video pornography's logic of interactive spectatorship: the reflected face becomes a figure for the way this genre enables the viewer to derail the normative progression of sexual intercourse from foreplay to penetration to climax. In fact, Nguyen's reshoot and the overlay of an almost motionless face disconnect gesture from response, action

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from consequence, by separating them in time.⁴ Far from consolidating the spectacle and naturalizing power differentials, *K.I.P.* suggests, the medium of video, and especially the genre of pornography, produce powerful sexual disorientation — not the least of which is dis-integrating the so-called sex act (as if there could be only one). In keeping with this derangement of bodies and pleasures, even Nguyen’s title breaks down the unity of “Kip” Noll’s muscular body into the alphabetic, recombinatorial “K.I.P.” The reshoot itself then uses this logic of fragmentation and remixing to open up gaps in the sexual dyad, inviting in not only a third party in the figure of the spectator but also, potentially, any number of viewers or even participants. In short, Nguyen seems to recognize that a hiccup in sequential time has the capacity to connect a group of people beyond monogamous, enduring couplehood — and this awareness, I would argue, is crucial to revitalizing a queer politics and theory that until fairly recently has focused more on space than on time.⁵

By portraying the reciprocal derangement of bodies and sequences, *K.I.P.* offers a through-the-looking-glass view of how time *binds* a socius. By “binds,” I mean to invoke the way that human energy is collated so that it can sustain itself.⁶ By “time binds,” I mean something beyond the obvious point that people find themselves with less time than they need. Instead, I mean that naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation: binding is what turns mere existence into a form of mastery in a process I’ll refer to as *chrononormativity*, or the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity. And I mean that people are bound to one another, en-grouped, made to feel coherently collective, through particular orchestrations of time: Dana Luciano has termed this *chronobiopolitics*, or “the sexual arrangement of the time of life” of entire populations.⁷

Chrononormativity is a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches inculcate what the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls “hidden rhythms,” forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege.⁸ Manipulations of time convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines, which in turn organize the value and meaning of time. The advent of wage work, for example, entailed a violent retemporalization of bodies once tuned to the seasonal rhythms of agricultural labor.⁹ An even broader description of chrononormativity appears in Pierre Bourdieu’s discussion of habitus — a social group’s culti-

vated set of gestural and attitudinal dispositions. Bourdieu argues that “the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations” structuring the norms of embodiment, personhood, and activity in a culture takes shape within the rhythms of gift exchange.¹⁰ For Bourdieu, cultural competence and thus belonging itself are matters of timing, of coming to inhabit a culture’s expectations about the temporal lapses between getting and giving such that they seem inborn. More recently, Judith Butler has shown how the rhythms of gendered performance—specifically, repetitions—accrete to “freeze” masculinity and femininity into timeless truths of being.¹¹ Zerubavel’s “hidden rhythms,” Bourdieu’s “habitus,” and Butler’s “gender performativity” all describe how repetition engenders identity, situating the body’s supposed truth in what Nietzsche calls “monumental time,” or static existence outside of historical movement.¹² But Bourdieu alone allows us to see that subjectivity emerges in part through mastering the cultural norms of withholding, delay, surprise, pause, and knowing when to stop—through mastery over certain forms of time. In temporal manipulations that go beyond pure repetition, his work suggests, institutionally and culturally enforced rhythms, or timings, shape flesh into legible, acceptable embodiment.

In chronobiopolitics, this process extends beyond individual anatomies to encompass the management of entire populations: people whose individual bodies are synchronized not only with one another but also with larger temporal schemata experience belonging itself as natural. In a chronobiological society, the state and other institutions, including representational apparatuses, link properly temporalized bodies to narratives of movement and change. These are teleological schemes of events or strategies for living such as marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction, childrearing, and death and its attendant rituals. Indeed, as the anthropologist John Borneman’s work clarifies, so-called personal histories become legible only within a state-sponsored timeline.¹³ This timeline tends to serve a nation’s economic interests, too. In the United States, for instance, states now license, register, or certify birth (and thus citizenship, eventually encrypted in a Social Security ID for taxpaying purposes), marriage or domestic partnership (which privatizes caretaking and regulates the distribution of privatized property), and death (which terminates the identities linked to state benefits, redistributing these benefits through familial channels), along with sundry privileges like driving (to jobs and commercial venues) and serving in the military (thus incurring state expenditures that often serve corporate interests). In

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the eyes of the state, this sequence of socioeconomically “productive” moments is what it means to have a life at all. And in zones not fully reducible to the state — in, say, psychiatry, medicine, and law — having a life entails the ability to narrate it not only in these state-sanctioned terms but also in a novelistic framework: as event-centered, goal-oriented, intentional, and culminating in epiphanies or major transformations.¹⁴ The logic of time-as-productive thereby becomes one of serial cause-and-effect: the past seems useless unless it predicts and becomes material for a future. These teleologies of living, in turn, structure the logic of a “people’s” inheritance: rather than just the transfer of private property along heteroreproductive lines, inheritance becomes the familial and collective *legacy* from which a group will draw a properly political future — be it national, ethnic, or something else.

Chronobiopolitics harnesses not only sequence but also cycle, the dialectical companion to sequence, for the idea of time as cyclical stabilizes its forward movement, promising renewal rather than rupture. And as Julia Kristeva argues, the gender binary organizes the meaning of this and other times conceived as outside of — but symbiotic with — linear time.¹⁵ Kristeva claims that Woman, as a cultural symbol, comes to be correlated with the endless returns of cyclical time, as well as the stasis of monumental time: the figure of Woman supplements the historically specific nation-state with appeals to nature and eternity. Luciano dates a particularly Anglo-American version of this arrangement to the early nineteenth century, when “separate spheres” were above all temporal: the repetitions and routines of domestic life supposedly restored working men to their status as human beings responding to a “natural” environment, renewing their bodies for reentry into the time of mechanized production and collective national destiny.¹⁶ In the wake of industrialization in the United States, she writes, mourning was newly reconceptualized as an experience outside of ordinary time, as eternal, recurrent, even sacred — and so, I would argue, were any number of other affective modes. Mid-nineteenth-century writers figured maternal love, domestic bliss, romantic attachments, and eventually even bachelorhood as havens from a heartless world and, more importantly, as sensations that moved according to their own beat. The emerging discourse of domesticity, especially, inculcated and validated a set of feelings — love, security, harmony, peace, romance, sexual satisfaction, motherly instincts — in part by figuring them as timeless, as primal, as a human condition located in and emanating from the psyche’s interior. In this sense, the nineteenth cen-

ture's celebrated "heart," experienced by its owner as the bearer of archaic or recalcitrant sensations, was the laboring body's double, the flip side of the same coin of industrialization. The fact that the wage system privatized domestic activities also meant that they could be experienced as taking place in a different time zone. In the home, time bound persons "back" to "nature," a state of innocence that could be understood as restorative only if women's domestic labor were fully effaced. If time becomes history through its organization into a series of discrete units linked by cause and effect, this organization in turn retrospectively constructs an imagined plenitude of "timeless" time to which history can return and regroup.

Thus the monumental or sacred time that Kristeva also describes as "Women's Time" does not escape chronobiopolitical regulation either. Luciano's crucial extension of and intervention into Kristeva's work demonstrates that nations and other public forms of engroupment depend not only on progressive, linear time and the cyclical time that buttresses it but also on the illusion that time can be suspended. Pauses or interruptions in the routinized rhythms of everyday life, in the sequences expected to unfold naturally from one another, become the material for a peoplehood experienced as pre- or a-political, as merely human. In describing the narrative texture of modern nationality, Homi Bhabha too refines the distinction between linear-historical time and the more static times of cyclic and monumental time: he describes the dialectic between a "pedagogical" time in which historical events seem to accrete toward a given destiny, and a "performative" time in which a people recreates itself as such through taking up a given activity simultaneously.¹⁷ Soliciting the masses to stop and feel together, activities done in tandem with strangers seen and unseen, like singing the national anthem or watching the Olympics, revivify national belonging as a matter of shared emotion rather than civic action. Bhabha claims that within performative strategies of national belonging, fissures can open up to suggest other historical moments or ways of living. And indeed, as Luciano points out, in counterpoint to the time of factory life in the antebellum United States, a set of "performative" sensations and corporeal forms was imagined, or even felt, not just as a contribution to national destiny but also as an impediment to or bulwark against the pedagogical time of history proper. Mourning and romance, empathy and affection were not segmented into clock-time, even if highly ritualized public performances like courtship and grieving did follow timelines; the sentiments and their perceived rhythms coun-

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tered “work time” even as they were also a product of it. So did the time of specific bodily needs. As Eli Zaretsky writes, “The family, attuned to the natural rhythms of eating, sleeping, and child care, can never be wholly synchronized with the mechanized tempo of industrial capitalism.”¹⁸ Emotional, domestic, and biological tempos are, though culturally constructed, somewhat less amenable to the speeding up and micro-management that increasingly characterized U.S. industrialization.

Time’s Wounds

As Luciano puts it, in the dialectic between linear-national history and cyclical-domestic time, history appears as damaged time; time appears as the plentitude that heals the historical subject.¹⁹ Time, then, not only “binds” flesh into bodies and bodies into social but also appears to “bind” history’s wounds. But the figure of damaged time also became the signature of late-nineteenth-century decadence and modernism. Of course, the appearance of sexual identity as a field of knowledge and self-description was part of a more general movement toward the abstraction and taxonomizing of human qualities, the reification of both space and time, that began with industrial capitalism.²⁰ In this sense, homosexual identity was simply the product *of* a historical moment in time. But sexual dissidents have also in many ways been produced by, or at least emerged in tandem with, a sense of “modern” temporality. The double-time of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was somewhat different from the highly gendered, sacred time of antebellum domesticity: rather than evoking timelessness, it trafficked in signs of fractured time. Its signature was interruptive archaisms: flickering signs of other historical moments and possibilities that materialized time as always already wounded. Thus gay men, lesbians, and other “perverts” have also served as figures *for* history, for either civilization’s decline or a sublimely futuristic release from nature, or both.²¹ Here we might cite, for instance, the poet Renée Vivien’s Sapphic vampires, the novelist Djuna Barnes’s hybrid animal/child/lesbian Robin Vote, or T. S. Eliot’s sexually alienated J. Alfred Prufrock declaring himself to be “Lazarus, come from the dead!”²² Sexual dissidents became figures for and bearers of new corporeal sensations, including those of a certain counterpoint between now and then, and of occasional disruptions to the sped-up and hyperregulated time of industry.

Freud’s concept of the unconscious acknowledged exactly this doubled

time: it relocated modernity's temporal splittings into the psyche's interior (and thus from their moorings in historically specific changes). Freud theorized the "normal" self as a temporal phenomenon, the ego as a manifestation of displaced and disavowed past experiences. The Freudian unconscious refused to make an experience obsolete or to relegate it to the past; within the Freudian paradigm that Laplanche and Pontalis term *Nachträglichkeit*, or deferred action, the mind recorded the signs of an event when the subject could not consciously process its meaning, and preserved these signs for future uses.²³ So even as an emerging consumer market and what Foucault calls the "incitement to discourse" about sexual types put an ever greater premium on novelty, the interlaced models of the unconscious and *Nachträglichkeit* insisted on a certain semiotic recalcitrance. And in Freud, what we might now claim as a queer intemperativity evidenced itself in and with the body as well as the emotions. The repetitions and returns that disturb the Freudian subject appear not as pictorial or narrative memories per se but in forms that are at once metaphorical and *visceral*: a "slip of the tongue," repetitive bodily acts, lingering symptoms with no apparent physical etiology. In this sense, the "perverse" Freudian body itself became the scene of and catalyst for encountering and redistributing the past.

This was particularly true of the body erotic. As early as the eighteenth century, Henry Abelove and Paul Morrison have argued, erotic life began to assume the contours of mechanized productivity, and specific sexual practices came to be seen as "foreplay," acceptable en route to intercourse but not as a substitute for it.²⁴ In Freud's update, these practices were remnants of childhood itself, not merely adult means to an orgasmic end. Psychologizing what had once been biological paradigms, Freud identified taboo sexual practices as normal childhood behavior in which the pathological adult subject was simply stuck or frozen due to an inability to remember, conceptualize, or narrate past events. Orality, anality, fetishism, and so on became, in the Freudian itinerary, places that children visited on their way to reproductive, genital heterosexuality, but not places to stay for long.

This stubborn lingering of pastness (whether it appears as anachronistic style, as the reappearance of bygone events in the symptom, or as arrested development) is a hallmark of queer affect: a "revolution" in the old sense of the word, as a turning back. Heather Love's *Feeling Backward*, for instance, astutely diagnoses the "backwards" emotions elaborated by artists for whom the birth of the modern homosexual identity-form was

constraining rather than liberating: shame, passivity, melancholy, and recoil, to name but a few, were ways of refusing the progressive logic by which becoming ever more visible was correlated with achieving ever more freedom.²⁵ Late-nineteenth-century perverts, melancholically attached to obsolete erotic objects or fetishes they ought to have outgrown, or repeating unproductive bodily behaviors over and over, also used pastness to resist the commodity-time of speedy manufacture and planned obsolescence.

History's Holes

Interestingly, the dialectic between time and history has been characteristic of not only Euro-American modernity but also queer theory, or at least one particular caricature of queer theory. “Ludic” queer theory, as it has been called, tends to align itself with deconstruction, with the play of signifiers and the possibilities opened up by understanding identities as relational, constructed, and endlessly detoured to meanings outside themselves.²⁶ Insofar as deconstruction depends on the endless penetration of the whole by the other, current meanings by prior ones, it has dismantled the fiction of a time fully present to itself and accessible as such; its detotalization of time has been useful to a queer theory concerned with desire and fantasy. But according to some critics, ludic queer theory has not always concerned itself with history understood as a collective consciousness of the significance, singularity, and sheer pain of exploitation, or as collective agency toward relief from that pain.²⁷ A more somber queer theory, on the other hand, tends to align itself with Marxism, with social conflict and sufferings inflicted by powerful groups, with a politics attuned to need — with histories and even with History.²⁸ But this version of queer theory has not always attended to the vagaries of temporality, as practiced and as embodied, that make new conceptions of “the historical” possible.

Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* has been a key text for bringing these two strains of queer theory into conversation, insofar as it explicates the “hauntological” properties of Marxist thought: Marx, Derrida argues, theorizes an ethics of responsibility toward the other across time — toward the dead or toward that which was impossible in a given historical moment, each understood as calls for a different future to which we cannot but answer with imperfect and incomplete reparations. In this Marx, the present is thereby always split, but split by prior violence and

future possibility rather than simply by the nature of signification.²⁹ As Derrida argues, we are thereby bound not only to history (that is, we do not make it just as we please), but also, and crucially, to the other who always takes precedence and has priority and thus splits our selfhood, detours our forward-moving agency. Here, time does not heal but further fissures history.

Specters of Marx, then, contributes to queer theory the idea that time can produce new social relations and even new forms of justice that counter the chrononormative and chronobiopolitical. This call for a more sensate, sensory historical method also appears in other important critical theories, whether explicitly Marxist or not: Walter Benjamin's concept of "shock," for instance, suggests that modernity reorganizes the human sensorium.³⁰ Raymond Williams's phrase "structures of feeling" suggests that social change can be felt as well as cognitively apprehended, and that it appears alongside dominant structures in the uncanny persistence of obsolete formations and the proleptic, partial emergence of new ones.³¹ Jameson's famous dictum that "history is what hurts" offers another example: in his analysis, large-scale social structures set limits on individual desires, even as works of imaginative fiction repress the fact of those limits and provide formal resolutions to irresolvable social conflicts.³² In Lyotard's formulation of the *differend* is yet another version of history as hurt: occurrences earn their historical eventness by delegitimizing both the existing methods for knowing the past and the forms that that knowledge can take: in this sense, traumatic experiences productively humiliate and discombobulate the knower into new epistemologies, or at least into feelings that intimate the possibility of new modes of apprehension.³³ Yet none of these formulations engages with what might be called vulgar physical pleasure. Even Derrida consistently displaces his radically porous ghost-host into a visual and occasionally aural economy (seeing and being seen, calling and responding), and *Specters of Marx* also insists that the ghost can only be, at best, a prosthetic body.

Indeed, in contemporary critical theory the body itself seems an impossible object with which or through which to think historically. Jameson suggests that "body theory" is actually the symptom of a certain loss of time itself, specifically the deeply comparativist time of modernity.³⁴ In the moment of modernity's emergence, he argues, prior modes of production had survived alongside industrial capitalism to produce a sense of living in two different time zones. There was something to compare modern temporality *to*, though Luciano's work importantly suggests that

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the alternative times were not so much prior to industrialization as they were co-constructed within it. For Jameson, temporal heterogeneity has been replaced by the instantaneity of the Internet, cell phones, and so on, and “it seems clear enough that when you have nothing left but your own temporal present, it follows that you have nothing left but your own body.”³⁵ To do body theory, he suggests, is to reduce history to something timeless and permanent, to heal history with bodily plenitude in the way Luciano describes denizens of antebellum sentimental culture doing—and unfortunately, gender and queer theory are Jameson’s straw-girl examples of disciplines clinging to the fiction of a timeless, monolithic referent. Yet Jameson also reminds us that the body is an insistently non-present, nonunified nonentity: “We experience the body through our experience of the world and of other people, so that it is perhaps a misnomer to speak of the body at all as a substantive with a definite article, unless we have in mind the bodies of others, rather than our own phenomenological referent.”³⁶ Queer theory and feminist theory have answered to calls for poststructuralist and affective historiography by foregrounding *just this kind* of body, that is, one intelligible only through its encounters with other bodies. *Pace* Jameson, though, what makes queer theory *queer* as opposed to simply deconstructionist is also its insistence on risking a certain vulgar referentiality, its understanding of the sexual encounter as precisely the body and ego’s undoing.³⁷

Queer theory, then, pays attention to gaps and losses that are both structural and visceral: the all-too-real limits presented by the stigmatization of AIDS, by violence against lesbians and gays, by the unbearable heaviness of the gender binary. Queer theory also describes how specific forms of knowing, being, belonging, and embodying are prevented from emerging in the first place, often by techniques that intimately involve the body. However, even in these descriptions pain has taken center stage. Queer melancholia theory, an especially lush account of how the mourning process bodies forth gendered subjects, insists that subjectivity itself is a record of partings and foreclosures, cross-hatched with the compensatory forms these absences engender. Within this paradigm, queer becoming-collective-across-time and even the concept of futurity itself are predicated upon injury—separations, injuries, spatial displacements, preclusions, and other negative and negating forms of bodily experience—or traumas that precede and determine bodiliness itself, that make matter into bodies. This paradigm is indebted, via Judith Butler’s *The Psychic Life of Power*, not only to Derrida but also to Freud’s theory that

a bodily *imago* and eventually the ego itself emerge from raw suffering. With Freud, we gain the understanding that hurt is what morphologizes; it congeals inchoate sensations into personally and culturally legible forms of embodiment — we might even say that to Freud, hurt is what histories. In “On Narcissism,” Freud describes how the libido invests in an uncomfortable local sensation such as a toothache, by which means it doubles back upon itself to delineate body parts as such; Freud suggests that the genitals are perhaps the most insistent locale for such hypochondriacal fixations.³⁸ In “The Ego and the Id,” he argues that from within this Möbius loop of libidinal self-attachment to sensitive areas, an increasingly unified sense of bodily contours emerges, and these contours materialize the ego that is “at first, a bodily ego,” an interconnected set of perceived surfaces and boundaries.³⁹ Opening these terms out into the social, we might think of engroupment — the collective form of the ego forged beyond familial ties — as engendered by this process as well as by, or alongside, chrononormativity. Bodily experiences of pain inflicted on a population, or indeed the agony of being socially reduced to a misreading of one’s own body, may inform queer social contours, a wounded morphology of the social following a wounded morphology of the individual. Individual bodily *imagos*, in short, are nascent collective and historical formations in that they may arise from contingent, institutionalized forms of hurt that are experienced simultaneously and survive over time yet *cannot be reduced to* the social relations of the mode of economic production. We might call these collectively held morphologies the raw material for a queerly inflected consciousness that can hold deconstructionism and historical materialism in productive tension.

But why is it that even in queer theory, only pain seems so socially and theoretically generative? Turning back to Freud, we might ask why physical sensation, which he sees as the ground for body and psyche, must always be unpleasant, and even why this originary bodily displeasure is eventually recast as the kind of tumescence or engorgement that only penises experience. In order to become “ego,” that is, Freud’s wound must effectively be turned inside out into a phallus: as Judith Butler puts it, “The gaping hole in the mouth, the panoply of organic and hypochondriacal ailments, are synthesized in and summarized by the prototypical male genitals.”⁴⁰ But even Butler’s revision of Freud via the lesbian phallus only suggests that the primary tumescence from which the ego emerges might be productively relocated onto arms, hipbones, and other sites as a way of theorizing a lesbian ego; it doesn’t challenge the phallicizing con-

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struction of “sensation” itself. Where goes that interestingly aching hole, symptom of a certain desire to be filled up by—let us risk—a vulgar referent?

One figure for that hole might be the open mouth of *K.I.P.*'s simultaneously mourning and lusting spectator, who seems to want to have sex with history—with dead men, with men older than he, with an era and place barred by both linear time and racial politics. Thus *K.I.P.*'s hauntological imaginings actually revise and go beyond *Specters of Marx*—and much of the queer work that has followed from it—by centering on erotic pleasure. In this light, we can reread *K.I.P.* as more than a gay-affirmative experimental film: it is also a queer hauntological exercise. For Nguyen's videographic double exposure exploits *Kip Noll*'s user-generated discombobulation of *filmic* and *erotic* sequence, in order to jam *historical* sequence. In the remake, the reflection of Nguyen's own face hovers over a scene of plenitude he did not witness directly, a time that he never experienced but nevertheless clearly mourns for: the exuberant moment when urban gay men in the 1970s and early 1980s could pursue and enjoy casual sex without latex. Too young, too racialized, too “foreign”—that is, too queer by more than half—Nguyen could not have literally joined the pre-AIDS white urban gay male scene for which *Kip Noll, Superstar* is a metonym. But by superimposing his own image *as* a spectator onto a scene already containing a trace of earlier spectators, with that trace in turn present only in the negative as gaps and repetitions, Nguyen figuratively joins a community of past- and present-tense viewers, some of whom we can presume died in the AIDS epidemic or are now seropositive. And he does so without ever presenting those people or that community as complete or fully apprehensible, for “K.I.P.,” I presume, is a riff not only on Kip Noll's name but also on R.I.P., or “Rest in Peace,” indicating both the desire to enliven the dead and the understanding that this is never wholly possible.⁴¹ *K.I.P.* acknowledges that while physical contact across time may be—like the sexual relation itself—impossible, the very wish for it demands and enacts formal strategies and political stances worth taking seriously.

Longing produces modes of both belonging and “being long,” or persisting over time.⁴² Yet this is more than desire, for desire is a form of belief in the referential object that the subject feels s/he lacks and that would make him or her whole (and insofar as this referential object is often posited in terms of a *lost* object, desire is “historiographical,” a way of writing that object into the present). Erotics, on the other hand, traffics

less in belief than in encounter, less in damaged wholes than in intersections of body parts, less in loss than in novel possibility (will this part fit into that one? what's my gender if I do this or that to my body?). *K.I.P.* proffers a productive *disbelief* in the referential object, a disbelief strong enough to produce some kind of pseudo-encounter with it that isn't worried about the pseudo. Here, artifice is part of the pleasure: the fetishistic belief in the lost object is less important than the titillation of "but all the same . . ." of the performance of substitution itself. *K.I.P.*'s queer subject would thus feel a encounter with what looks like a historical index not as a restored wholeness but as a momentary reorganization or rezoning of parts, even of the part-whole relation (will this part of a collective past fit into my present, remake it in some interesting way? how does this part of my personal past estrange a collective present?). He or she would refuse to write the lost object into the present, but try to encounter it already in the present, by encountering the present itself as hybrid. And he or she would use the body as a tool to effect, figure, and perform that encounter. By confronting the erotics of hauntology, *K.I.P.* intervenes not only on *Specters of Marx* but also on the occasion for that text: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Or rather, *K.I.P.* allows us to restore to *Hamlet* a *pleasurably* visceral sense of temporal and historical dissidence that even Derrida for the most part skirts.

O, O, O, O that Shakespearean Drag

Following *K.I.P.*, we might read Shakespeare a bit more literally. For when Prince Hamlet says that "the time is out of joint," he describes time as if its heterogeneity feels like a skeletal, or at least deeply somatic, dislocation.⁴³ In this famous phrase, time has, indeed *is*, a body; the disruption of present by past and the resulting disunity of the present seem visceral. And so it was in the early modern period of English history, where kinship articulated—in both the discursive and the physiological senses of the term—the body politic.⁴⁴ That is, the fleshly bonds of marriage and parentage (the latter sealed through a religious or eventually civil ceremony that would legitimize an eventual heir) not only metaphorized asymmetrical power relations but also directly regulated transfers and mergers of authority. Here and throughout *Hamlet*, then, the body is less a metaphor for time than it is the means for and effect of convoluting time, and consequently the smooth machinery of political power, or the mode of the state's *re*production. As Hamlet recognizes,

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time as body, and “the times,” or the sphere of official politics and national history, form a joint: the body and the state are, rather than mere metaphors for one another, mutually constructing.

But *Hamlet* the play and Hamlet the Prince stick the gears of this machine. Centered on a protagonist who eschews the marriage plot or even its alternative, the revenge plot, Shakespeare’s play freezes narrative movement, political/historical progression, and psychic development. As John Hunt argues, *Hamlet* is a fantasia of corporeal disfigurement and fragmentation, reducing the human form to “a collection of pieces whose morbidity intimates their violent dissolution.”⁴⁵ Hamlet’s disarticulated body, as well the bodies of those around him, both registers and performs time’s heterogeneity. Indeed, the very manner in which Claudius murders King Hamlet effects generational disarray and somatic disintegration. As the Ghost tells it:

Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leperous distilment; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body,
And with a sudden vigour doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;
And a most instant tetter bark’d about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
All my smooth body. (1.5.59–73)

In this twisted Edenic tale, Claudius, whom the King has already called “the serpent that did sting thy father’s life” (1.5.39), pours a poisonous liquid into the sleeping King’s ear, so that the King is feminized not only in the implicit analogy to Eve but also in terms of the “natural gates and alleys” of his body. The Ghost goes on to compare the King’s blood to milk, another female fluid, and the poison to curds in the milk. Given that Hamlet himself later makes the pun of his mother lying in an “en-seamed” bed (3.4.92), this supposedly female milk looks suddenly and suspiciously like semen. The “leperous” poison Claudius administers, and

the fact that the King's body erupts in "tettors" and "crust," also make the transmission look venereal. The story of Adam and Eve has here been transformed into a story of Adam and Steve, a scene of what looks very much like male-on-male oral or anal sex causing the royal house to fall from health into disease, timeless glory into sordid history.

Perhaps, too, Hamlet is complicit with at least part of this story: given his disinterest in marrying Ophelia, obsession with Claudius, and passion for Laertes, it's not unreasonable to read the entire play as — like *K.I.P.* — a melancholic wish for the homoerotic Eden that is this play's primal scene. In historical terms, that lost Eden might even be the era prior to the establishment of the Church of England, when Catholic monasteries sheltered passions between men. For Hamlet, the time for love between men is, indeed, out of joint, as it is for Nguyen, whose *K.I.P.* imagines a different articulation between past and present, body and collectivity. Through *K.I.P.* we might imagine a different *Hamlet*, in which the Prince would have figured out a way to answer his cross-generational and same-sex desires and, as the opening lines of Shakespeare's play put it, "stand, and unfold yourself" toward other times (I.I.2).

But the Shakespearean referent for *K.I.P.*, with its more exuberantly sensual effects of temporal alterity and its vision of how temporal dislocation might produce new orientations of desire, might be less the ponderous *Hamlet* than the spritely *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which nighttime and the nonsequential logic of dreams enable all kinds of illicit alliances. The latter play puts forth a model of time as embodied, of bodies and their *pleasures* as at once the vessels, figures, and even causes of temporal (dis)orientation. Indeed, the servant Philostrate initiates the comedy of mistimed erotic encounters — of people waking up suddenly and falling instantly in love with forbidden or ridiculous objects — solely for the purpose of speeding up the four days and nights preceding Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding. *Midsummer* follows the conventions of comedic closure with a wedding near the end, where everyone pairs off appropriately and the fairies' blessing explicitly ensures that the royal children will have none of the physical deformations that run through *Hamlet*. But like *K.I.P.*, the play also suggests that temporal misalignments can be the means of opening up other possible worlds.

One of these worlds is, indeed, "historical" and offers queer theory something that neither poststructuralist Marxisms nor even their eroticized manifestation in *K.I.P.* considers: the world of the working classes, or at least of laborers, whose own vulgar presence (not only embodied

but erotic) we seem to have scrubbed from so much deconstructionist and Marxist criticism alike. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Duke Theseus and his parallel in the fairy world, the fairy king Oberon, move in tandem with one another. With their entrances and exits exquisitely choreographed in counterpoint, Theseus and Oberon demonstrate how synchrony with one another and power over the timing of others intersect. Both have the power to control time literally, through their servants: Philostrate's disorderings are supposed to make time go by more quickly for Theseus as he awaits his wedding, and on behalf of Oberon, Puck disrupts Queen Titania's normative time for falling in love by making her fall in love with the first object she sees upon awakening. But the two noblemen also have power over time ideologically, through their control of women's reproductive and marital roles: Theseus both speeds up the time that passes all too slowly, delaying his nuptial consummation with Hippolyta and also insists that Hermia agree to her arranged marriage within four days; Oberon fast-forwards Titania's desire as well as object-choice because he wants her adopted Indian child.

The play's "rude mechanicals," on the other hand, are both "rude" and "mechanical" precisely insofar as their timing is off both with one another and with the temporal expectations of the aristocrats. "Here is a play fitted," intones Quince the Carpenter as he casts the characters in their play-within-a-play, punning on Snug the Joiner's trade.⁴⁶ But Snug is both the most and the least fitted to his part. He is the most apt for the part because, he and the players agree, all he has to do is roar, which any idiot can do. But Snug is also unfitted: Quince instructs him to speak "extempore" (1.2.64), literally out of time, making him the figure for a play that is simultaneously too short ("ten words," says Philostrate) and too long (by exactly those ten words, he adds) (5.1.61–63). In fact, the entire play-within-a-play is out of joint, with its clumsy literalizations and malapropisms, its botching of the heterosexual love plot that frames the rest of the play, its dragging on and on of some scenes. Furthermore, as Snug remarks, Bottom's wandering off into the forest delays their presence at the wedding, preventing them from becoming rich. In a pun suggesting not only financial success but also heterosexual consummation, Snug declares that "if our sport had gone forward," meaning if they had caught the wedding revelers earlier, "we had all been made men" (4.2.17–18).

The mechanicals are not "men": apparently unmarried, failed in their efforts to accumulate wealth, unsynchronized with one another and with

dramatic conventions of pacing, they live in the slow time of delay and deferral. As Snug puts it, “I am slow of study” (2.2.63). The craftsmen’s queerness, then, consists of a bodily difference that cannot be reduced to sexual orientation, a class relation that cannot be reduced to ownership of the means of production or the lack thereof—and they are not simply “premodern” in their slowness. What the artisans lack are the properties of temporal decorum and life-trajectory that distinguish their social superiors: as Marcel Mauss writes in his discussion of habitus, prestige accrues to those who can perfectly imitate “the ordered, authorized, tested action” of a given culture.⁴⁷ But as queerly classed subjects, the mechanicals are shadows of the “apprentice problem” in early modern Europe: not being allowed to marry, forced to delay forming families until they had accumulated something, apprentices and servants were viewed as sexual threats.⁴⁸ Their status as bound was at once economic, sexual, and temporal. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, then, poses an important question for this project: how is class “timed”?

It’s Class Time

Part of what I aim to do in this book is to restore a differently queer body to queer theory—the body erotic thought not only in terms of its possibilities for making sexual cultures but in terms of its capacities for labor—by which I mean both the social relations of production/reproduction and the expenditure of bodily energy. Thus far I have argued that the discipline of “timing” engenders a sense of being and belonging that feels natural: in fact, Bourdieu’s description of the rhythms of habitus appears in his discussion of the differences between kinship under the law and what he calls practical kinship, or the actual patterns of interaction that form the social field as such. For Bourdieu, habitus organizes a form of belonging that subtends and supersedes kinship—and that is class. Where physical appearance and name fail to secure likeness, the hidden rhythms of gesture, giving and withholding, play and humor, courtship, and etiquette, among other things, establish similarities between strangers that seem to be inborn. These techniques, Mauss writes, are felt by the subject who performs them as “*actions of a mechanical, physical, or physico-chemical order*.”⁴⁹ With Shakespeare’s mechanicals, on the other hand, the gears stick.

Let me hazard that “queer” names a class relation of a different sort from the standard Marxist definition of a relationship between people

who own the means of production and people whose biggest asset is their labor power — even as both of these forms of power also involve time. We might think of class as an embodied synchronic and diachronic organization. In its dominant forms, class enables its bearers what looks like “natural” control over their body and its effects, or the diachronic means of sexual and social reproduction. In turn, failures or refusals to inhabit middle- and upper-middle-class habitus appear as, precisely, asynchrony, or time out of joint. And as denizens of times out of joint, queers *are* a subjugated class in the sense I have described it, even as many of us occupy other positions of power including the economic.

With queers and/of the working class, too, the synchronic aspect of habitus out of joint meets the diachronic aspect of generationality. In other words, these two sometimes but not always overlapping subject-positions, queer and working class, also confront time longitudinally. In “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Walter Benjamin writes that “Social Democracy thought fit to assign to the working class the role of the redeemer of future generations, in this way cutting the sinews of its greatest strength. This training made the working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice, for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than that of liberated grandchildren.”⁵⁰ Anticipating Edelman’s *No Future* by many decades, this passage suggests that the perils of reprofuturity bear upon a more traditionally Marxist class struggle. Unlike Edelman, Benjamin asks that the working class not only reject the future but also turn back toward the suffering of their forebears. Yet, as I have argued here, suffering need not be the only food the ancestors offer. *K.I.P.* turns back toward the elders (if not the ancestors, in the genealogical sense of the term) for a different form of nourishment. Nguyen’s diaphanous, lusting queer archivalist gazes hungrily into a scene that excludes him, mouth agape to receive lineal bliss. And this turning back feeds not hatred but entitlement, not the spirit of sacrifice but a commitment to bodily potentiality that neither capitalism nor heterosexuality can fully contain.

