

DUSTY: Yes. I love you because you tell me. I love you because we never speak in periods. I love you because sometimes you choose otherwise, as well, and we go other places, and glimpse at other things.

KIMBERLEE: I don't know how you walk through the world, and I know that there's a cavern between what many people map onto you and how you feel—and I know that that's partially because of your choice.

DUSTY: And to know these discourses cut you

KIMBERLEE: and work to constrain us

DUSTY: and work to pull us apart

KIMBERLEE: but I want us to keep going

DUSTY: I hope we keep going

KIMBERLEE: get angry

DUSTY: feel hurts

KIMBERLEE: and get ugly. To ask what that means without knowing the answer. To own up to all the things we are and are not to one another.

DUSTY: And I know this, but I also know us. You make my theory messy.

KIMBERLEE: And I know these things, but I too, know us.

### Note

1. This scene is excerpted from "*In-Appropriation: Race, queerness, and the politics of intimacy*" a collaborative multi-media performance project by Dustin Bradley Goltz and Kimberlee Pérez (2010–11). The piece was first presented at The Critical Studies Whiteness Symposium, Iowa City, September 2010.

## 27. *Tomorrow Be-Longs to Us*

JEFFREY BENNETT AND ISAAC WEST

For many queer studies scholars, sustained attention to queer temporalities as a site of academic inquiry surfaced first in the debates surrounding the antisocial or antirelational thesis. The antirelational thesis bubbled up from a number of projects with a shared anxiety about how one's relation to actual and imagined collectivities prefigured the fields of socialities to privilege the future over the present, the common good over individual desires, and assimilation into established ways of living over the crafting of queer lives (Caserio, Edelman, Halberstam, Muñoz, & Dean, 2006). In the interest of space and because of its popularity, Lee Edelman's (2004) *No Future* will stand in as the representative text for this unruly field of argument.<sup>1</sup> Edelman's trenchant critique of the figure of the Child and its representation of our obligations to future generations charges the spectre of children with impeding the enjoyment of pleasures in the here and now. Edelman's nonpartisan indictment cites both the religious right's invocation of the dangers of same-sex marriage on the traditional family and LGBTQ advocates' demands for tolerance and acceptance in the name of queer youth as equally guilty of allowing the future to inveigh itself on the present. In both cases, according to Edelman, unknown and even unborn children dictate our actions in the here and now. In the former case, children must be protected from "alternative lifestyles" for their own good. In the latter case, LGBTQ youth, who are assumed to be innocent and pure (read: stripped of their sexualities and sexual acts), need shelter from those who would persecute them. Either way, for Edelman, the present and the future are not ours to have or enjoy as much as they are repeated deferrals of our desires for someone else's benefit. As a result, for those in common cause with Edelman, truly queer temporalities are thoroughly presentist and antirelational in their lack of regard for others and their opinions, except as objects of desire.

The antirelationality of this thesis plays itself out in a number of ways, and we cannot address the particularities of all of Edelman's arguments. Instead, with the help of the authors of the preceding essays, we undertake a more modest task of arresting the allure of antirelationality and its hostility to the future by restoring some of the complicating complexity Edelman evacuates from the argumentative field. If we must live, love, and work together, which are only some of the shared conditions of community we cannot escape, then surely we can imagine temporalities more suitable for the sharing of time and space with others than those proposed by antirelationality.

Relationality, in Edelman's (2004) account, can be understood only in exceedingly narrow and prefigured terms, so much so that the dynamism of antirelationality is generated by its uncompromising negation of the supposedly moribund realm of social relations with others. In contrast to most perspectives on identity, wherein identities can be generative markers of identification, invention, and pride, Edelman asks queers to embrace their liminality and exclusion as an opportunity to experience pleasures unfettered by social normativities. That is, to use Edelman's parlance, *sinthomosexuals* engender a pleasurable threat to heteronormative hegemonies through their unintelligibility as they revel in their incongruence with what is right, good, or acceptable. Queers, then, must reject association with politics and other forms of collectivity because these fantasies are tied to a vision of the future implicated inextricably in an imagined relation to future generations. In his words, "we are no more able to conceive of a politics without a fantasy of the future than we are able to conceive of a future without the figure of the Child." Edelman thus deduces, "that figural Child alone embodies the citizen as an ideal, entitled to claim full rights to its future share in the nation's good, though always at the cost of limiting the rights 'real' citizens are allowed" (p. 11). The future, therefore, is unmoored from its productive valence as a site of hope, replaced instead by an understanding of the future as a perpetual encroachment by others on our own pleasures in the present. What concerns us, even more so after engaging the preceding essays, is how Edelman reduces relationality to one and only one possible configuration, which ignores the discursive antagonisms available for multiple articulations in our relations with one another (see Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). As scholars of communication, we cannot and should not accept Edelman's symbolic determinism. Social units of recognition, such as partners, lovers, co-workers, family, kin, and citizen, are enacted in various ways in and because of different contexts, thereby negating Edelman's underlying premise about the fixity of the future's grip on the present. Accordingly, we want to question what it is that we are being asked to resist, to interrogate the anti- in antirelationality, to

offer another perspective on queer temporalities that need not end or begin with the Child.

As the argument progresses in *No Future*, the refusal to entertain any chance of a productive futurity enjoins Edelman to even more deterministic readings of the social field, including one that we find to work at cross-purposes with the foundational premise of his argument. As unfair as it may be to isolate one passage from a dense work to stand in for the whole of the argument, we want to introduce a representative fragment of Edelman's prose to offer another reading of his citation of a queer text to unpack the consequences of the antirelational thesis. Edelman (2004) writes,

This fascism of the baby's face, which encourages parents, whether gay or straight, to join in a rousing chorus of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me,' suggests that if few can bring up a child without constantly bringing it up—as if the future secured by the Child, the one true access to social security, could only be claimed for the other's sake, and never for one's own—then that future can only belong to those who purport to *feel* for the other (with all that appropriative implications that such a 'feeling for' suggests). It can only belong to those who accede to the fantasy of a compassion by which they shelter the infant future from *sinthomosexuals*, who offer it none). (p. 75)

The imagery of the fascism of the baby's face is funny in its own way, and it has been fodder for many jokes between our friends about their children. Yet, the choice to reference this chilling song from *Cabaret* strikes these two show tune queens as odd, maybe even self-defeating, and it gives us a departure point from which we can leverage another reading of the connections among relations, pleasures, presents, and futures. Lyrically, the anthem anticipates a nationalist awakening in Germany, which comports neatly with Edelman's reading of how a text can initiate and cement a set of relations, and here conveniently children and fascism share more than a metaphorical relationship to one another. At the same time, however, the song is more than just a literal articulation of children with futurity as it punctuates another message in *Cabaret* in its indexing of the inescapability of our inter-implications in one another in larger cultural contexts, which troubles the connections Edelman draws between the Child and self-imposing futures.

Whether in the stage production or the movie, "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" is a fictional nationalist anthem foreshadowing the rise of the Nazis and the death of the proto-queer cultures in the Kit Kat Klub. On the stage (in the style of the edgier revival popularized in the 1990s), the audience first hears a recording of the song sung by a child just before Herr Schultz, a Jewish man, asks Fraulein Schneider, a non-Jewish woman, to marry him. After Schneider accepts Schultz's proposal, the reprise of the song interrupts

their engagement party when one of Schneider's tenants who wants to curry favor with a low-ranking Nazi official prompts the partygoers to join her in singing the song, leading Schneider to break off the engagement to avoid any further scrutiny into her life and boarding house. By the end of the scene, fascism is seeping into all facets of the characters' lives, which should remind us not that the future is always and only fascistic in its collective demands on the present, but instead that an inward inattentiveness to the world around us will not shelter us from its shifting winds.<sup>2</sup> Although the characters had been able to write off Nazism as a minor nuisance in their lives, "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" introduces us to a new reality wherein individual desires cannot overcome their prohibition by a future that has been written for them by others—a future that may or may not have been preventable, but one assured by an antirelational abdication of a collective concern for others.

In the movie, where the aforementioned characters and scene are absent from the script, the foreboding song introduces a dramatic shift in the narrative signaling the sudden ascendancy of the Nazi party. Brian, an English academic seeking refuge from his doctoral studies, falls slowly for Sally Bowles, an eccentric American trying to make it as a nightclub performer in Berlin, whom he shares a room with in a boarding house. One night at the club, Sally meets Max, a baron who lavishes the couple with gifts, meals, and plenty of booze. Shortly after they meet each other, Max takes them to dinner, and on their way home in his chauffeured car they pass a person murdered by Nazis. Max ridicules the Nazis as a "gang of stupid hooligans" with one redeeming value when he states, "Let them get rid of the Communists and later we'll be able to control them." An incredulous Brian responds, "But who exactly is we?" Without missing a beat Max retorts, "Germany, of course." In between shots where the police and bystanders display different reactions to the violent scene before them, Sally shortcuts the discussion of politics to ask if they can go out to a club that night, and Max counters with an invitation to his country estate for the weekend. Unlike the happy threesome portrayed in the song "Two Ladies," where the Emcee shares an idyllic polyamorous relationship with two women, the trio of Max, Sally, and Brian cannot navigate these currents of desire with the same skill. Max flirts with Brian as he reveals he is married to a wife away in Cologne. Max and his wife, according to him, have "quite a special understanding." Awkward moments permeate the weekend, such as when Max dances with Sally and then they all dance together in a drunken stupor, where it is not clear who desires whom or why.

At the end of their weekend together, on the way back to Berlin, the threesome gets even more complicated when the two men share a drink and some awkward glances in a countryside beer garden while Sally sleeps off a

hangover in the car. Before Max and Brian can verbalize their emotions "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" interrupts and disrupts their gazes. A young blonde boy dressed in a khaki-colored uniform rises to his feet to sing the song. The tight shot on his face widens out to reveal his red armband and swastika, and the crowd eventually rises to its feet and sings along, save one older gentleman who sits silently in resignation. Near the end of the song, the young man raises a salute to Hitler. No longer enjoying the vibe of the beer garden, Brian asks Max, "You still think that you can control them?" and they get into a car and drive off. Upon their return to the city, the Nazis are more visible, even gaining influence among the tenants of their boarding house who repeat vile lies about Jews. By the end of the film, the Nazi takeover is complete. After Liza Minnelli's belting of "Cabaret," the final shot stops on a distorted reflection of the Kit Kat Klub's audience, now composed almost entirely of men in Nazi regalia.

We recount the musical and film in detail not to blame the principal characters (or Edelman) for the rise of fascism. We cannot expect an individual or even a small group of individuals to resist and defeat anti-Semitism and National Socialism. Rather, we read *Cabaret* as a cautionary tale about the importance of recognizing our shared humanity with one another in conditions not always of our own choosing. Despite Edelman's wish to the contrary, pleasures do not exist in a vacuum, alone, or without considerations of others.<sup>3</sup> If we read the characters of *Cabaret* as representatives of the retreat into radical individualism, as the imagining of one's self as disconnected from or at least unaffected by the world around them, where it is possible to ignore the warning bells of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" without any care for the futures of the Others in our lives, it is not altogether clear that antirelational futures are better for all involved.<sup>4</sup>

So why make so much of one passage and an off-hand reference to a musical/movie? In *Cabaret* and *No Future*, on our reading, the apocalypse is not one borne solely from too much action in the name of a unified future. Instead, indifference to the future or the lack of recognition of one's implication in the social is what allows us to excuse all sorts of injustices. For better or worse, we share space and time with others in communities, and we cannot coexist without caring for others, which is to say, without attending to our relationships with each other. To be fair, *No Future* is an exquisitely written polemic that deftly weaves together textual readings of Hitchcock films with psychoanalytic theory to stake out truly original ground in queer thought. Many of Edelman's turns of phrase are even laugh out loud funny. And they would be funnier if not for the grave consequences of an antisocial queer theory that can only be enjoyed by the privileged few for whom the future

is always already guaranteed. Edelman's advice is to say "Fuck the future," which can take many forms and not all of them end in *jouissance*.

If we continue our generous engagement with Edelman, particularly his provocative call to shun the desire for recognition as legitimate and valuable members of the social, his arguments do shed light on the ways in which normalizing tendencies can operate in some political actions when re-presentations of the self require a straightening out of one's appearance or actions in the name of children. (Of course, Edelman would disagree without our qualifications of his argument, but our training as rhetorical scholars predisposes us to default to more provisional and contextual judgments of discourse and subject positions.) Therefore, we find some value in these arguments, but we remain unwilling to adopt Edelman's position in any orthodox sense because his arguments rely on a flattening of futures to a universal category of experience devoid of specific contexts or any considerations of agentic relationships in the realm of the social. In other words, the future does beckon us so that we imagine a future better than our current circumstances, but these futures and the sacrifices of the present to get there are not all the same. If we constrain ourselves to narrativizing the future through unreconstructed and self-correcting liberalisms, salvific narratives of religion, and upward class mobility, then Edelman's arguments are more persuasive. Yet, if we were to follow along with Edelman and condemn categorically all of the communicative labor of racial minorities working for civil rights, women demanding reproductive rights, or religious persons working together with environmentalists to reframe our perceptions of the environment as undifferentiated and irrecoverable discourses of futurity, it would require us to install at the outset a universalism evacuating the rhetoricity of symbols and signs, without any regard for the specificity or the context of the articulation of the demand, and that move is not sustainable on pragmatic or political grounds for those of us who value communication as an agentic practice. Moreover, the determinism of antirelationality also asks us to not entertain other questions, such as, Does the Child, literally or figuratively, traffic in equal measure across all social fields in exactly the same manner? Or, What racialized, classed, cisgendered, and other imaginaries are required by antirelationality and to what effect? Or, Is any theory of temporality available to us outside of the logics of straight time? For us, these questions are too important to overlook in the name of a promised (read: future) *jouissance*. Therefore, we need more complex vocabularies for engaging queer temporalities and relationalities, and we find many valuable insights in the essays in this volume.

The implicit and explicit attention paid to queer temporalities in these essays and the larger field of queer studies is a fitting response to a discipline

all too often mired in an ironic repetition of the same arguments over and over again about the apocalyptic futures of (fill-in-the-blank) normativities. We find hope in the slow movement away from paranoid reading strategies, a strategy more appropriate for a different time and place, to reparative readings interested in nurturing affective bonds capable of sustaining other ways of living together.<sup>5</sup> We want to be clear here that we are not ignoring or excusing the current injustices too many LGBTQs face in their everyday lives, but changing conditions of visibility, recognition, and worldmaking require us to reconsider our relationships to the past, present, and future. What these changing conditions enable is the ability to see ourselves as parts of different futures that may have been previously unavailable to us. And, not all of these futures are better as a matter of necessary correspondence. But if we are able to imagine futures because they are available to us, then the question is how to imagine temporalities that do not simply reincorporate and reproduce what is already available. Luckily, the works of Carrillo Rowe (2005), and Pérez and Goltz (2010) highlight the complex relationship among temporalities, praxis, and politics in their investigations of intersubjective identities. Their writings compel us to explore further those moments of opportunity and cultural rupture that challenge commonly held understandings of agency, material relations, and the development of the self. Although Berlant (2011) warns us that intersubjectivity is impossible from a psychoanalytic standpoint (as the drive to know the other is always incomplete and a projection of our own desires), we nevertheless believe communication has much to offer in regard to the development of politics of relations, especially as they relate to futurities. Affiliation, desire, and coupling happen for all sorts of reasons, for the present and the future as well as the past, with and without children.

In contrast to Edelman's determinism, Carrillo Rowe (2005) offers us another account of temporalities, relationalities, and politics. By playing with the terms of be-longing, informed by a decolonial imaginary that decenters the sovereign self, Carrillo Rowe reminds us that we cannot escape our cultural surroundings and collective ways of living. "A politics of relation," according to Carrillo Rowe, "is constituted not first through the 'Self,' but through its own longings to be with. Belonging precedes being" (p. 17). The simplicity of the last sentence amplifies its profundity in its declaration that we are only legible to others and ourselves because of our imbrication in one another through symbolic economies. As an alternative to radical individualism, then, we must account for the fact that "'subjectivity' may be thought of as an *effect* of be-longing—of the affective, passionate, and political ties that bind us to others" (p. 18). The critical reflection of one's belonging is not satisfied by an interrogation of one's sense of self and inventorying one's intersectional identities.

The perfunctory confessional and mapping of one's race, class, gender, and other forms of identity will not do if it is meant to shore up one's individual location in these power relations. A more productive path of political belonging requires us to understand one's subjectivity as an effect of these power relations, richly and densely implicated by one's relations between persons, not just an assemblage of templates of identities. In fact, Carrillo Rowe's move from identity to modes of belonging allows us the opportunity to "reveal the often overlooked conditions of belonging that these forces impose, as well as their effects on resistance and/or transformative affinities" (p. 28). These modes of differential belonging ask us to consider the contextualized nature of our relations to work their weaknesses and exploit their affective potentials to create more just worlds.

Unlike the guaranteed relations Edelman detests in "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," Carrillo Rowe injects a more fluid and malleable notion of be-longing to dislodge relationalities from static notions of identity. The etymology of "belonging" is "to go along with," and Carrillo Rowe's split of the term into "be longing" implies a futurity to relationalities, an infinite demand in chains of recognition without determination regarding the materialities of our bodies, affect, desire, or history. To be longing is an exercise in power relations, but it is an exercise without volition and one saturated in history, even though it often involves a fictive narrative of individual sovereignty. These are powerful fictions for "Belonging is about where you long to belong, whom you want to nestle beside at the end of the day, who you call when you are in pain, or who accompanies you in ritual—in signifying practices that give life meaning, if by no other means than to call mindful attention to the awesome beauty of now" (p. 27). These spatial temporalities along with the relationalities enacted in and from them are important for understanding our situatedness "between self and community, between community and theory, between theory and justice" (pp. 15–16).

Goltz (Chapter 29, this volume) also highlights the value of looking to non-normative understandings of the time, both in the execution of the essay itself and its provocative conclusion. For Goltz, the past repeatedly surfaces to interrupt the narrative, inserting itself into the present throughout the piece (itself temporarily disrupted in print). The future is also addressed in memorable ways. Goltz concludes his performance with a valuable piece of advice for his newlywed friends. He proposes: "May you never fall victim to the burdens of 'what's next?' And always play in the potentiality of 'what else?'" Of course, the stakes of "what else" are high in a toast offered to two people, perhaps experiencing differing temporalities and perhaps not experiencing time in the same way. Like Goltz, we might understand time as a

recurrence and a resource, as an accumulation of experiences and knowledge that we can draw from, not in a linear way commanded by "what next," but like the wedding toast, in the experience of the "what else," which is not a command to go somewhere in particular in a linear, logical way, but to search out what else can be done from this place and time, together in a purposeful relationship of unknown duration.

Likewise, Kimberlee Pérez and Dustin Goltz (2010) emphasize coalitional subjectivities through the performance of individual narratives as a relationality beyond the expected ones generated by performer and audience. With their collaborative personal narratives, be-longing is activated to stress the dialectical materialization of difference as a resource for drawing connections between seemingly disparate identities into coalitional spaces of subjectivity. This modernization of the Aristotelian maxim "The whole is more than the sum of its parts" draws attention to the coalitional subjectivities enabled by the copresence of relationalities and, following Carrillo Rowe's lead, the possibilities initiated by the push and pull of interpellations. In the course of their performance, the relationalities are not always easy to manage or negotiate. Take for instance when the authors try to dance together. In one scene, aptly named "Queer Utopia," the lines of affiliation, even in the movement of bodies, are not simple. "We move back and forth with the other, upstaging, dancing alongside, embracing, and retreating. We welcome the other to play within our imaginations, yet are always aware of the temporal and limited ways that we can fully embrace the other" (p. 255). The authors also confront each other throughout, reminding us that relationality is not the consubstantial union of two into one, but a coalitional subjectivity. "Rather than collapsing difference, the notion of a coalitional subject in performance maintains distinctions in dialogue, recognizing the heterogeneity of the collective of performer/s and audience members" (p. 262). Although this insight is directed as an intervention into performance studies, we can also mine it as a resource for thinking about the dynamics of identity more generally as a vibrant, as opposed to deadening, form of relational intersubjectivity.

In the end, we return to Carrillo Rowe (2005) to emphasize the importance of desire as a form of relationality that need not require any deterministic rendering of the future. In a passage that seeks to challenge strict Althusserian readings of interpellation, Carrillo Rowe argues that the "meanings we make alongside of those we love, particularly across lines of difference, allow us to remake our assumptions and widen our vision of the political field" (p. 36). So resonant is this line that Pérez and Goltz (2010) use it as the starting point for their own performative work, seeking to come to terms with the constitution of their identities alongside and against one another.

Carrillo Rowe's explication of "differential belonging," in which "collective conditions out of which our agency, experience, and consciousness emerge" (p. 15), is reminiscent of Gadamer's musings about the metaphor of the "horizon." Our vision is always within the parameters of our own personal experience, literally offering us a "lens" for living in the world. However, just as the horizon exposes the limitations of our vision, so to does it provide for the possibility of something more that lies before and beyond us, both in time and in space. The relational intersubjectivities proposed by the authors in this section are provocative interlocutors for understanding futurities as they anticipate, expect, and demand an infinite chain of recognition, where we can be longing for others in this anticipation. In so doing, the concept of be-longing attends also to the materiality of bodies, affect, and love because intersubjectivity is refigured as an effect of belonging with others. This, from our perspective, moves the conversation in a much more productive direction than antirelationality, wherein communication plays more than an instrumental role in refiguring our futures together.

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### Notes

1. Edelman has been employed as a representative text for the antirelational thesis elsewhere. See especially Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
2. Of course, some might claim the problem with National Socialism in Germany provides more support for Edelman's reading because Nazis acted in the name of the future with purified races and a thousand year reign of the Third Reich. Even so, the most extreme example of the National Socialism in Germany fails to support Edelman's reading of futurity because it was the lack of antagonisms available in political vocabularies, indexed by deep-seated anti-Semitism, that allowed for their atrocities.

3. José Esteban Muñoz's searing indictment of the registering of Edelman's complaint asks us to reconsider why the fantasy of antirelationality and the requirement of a universalizable queer positionality surfaces at the moment when intersectional critiques are gaining currency in queer studies. We concur with Muñoz about the appropriateness of this question. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
4. For more on the relationship between duty and pleasure, see James Chesebro's discussion of hedonics. "Ethical Communication and Sexual Orientation," in *Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity*, eds. J. Makau & R. C. Arnett (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
5. For more of paranoid and reparative readings, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2003), and, *The Weather in Proust* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).