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Queer Melancholia

When one works on *work, on the work of mourning, when one works at the work of mourning, one is already, yes, already,* doing *such work, enduring this work of mourning from the very start, letting it work within oneself, and thus authorizing oneself to do it, according it to oneself, according it within oneself, and giving oneself this liberty of finitude, the most worthy and the freest possible.*

—Jacques Derrida, "By Force of Mourning"

"Time for a new journal," announce founding editors Carolyn Dinshaw and David M. Halperin in the first issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies.*[1] Time, thus, presents itself as one of queer theory's central concerns from the start, but what kind of time is ushered in by Dinshaw and Halperin's words? In their declaration that it is "time for a new journal," they invoke at least two temporalities.[2] On the one hand, "time," here, is the historical moment of *GLQ*'s founding—that opportune moment in the early 1990s when the coincidence of a vibrant and necessary queer politics and increasingly innovative queer scholarship seemed to call for "a journal dedicated solely to this interdisciplinary field, a field that is at once rapidly expanding and delimiting itself."[3] This time is kairotic time—an opportune moment for decisive action that, in this case, opens up the possibility to reimagine queerness and, what is more, the very queerness of time. On the other hand, the time they invoke is also the regular and regulated time of scholarly production—not only the regularity of a journal that adheres to quarterly publication but also the regularity of newly appearing journals meant to keep apace of the constant development of new fields. Indeed, *GLQ*'s dominant association with a version of the queer that emphasizes disruption, opposition, and radicality obscures the institutionalized conventions to which it adheres as a journal in the first place.

ABSTRACT *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, founded in 1993, offers an exemplary site for understanding the rise of queer theory, which, from the start, has struggled with the tension between institutionalization and radical resistance. By situating the emergence of this journal and queer theory in general within the AIDS crisis and the literary tradition of the elegy, this essay offers a reading of conventional academic practices as rituals of queer melancholia that comes to challenge the assumption of queer theory's secularity. Representations 153. 2021 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018, electronic ISSN 1533-855X, pages 105–26. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2021.153.7.105.

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The extent to which Dinshaw and Halperin acknowledge the significant move toward institutionalization that founding a journal marks cannot be overstated. Instead of forgoing institutionalization altogether, Dinshaw and Halperin "make no bones about the fact that with this journal [they] seek a broader, wider niche for lesbian and gay studies in the academy and in cultural life."[4] As they elaborate, "Such institutional and cultural acknowledgment brings money, curricular space, and jobs, and such support increases our capacity to do new work."[5] And even as they recognize that "as everyone is aware, with growing institutional recognition, lesbian and gay studies runs the risk of losing its edge and narrowing its desires," they do not take this as a reason to disavow entirely the institutional forms that render queer theory legible to the academy.[6] On the contrary, they rely upon institutional conventions just as much as they seek to remake them. As they explain, "*GLQ* locates itself in this tension, seeks to play it out."[7] Instead of opposing repetition and disruption, then, Dinshaw and Halperin suggest that the very notion of queer theory that emerges from the pages of *GLQ* requires the citation of older and established forms. In other words, the radicality of queer theory is inseparable from a logic of iteration, or, as I would suggest, it is precisely through repetition—by which I mean the *citation* of norms and practices and not the perfectly faithful *reproduction* of the same old institutional forms—that the very notion of queer disruption is cultivated and even made possible. By attending to the institutional norms from which *GLQ* draws, we may better situate the journal and queer theory within a set of intersecting conditions including the history of the theory journal, the queer politics of grief in the context of the AIDS crisis, and the elegiac mode of literary studies. The ritualization of these norms, I will suggest, shifts focus away from the queer exceptionalism of iconoclasm, disruption, and shock toward queer repetition, persistence, and survival.[8]

Rather than see the institutionalization and professionalization of queer theory as necessarily restrictive to the field, I turn to the theory journal in order to understand what possibilities for transformation and resistance exist in such a conventional object of the profession. As Jeffrey Williams claims,

> The theory journal, in its profusion and institutional mass, did not only report the developments of theory but created the expectation of theory; like a museum that has a wall of frames of a certain size and color to be filled, it precipitated a certain form of writing. Temporally, the theory journal did not merely gather things after the fact but prompted the kind of writing known as theory.[9]

Following Williams, I ask how *GLQ,* as a theory journal, generates the possibility of new forms of queer theory rather than simply gathers theories that conform with its expectations. Indeed, in recounting the founding of *GLQ,* Halperin is clear to place it alongside other theory journals like

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Representations, *Screen*, *Yale Journal of Criticism*, *Qui Parle*, *Raritan*, *diacritics*, *Textual Practice*, *differences*, and *Signs* and, therefore, to emphasize the journal's relationship to literary studies.[10] My focus here will be less on the institutional history of the theory journal and more on the ways in which institutional forms like the academic journal sustain affective attachments and devotions to particular texts, people, and communities.

I will argue through a reading of *GLQ* that queer theory normalizes intellectual labor as itself a practice of mourning and that this ritualization of grief challenges the assumption of queer theory's secularity. Following Jacques Derrida, who claims, "All work in general works *at mourning*," I suggest that queer theory's sustained scholarly attention to Freudian melancholia is inextricable from the experience of what I call "queer melancholia," which forgoes any clear distinction between normal mourning, on the one hand, and pathological melancholia, on the other, in favor of what Jahan Ramazani calls "melancholic mourning," or a mourning bereft of consolation.[11] By situating the emergence of queer theory amidst the AIDS pandemic and within a longer tradition of the elegy, I hope to show how the practice of queer theorizing is inseparable from the rituals of caring for the dead. Ultimately, to frame queer time within the terms of ritual, I suggest, is both to challenge queer theory's secularity and the progressive temporality to which it is bound and to arrive at an understanding of how the conventions of ritual repetition in theory can actually give rise to resistance and new forms of communal life.

The History of *GLQ* and Ritual Time

In order to commemorate handing over the editorship of *GLQ* to Ann Cvetkovich and Annamarie Jagose in 2006, Dinshaw wrote "The History of *GLQ,* Volume 1: LGBTQ Studies, Censorship, and Other Transnational Problems," which offers an account of the journal's origins and lays out hopes for the journal's future. Reflecting on the early 1990s, the essay provides a sketch of the political activism, intellectual energy, and culture wars that gave rise to the journal's embrace of queerness. The AIDS crisis, the polemic protests by ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and Queer Nation, the opposition to both heteronorm and homonorm gender policing, the growing interest in queer theory in academic conferences, the publication of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), the controversy over the "NEA Four"—all of these conditions corroborate Dinshaw and Halperin's intuition that "the time was certainly ripe for something with

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queer in its title."[12] So they chose the working title *Queer Quarterly*, which made even more explicit than "*GLQ*" the tension between the radical energy of queerness and the legitimating but stultifying force of the academy. With the political, intellectual, and cultural urgency of the early 1990s in mind, Dinshaw asserts, "It was a queer time. In fact, it was *GLQ* time."[13] For Dinshaw, then, *GLQ* is emblematic of queer theory's investment in the exploration of queer time. But if we take seriously the assertion that queer time is, indeed, "*GLQ* time," at what formulation of queer time do we arrive?

One aspect of this queer temporality emerges from a narrative central to Dinshaw's essay, which recounts a transnational conflict that led to *GLQ*'s departure from Gordon and Breach Publishing Group and its subsequent acquisition by Duke University Press in 1996. While Gordon and Breach's main business office was located in Newark, New Jersey, it also had typesetting and printing facilities in Malaysia and warehouses and distribution centers in Singapore. Halperin and Dinshaw originally opted to work with this publishing group instead of a university press because they had imagined that its corporate structure would enable greater editorial freedom and therefore limit any form of censorship. According to Dinshaw's version of the story, however, a conflict arose around K. Daymond's piece "Bodies on the Line," which depicted lesbians in various arrangements of sadomasochistic sex acts, precisely because of Gordon and Breach's structure as a transnational corporation. During the editorial process of Daymond's piece, Gordon and Breach informed Halperin and Dinshaw that the publishing group would refuse to print the photo-essay because of its pornographic nature. Informing this decision was an earlier incident in which Malaysian customs officials had inspected a small mailing of *GLQ* volume 2, number 4. Lawrence Cohen's essay "Holi in Banaras and the *Mahaland̩* of Modernity" in this issue reproduced a series of obscene cartoons taken from pamphlets disseminated during the Hindu festival of Holi in Banaras. "Particularly offensive to the Malaysians, it seems," explains Dinshaw, "were two images: the sexualized depiction of a mosque as a spread-legged female, open and waiting for the Hindu males with huge erect members marching in front of it/her, and a representation of Hindu males with enormous phalluses shoving a mosque up a Muslim man's behind."[14] Even though Malaysia is not an Islamic state, Dinshaw explains, its increasing Islamicization under Prime Minister Mahathir enabled the invocation of a "dormant law (dating from British colonial times) against unnatural sexual practices [used] to harass its opposition and foment fear of threats to the nation."[15] She goes on to surmise that "it was the anti-Islamic nature of the representations that mattered to the Malaysian officials. The religious symbolism of these sexual images is what I believe proved crucial," much like the Danish cartoons of Muhammad printed by *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005.[16] As a result of this offense,

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the Malaysian police warned that if any more such obscenity was published by the journal, the Gordon and Breach office in Malaysia would be shut down. *GLQ*, as a result, moved to Duke University Press because Halperin and Dinshaw believed that a press without such complicated transnational arrangements would avoid further censorship. Ironically, even after Daymond's piece was published by Duke in *GLQ* volume 4, number 1, the issue ran into trouble, this time when Canadian customs officials held up copies of the journal meant to be showcased at the 1997 meeting of the Modern Language Association held in Toronto that year.

While Dinshaw's insistence on the significance of Gordon and Breach's decision to comply with the Malaysian police and of the incident with Canadian customs is meant to complicate "any simple narrative here of Western progress versus Eastern archaism," she concedes that "rhetorically, at least, the censorship in this story presents a contrast between Western freedoms and Islam-backed prohibitions. Thus the *GLQ* story might be boiled down to an ideological battle between progressive modernity, on the one hand, and timeless religion, on the other."[17] Dinshaw's deployment of the terms "narrative," "story," and "rhetoric" to describe her "history" of *GLQ*, however, is crucial to understanding her greater implication that the inseparability of underlying values and models of time gives rise to particular kinds of histories and interpretations. Read in this way, Dinshaw's history of *GLQ* is less an accurate testament of fact—what history really ever is?—and more an exercise in storytelling. As she acknowledges, "There is a strong guiding line in my *GLQ* history, after all, of progress and development."[18] And this investment in temporal progress at the level of *syuzhet*—both the story of *GLQ*'s progressive overcoming of conflict or its commemoration of editorial succession and the larger progressive narrative of the US lesbian and gay liberation movement in which this story is couched—reveals an attachment to the value of political progress, which Dinshaw elaborates as "a progressive secular modernity combining academic freedom (which assumes that *anything* can be subjected to critical analysis) with social justice and democracy, including freedom of the press and of religion, and the separation of church and state."[19] This story thus figures temporal progress as the representation of political progress that is, importantly here, secular and modern.

By drawing attention to the constructed nature of this narrative, then, Dinshaw suggests the necessity of its critique and the critique of its concomitant values. In other words, by opening up the possibility of alternative queer temporalities, Dinshaw not only critiques a progressive model of time that is complicit in the racialization and colonization of the Global South; she also makes possible a critique of secular modernity.[20] This is where her training as a medievalist comes in handy: she asserts, "It is a Western *Enlightenment* sense of history that produces that timeline of progress. Medievalists,

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in analyzing the Middle Ages, must envision other concepts of time and other forms of history that do not depend on progress and development as their motors."[21] But, in addition to her professional training as a medievalist, Dinshaw also confesses a personal attachment to nonprogressive modes of time motivated by her position as a person of South Asian descent: "My insistence now on understanding alternatives to narratives of Western progress derives at least some of its ardor from the necessities of my life lived in figuring out the weird temporalities of the diasporic subject."[22] Aligned, then, with postcolonial studies, which also attests to the simultaneous production of the subaltern subject and the Middle Ages as both premodern and nonsecular, Dinshaw urges queer theory to face up to its own secular assumptions about temporal and political progress.

In light of this call for self-critique, Dinshaw makes "one final suggestion for getting away from the progress narrative in LGBTQ studies: we must be willing to engage more deeply with religion as a factor complicating and enlarging narratives of modernity."[23] She argues, "religious beliefs and structures of history require nonetheless that we find different temporalities to describe their presence and persistence in the here and now."[24] According to Dinshaw, religious time might offer an antidote to the violence and exclusion committed by a queer progressive politics underpinned by a model of progressive time, but what exactly does she mean here by "religion" or "religious temporalities"? Although she doesn't provide a full definition of religion in this essay's final prescriptive move, she does hint at one possible understanding of religion when she writes, "I believe that we must add 'religion'—in its psychological dimensions as well as its social, cultural, political, economic, historical, and theological dimensions worldwide in the past, present, and future—to our intersectional analytic mantra of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, nation, and class."[25] While this appeal to take religion seriously in queer theory appears only to add religion to a whole host of categories of difference—just another term amongst many—Dinshaw's characterization of this oft-uttered series in intersectional queer analyses as mantric is telling, if not also tongue-in-cheek. What this statement implies is that just like a mantra, which cultivates the proper concentration in the practice of meditation and prayer, this series of terms aids in the production of the proper subject of queer theorizing. Religion, for Dinshaw, then, is not just another term to be added to a growing series but rather furnishes the very temporal structure of a practice of ritual repetition. In other words, the very devotion to an intersectional queer analysis of a mantra of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, nation, class, and religion is religiously construed insofar as the unfolding of ritual recitation offers a resistance to temporal progress.

Ultimately, Dinshaw's closing suggestion of the religious quality of repetition, ritual, and iteration reframes the entirety of her essay, for, as she

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explains early on, the very form of the academic journal also adheres to a temporal logic of repetition. Indeed, this structural aspect of the academic journal is what fosters Dinshaw and Halperin's belief that queer theory could still "make at least a little mischief" through this institutionalized form.[26] "Journals," she continues, "can perform a resistance to disciplinary power—even as they obviously depend on disciplines—via their seriality and potential endlessness. . . . In this way the journal medium could help foster the weirdness, the perversity, that gave rise to our queer project in the first place."[27] Neither deadening and rote nor even constrained by the regularity and regulation of time, repetition and seriality, for Dinshaw, provide the very ground of queer perversion, weirdness, and radicality—the very possibility of resistance to progress. Part and parcel of this resistance is a challenge to secular modernity, which often structures narratives of both queer theory and literary studies. Thus it is no surprise that Dinshaw's reclamation of ritual in and for queer theory portends Lori Branch's argument that "the secularism of our discipline [literary studies] confesses its disavowed but ineradicable religiousness . . . in the ritual by which it must cyclically reinvent its claims to secularity."[28] Branch maintains that a recognition of literary studies' "ritual re-assertion of its secularity" ultimately undercuts any claim to secularity because to read the constant resecularization of the field as ritual reveals a disciplinary devotion to a secular narrative not entirely different from the fervor of faith. Like Branch, then, Dinshaw identifies religion with ritual repetition, especially its challenge to a progressive secular modernity. Insofar as the temporal logic of repetition is organized, for Dinshaw, by the mantric, the ritual, and the radicality of *GLQ*'s queerness, *GLQ*'s time was from the start allied with the radical potential of devotional practice. Thus it is this temporal resistance, this affective attachment to nonprogressive time, and the potential that these alternative temporalities engender for real political change and transformation that characterize Dinshaw's version of queer time.[29]

Queer Theory's Melancholic Rituals

Following Dinshaw's lead, Judith Butler offers an extended critique of putatively modern sexual politics in the 2008 essay "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time." In the essay, Butler identifies a problem of time at the heart of conflicts between competing notions of freedom—in particular, the problem of progressive time's exclusionary force. "The way in which debates within sexual politics are framed," she claims, "are already imbued with the problem of time, of progress in particular, and in certain notions of what it means to unfold a future of freedom in time."[30] She

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moves away from a pluralistic notion of cultural difference premised upon a cultural holism that itself relies upon the presuppositions that diverse cultures are self-sufficient and that each offers a distinct model of time. Instead, she argues, "hegemonic conceptions of progress define themselves over and against a premodern temporality that they produce for the purposes of their own self-legitimation."[31] Premodern sexual norms are thus consolidated as the requisite outside that props up the dominance of progressive sexual politics and time from which they are excluded. By analyzing anti-Islamic state policies in the Netherlands, France, and the United States, Butler shows how the developmental norms of secular modernity and progressive time foster implicitly and explicitly violent forms of assimilation that ultimately require "an immunization against contestation"—that is, the suppression of cultural contestation enforced by the dogmatism of a hegemonic secularism.[32] In this way, progressive sexual politics are weaponized by the state in order to further a program of cultural homogeneity built upon a procedure of exclusion.[33]

While both Dinshaw and Butler focus on Islam in particular, their concomitant critiques of progressive secular time render religion a significant category of analysis for all manifestations of alternative, nonprogressive, queer temporalities. As I have suggested, repetition and ritual emerge for Dinshaw as the organizing temporal framework for the journal *GLQ* from its inception, which is to say that religion makes itself relevant to all formulations of queer time from the start—at least from the start of queer theory's production within the domain of *GLQ*. This is especially true for Butler's own essay in the first issue of the journal, an essay titled "Critically Queer." Indeed, Butler's essay calls for a reading of queer theory and queer critique in religious terms not only because of its invocation of ritual and repetition but more specifically because of its meditation upon and performance of melancholic ritual.

Published simultaneously in 1993 as the second essay in *GLQ*'s first issue and, in a revised form, as the eighth and final chapter of Butler's third book, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* "Critically Queer" begins as a reflection on the inherent queerness of the performative utterance and the performative effects and resignification of the term "queer." Within Butler's larger body of work, however, this essay offers an important first attempt to articulate the distinction between the theatrical sense of performance and theories of performativity alongside the theoretical relationship between performativity and the psychoanalytic formulation of melancholia.[34] While the latter pair of theories prominently emerges in *Gender Trouble,* Butler admits that she "failed . . . to refer the theatricality of drag back to the psychoanalytic discussions [of melancholia] that preceded it."[35] This is to say that Butler's deployment of melancholia, performance, and performativity,

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by her account, is insufficiently elaborated in *Gender Trouble* and that a clarification of the relationship between these terms would correct misreadings that give rise to “a voluntarist account of gender which presumes a subject, intact, prior to its gendering.”[36] As Butler explains, “The misapprehension about gender performativity is this: that gender is a choice, or that gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning, that there is a ‘one’ who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today.”[37] “Critically Queer,” then, as well as *Bodies That Matter*, of which it is the concluding part, offer an important but complicated rejoinder to those who might hold on to a voluntarist notion of gender performance.

The complicated nature of this response rests in the fact that even as Butler attempts to remind readers of her authorial intention in *Gender Trouble*, she ultimately undoes this intention by offering a subject that is produced by discourse and not the other way around. In other words, as the epigraph of Butler’s essay suggests, discourse takes on a life of its own despite the author’s wishes: “Discourse is not life,” writes Michel Foucault; “its time is not yours.”[38] And yet it seems impossible to divorce “Critically Queer” from the author function “Judith Butler.” Indeed, how might a serious consideration of the autobiographical or confessional quality of this essay further our understanding of this text not as a theory unmoored but rather as a mode of writing that emerges out of its particular context? In order to highlight the tension between authorial intention and the discursive production of the subject, Butler makes especial use of the movement between the first-person singular pronoun in and out of scare quotes—the vacillation between the “I” and the I. For example, in order to emphasize that discourse is prior to the subject who speaks—that there is no subject prior to their formation in discourse—Butler writes, “The ‘I’ is thus a citation of the place of the ‘I’ in speech, where that place has a certain priority and anonymity with respect to the life it animates: it is the historically revisable possibility of a name that precedes and exceeds me, but without which I cannot speak.”[39] The citation of the “I” in scare quotes—the predominant way that Butler invokes the first-person singular throughout this essay—serves to render anonymous and deictic the site of the speaking subject. But interspersed among these pronominal generalities lie a few moments when she names a “me” or “I” without scare quotes, such as the passage just quoted, which remind us that this essay is just as much about Judith Butler as it is about the subject performatively produced as an effect of discourse. It is not only discourse that “precedes and exceeds” the subject but also the particular proliferation of citations, interpretations, and even misreadings of Butler’s work that precede and exceed her.

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The text also draws attention to Butler in a single but significant invocation of her name in diminutive form—Judy. In a paragraph that grounds her analysis in the context of the AIDS crisis, Butler suggests that "the hyperbolic 'performance' of death in the practice of 'die-ins' and the theatrical 'outness' by which queer activism has disrupted the closeting distinction between public and private space" have increased AIDS awareness and the political potential of the theatrical in the public domain.[40] She then identifies numerous examples of these politicized theatrical strategies, including a reference to "drag performance benefits for AIDS (by which I would include both Lypsinka's and Liza Minelli's in which she, finally, does Judy)."[41] While the name Judy here is clearly a reference to Judy Garland, this citation also exceeds the Hollywood star by echoing an earlier crucial moment in the preface to *Bodies That Matter*. In the first pages of the book, Butler recounts an anecdote that explains, in part, her turn to the materiality of the body after deep engagement in *Gender Trouble* with a body of feminist theory that attempted "to bring the feminine body into writing" in order to undo the phallogocentrism of Western thought.[42] "Theorizing," she writes,

> from the ruins of the Logos invites the following question: "What about the materiality of the body?" Actually, in the recent past, the question was repeatedly formulated to me in this way: "What about the materiality of the body, *Judy*?" I took it that the addition of "Judy" was an effort to dislodge me from the more formal "Judith" and to recall me to a bodily life that could not be theorized away. There was a certain exasperation in the delivery of that final diminutive, a certain patronizing quality which (re)constituted me as an unruly child, one who needed to be brought to task, restored to that bodily being which is, after all, considered to be most real, most pressing, most undeniable. Perhaps this was an effort to recall me to an apparently evacuated femininity, the one that was constituted at that moment in the mid-'50s when the figure of Judy Garland inadvertently produced a string of "Judys" whose later appropriations and derailments could not have been predicted.[43]

According to this reflection, Butler imagines herself not only as tied to Judy Garland and the femininity she promoted but also as but one iteration of "Judy," a name that precedes and exceeds her. In this way, the citation of "Judy" in "Critically Queer" refers simultaneously to Judy Garland and "Judy" Butler, but it also, in the diminutive form, brings attention to the body of the theorist. What Butler hears in the question "What about the materiality of the body, *Judy*?" is also the question "What about the materiality of *your* body?" This suggests that the inquiry into and concern for the bodies of others are inseparable from the concern for one's own body. It is no surprise, then, that the citation of the name "Judy," which leads us circuitously back to an interest in Judith Butler's body, is introduced in the context of the mass death during the AIDS crisis and the hyperbolic

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"performance" of death. Indeed, the precarity of the body, the body of the subject discursively produced, is rendered all the more charged in the context of the profound bodily illness, wasting away, and death caused by AIDS.

It is also telling that Butler invokes the name "Judy" in the context of drag benefits for AIDS. In order to explain how one might "link the trope by which discourse is described as 'performing' and that theatrical sense of performance in which the hyperbolic status of gender norms seems central," she proposes that "what is 'performed' in drag is, of course, *the sign* of gender, a sign which is not the same as the body it figures, but which cannot be read without it."[44] The implication of this assertion is that whatever discourse performs cannot be read without reference to the body even if a textual corpus made up of signs is irreducible to material corporeality. What Butler offers in "Critically Queer" is a literary analogue to drag. Just as drag functions as an allegory that mimes and exposes the hyperbolic discursive conventions that produce gender, the hyperbolically playful and strategic movements from "I" to I and the citation of "Judy" by both Liza Minelli and Butler mime and expose the voluntarist fantasy that produces authorial intention and mastery. Butler's own use of self-referential language puts on display the iterative logic that undergirds the force of the performative act and reminds her readers that "reiterations are never simply replicas of the same. And the 'act' by which a name authorizes or de-authorizes a set of social or sexual relations is, of necessity, *a repetition.*"[45] She then cites Derrida, who reflects on the citationality of the performative—that a performative functions through its repeated citation of a prior utterance or what Butler calls "the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force"—in order to conclude that "the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance."[46] While historical force sediments and accumulates on account of a performative's compulsory citation, this repetition is never self-identical to that which it cites. Indeed, a performative's felicity is not guaranteed from the start; instead, citation opens up the possibility of numerous infelicities, which for Derrida and Butler, are not complete failures but the very possibility of a performative's resignification or subversive citation. The repetition that governs performativity and undoes the mastery of the subject thus eschews a temporality of progressive development and in so doing offers a queer time incompatible with the temporality of progressive secular modernity. Furthermore, as a form of literary drag, this text renders even more acute the question about and concern over embodiment. In the end, "Critically Queer" offers a performance of performativity, one that destabilizes through repeated parody authorial intention while still holding onto the significance of the queer body—both Butler's body and the bodies of those afflicted by the AIDS pandemic.

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This final point is crucial because it highlights how Butler's performance of performativity is also a ritual performance of melancholia, a ritual performance of interminable grief conditioned by the AIDS crisis. The language of ritual appears twice in "Critically Queer." Its first citation comes when Butler characterizes the performative as producing effects under the constraint of a regulatory regime. She explains, "Social constraints, taboos, prohibitions, threats of punishment operate in the ritualized repetition of norms, and this repetition constitutes the temporalized scene of gender construction and destabilization."[47] Ritual in this claim is tightly bound to repetition and specifically the repetition of constraints that serve to condition the firing of a performative. Another reference to ritual emerges at a crucial moment when Butler attempts to articulate the distinction between heterosexual melancholia, on the one hand, and gay melancholia, on the other. Because of the cultural preemption of grief for homosexual love—a foundational prohibition of homosexuality—Butler argues, "normal" gender is constituted through a process of melancholic identification and incorporation: "The straight man *becomes* (mimes, cites, appropriates, assumes the status of) the man he 'never' loved and 'never' grieved; the straight woman *becomes* the woman she 'never' loved and 'never' grieved. It is in this sense, then, that what is most apparently performed as gender is the sign and symptom of a pervasive disavowal."[48] Heterosexual melancholia, thus, relies on the unconscious disavowal of homosexual desire. Gay melancholia, in contrast, operates a bit differently: "It is precisely to counter this pervasive cultural risk of gay melancholia (what the newspapers generalize as 'depression') that there has been an insistent publicization and politicization of grief over those who have died from AIDS; the NAMES Project Quilt is exemplary, ritualizing and repeating the name itself as a way of publicly avowing the limitless loss."[49] Gay melancholia, here, seems to name a state of depression over the way that preempted grief for homosexual desire transforms into a cultural resistance to mourning queer death. In response to this conscious recognition of prohibited grief, activism has politicized the work of mourning those who have died of AIDS-related causes.[50] In order to resist the proscription of grief over those who have died of AIDS, then, actions like the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt emerge as public rituals of grief whose avowal of loss serves as a form of resistance to homophobia. Ritual is again, in this moment, tied to repetition, but instead of engendering constraint, it enables resistance through the making of meaning. Ritual, thus, assumes an ambivalent position in "Critically Queer" as both restrictive and generative.[51]

Despite this ambivalence, Butler seems more interested in the generative function of ritual in this essay, especially insofar as she implicitly positions her own writing as an extension of these queer rituals of grief. She

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concludes her analysis of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt by declaring, "The emergence of collective institutions for grieving are thus crucial to survival, to the reassembling of community, the reworking of kinship, the reweaving of sustaining relations. And insofar as they involve the publicization and dramatization of death, they call to be read as life-affirming rejoinders to the dire psychic consequences of a grieving process culturally thwarted and proscribed."[52] How might we read the institutionalization of queer theory through the founding of a journal as the emergence of a collective institution for grieving? And might we understand "Critically Queer," like the die-ins, to perform a hyperbolic dramatization of death? Butler concludes this piece with the following confession:

> It is one of the ambivalent implications of the decentering of the subject to have one's writing be the site of a necessary and inevitable expropriation. But this yielding of ownership over what one writes has an important set of political corollaries, for the taking up, reforming, deforming of one's words does open up a difficult future terrain of community, one in which the hope of ever fully recognizing oneself in the terms by which one signifies is sure to be disappointed. This not owning of one's words is there from the start, however, since speaking is always in some ways the speaking of a stranger through and as oneself, the melancholic reiteration of a language that one never chose, that one does not find as an instrument to be used, but which one is, as it were, used by, expropriated in, as a continuing condition of the "one" and the "we," the ambivalent condition of the power that binds.[53]

This passage is dazzling in its performance of authorship that is simultaneously ambiguous and overdetermined. The ambiguity, marked by Butler's decision to use the pronoun "one" as opposed to "I" or "me," is almost entirely a pretense because this final paragraph is so obviously about the misreadings of *Gender Trouble*. Butler's choice of the indefinite pronoun, however, like the earlier shifting between "I" and I, underlines the theoretical emphasis on the "decentering of the subject," which ultimately gives rise here to a question about community formation. This is especially clear in Butler's final pronominal movement from the "one" to the "we." Even though she voices worry over the disappointment of misrecognition effected by the expropriation of one's words and writing, she acknowledges that this expropriative quality of language is there from the start and can actually function to bring one into community with a "we" in ways not fully known from the outset. In other words, Butler recognizes that even though interpretations of *Gender Trouble* have deformed her authorial intent, the very condition of language's unownability, of its priority to the formation of the subject, enables the binding of self and other in community. Thus, "the speaking of a stranger through and as oneself" is the estrangement both of and in language that makes possible the speaking *with* strangers in unforeseeable ways.

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In the end, the ambiguity of Butler's authorial intent—the shifting between a claimed and unclaimed first-person singular "I," the deployment of the indefinite pronoun "one," and the profoundly oblique reference to Butler's own bodily life that haunts the essay—decenters or even dissolves the authorial subject. We might even read Butler's essay as performing a dramatization or allegory of death that, in bringing together drag and the hyperbolic performance of death in the die-in, functions as a kind of literary drag. If drag exposes how the conventional constitution of gender is premised upon the disavowed attachments that constitute the "unperformable"—the fundamental prohibitions of incest and of homosexuality—then this literary drag of queer death, which both frames itself as a melancholic ritual and underlines the melancholia of performativity itself, serves to expose and, indeed, counter the prohibited grief over queer death upon which "normal" grief-work relies. In other words, by performing a kind of literary drag, Butler's essay functions as an extension of melancholic mourning for both those lives lost to the AIDS pandemic and the loss of self dramatized in the text. And while the ritualizing of queer mourning does not guarantee the radical undoing of homonormative conventions of grief altogether, it does make possible mourning's capacity to resist—mourning's capacity to render the ungrievable grievable. This is the precarity and potential of the rituals of queer melancholia: risking stultification for the possibility of engendering resistance whose effects are not guaranteed or foreseen from the start.

Queer Theory's Elegiac Mode

Butler's essay "Critically Queer," as I suggest, exemplifies the ways in which the melancholia of queer theory, what I have called queer melancholia, emerges out of the context of the AIDS crisis and in response to the politics of grief to which the pandemic gives rise. Put bluntly—and this point may be self-evident—the AIDS crisis fundamentally shapes the rise of queer theory. If we take the founding of *GLQ* as emblematic of this rise, then we see that AIDS conditions not only Butler's essay "Critically Queer" but also the remaining three essays in this first issue, written by Paul Morrison, Eve Sedgwick, and Kendall Thomas.[54] Not only does each make reference to the AIDS crisis; each essay also performs or analyzes a form of memorialization. Thus, queer theory as a form of practice functions in relationship to rituals of grief brought on by mass death. This is most explicit in Butler's essay, which imagines itself in solidarity with the work of drag benefits for AIDS, die-ins, and acts of memorialization like the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. However, the context of the AIDS crisis is not the only condition that informs the queer melancholia of queer theory.

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In the coda to *Poetry of Mourning* (1994), Jahan Ramazani concludes his interrogation of "modern elegy's repudiation of traditional elegy" with a reflection on "the persistence of the traditional elegy within the modern" by turning to other cultural forms of mourning.[55] At the center of his meditation is an analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, which, like elegy, he argues, "defy the social suppression of grief and . . . create new languages for its articulation."[56] Highlighting the AIDS Quilt's attempt "to break the grotesque silence imposed on open mourning by modern Anglo-American culture," Ramazani not only draws an analogy between elegy and this modern form of public memorialization but also suggests that the elegiac fundamentally frames a whole body of AIDS literature, including memoirs, novels, plays, and collections of poetry.[57] My contention here, following Ramazani, is that queer theory also belongs to this body of AIDS literature and that the melancholic rituals of queer theorizing should be read not only alongside contemporary performances of grief but also within the tradition of the elegy and the elegiac mode.[58]

Indeed, elegies figure prominently in the body of AIDS literature produced during the 1980s and 1990s, and like traditional English elegy, can be seen as "the work of mourning," which, following this Freudian phrase, Peter Sacks understands "both in the commonly accepted meaning of a product and in the more dynamic sense of the working through of an impulse or experience."[59] However, like other examples of modern English elegy, AIDS elegy resists and remakes the conventions of traditional elegy, which include most markedly a pastoral context, the use of repetition and refrain, a procession of mourners, the achievement of consolation, and an emphasis on resurrection and redemption.[60] And while he acknowledges that the anti-elegiac elegy's resistance to and appropriation of the genre's norms enact generic reclamation through rebellion, for Ramazani what clearly distinguishes modern elegy from its traditional predecessors is its consistent attack on "the psychological propensity of the genre to translate grief into consolation."[61]

Dagmawi Woubshet shows how this resistance to consolation and, therefore, lack of resurrection or redemption are compounded during the AIDS pandemic because, as he explains, "AIDS elegies are poems about being left behind, but they are also poems about leaving."[62] Because the death dates of HIV-positive authors like Melvin Dixon (1950–1992) and Paul Monette (1945–1995) were unknown yet imminent during the early AIDS pandemic, their AIDS elegies blurred the distinction between the subject and the object of grief. They offer what Woubshet calls a "poetics of compounding loss," not only because of the persistent and serial loss experienced during the early years of the pandemic but also because of "the notion that this

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compounded loss is heightened by reflexivity, with the subject's loss both object and subject, past and prospective, memory and immediate threat."[63] As the current COVID-19 pandemic has taught us, the threat of viral infection is enough to heighten one's anxieties over mortality. This is to suggest that during the early AIDS pandemic, when the scientific understanding of retroviral infection was still nascent and before the development of effective antiretroviral therapies rendered an HIV-positive diagnosis a manageable chronic disease for many (but not all), the threat of mortality was felt to be real for even those who were seronegative or whose serostatus was unknown. As a result, AIDS elegy resists any clear distinction between the voice of the living and the voice of the dead.[64] Read in this light, we might understand Butler's "Critically Queer" to function like AIDS elegy. First, the essay performs grief publicly in order to challenge the taboo on mourning queer death. It also offers no consolation for the expropriation of self but rather concedes its inevitability through the compulsory entry into language to which we are bound. Finally, its dramatization of the melancholic loss of both self and other blurs the boundary between the two.

My point here is not to reduce the variety of death writing—including memoirs, novels, plays, poetry, obituaries, eulogies, and even queer theory—that comes out of the early AIDS pandemic to the genre of elegy. Instead, I suggest that the tradition of elegy conditions the emergence of queer theory because the elegiac mode fundamentally shapes the field of English studies to which queer theory is bound.[65] As Deidre Lynch argues in *Loving Literature*, since the Romantic period, "declarations of love for literature have been framed in elegiac terms."[66] "From the mid-eighteenth century on," she claims, "the elegiac had vastly expanded its purview," especially as poetry offered a means of mourning bygone predecessors through reflexive reference to and citation of an older literary tradition.[67] Thus, drawing from the tradition of elegy, English studies "made explicit the links between bookishness and grieving" through its attempts to memorialize the lives of authors understood to be foundational to the English literary tradition.[68] Lynch's account of literary studies thus follows Diana Fuss's conception of poetic elegy as an ethical literary engagement with the past that deploys "the powers of figurative language, like prosopopoeia, not merely to recognize the dead but also to bring them back to life."[69]

Fuss's meditation on modern elegy, however, diverges from Lynch's account of the elegiac because it abides by a secular assumption that "bereft of traditional consolations like belief in eternal life or faith in restorative nature, modern poets appear to speak into a void."[70] In contrast, Lynch ultimately suggests that the literary relation in English resists conformation with any secular narrative of literary studies. "The peculiar pathos of literary reading," Lynch explains, "derives from the tension between that wish for

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identification and the wish to experience the discontinuities of historical time."[71] By gesturing toward communion with the ghosts of the past, literary studies not only concerns itself with the care of the dead but also challenges the linear and progressive temporality upon which secular narratives rely. In this way, "the productive confusions between literary and religious sanctity that comprise the post-Enlightenment history of literariness . . . make it easier to acknowledge the resemblances—for a start, the shared ritualistic quality—linking devoted readers' returns to beloved old books to the observances of those Protestant communicants whose regular, three-chapter-a-day schedule of Bible readings had long been enabling them to traverse the span from Genesis to Revelations on an annual basis."[72] Indeed, as Morton Bloomfield's account of the rise of the Renaissance English funerary or mourning elegy suggests, developments in elegy and the elegiac mode offer a "forerunner of a new religiousness."[73] In other words, just as the Renaissance English elegy of lamentation inherits the Catholic ritual function of elaborate funeral rites, obsequies, chantries, and the doctrine of purgatory—means of caring for the dead and sustaining the intimate relationship between the living and the dead that were prohibited by English Protestantism—the elegiac mode might be understood to inherit the impulse to care for and even revive the dead by fashioning newfound literary rituals of reading and writing.[74]

In fact, as Lynch suggests, these rituals include not only the constant return to and rereading of cherished authors long gone but also the very repetition of the refrain that literary studies is over. "Since the dawn of the literary era, readers have been getting ready to bid literature a final farewell," claims Lynch, because the mourning and yearning for the past internal to the elegiac mode of literary studies ultimately comes to identify literature itself as the object of its grief.[75] Literary studies from the start, thus, labors under a death sentence and persists in a perpetual state of posthumousness. It is the posthumousness of literary studies that queer theory inherits. In other words, the elegiac mode of queer theory catalyzed by the AIDS pandemic sets up a melancholic mourning whose object of loss is simultaneously the dead and the very project of queer theory. *What's queer about queer studies now? What comes after sex? What's left of theory? Queer and then what?*—questions like these are as constant in queer theory as the remembrance of the dead.[76] The precarity of life is intimately entangled with the precarity of theory, which is to say that the devotion to the dead is inseparable from the devotion to queer theory. In the end, the convergence of the elegiac mode and large-scale grief caused by the AIDS pandemic set the norms whereby the posthumousness of queer theory is constantly affirmed—the rituals of queer melancholia. But this melancholia is not defeatist. Rather, as José Esteban Muñoz (1967–2013)—whose own death,

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like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1950–2009), has occasioned a particularly charged response of queer melancholia—suggests, "I have proposed a different understanding of melancholia that does not see it as a pathology or as a self-absorbed mood that inhabits activism. Rather, it is a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names—and in our names."[77] The ritual citation of queer melancholia is not simply about the new or the old because the iterative logic of ritual time brings together both the past and the present—the inherent anachronism of repetition. And, as such, it complicates narratives of progress, secularization, and modernity just as it also makes possible the flourishing and survival of queer life (after death) in unforeseen ways. Queer melancholia, in the end, is not terminal but interminable devotion.

—To the memory of Jane Castillo, my Tita Jing

Notes

1. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Halperin, "From the Editors," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1993): iii.
2. Ibid. The scholarship on queer temporality is extensive, but some significant contributions to the field include Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, 1999); Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York, 2005); Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, 2004); José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, 2009); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); and Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, 2010).
3. Dinshaw and Halperin, "From the Editors."
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. For an attempt to undo the queer exceptionalism of Jean Genet through a process of de-idealization, see Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, 2017).
9. Jeffrey J. Williams, "The Rise of the Theory Journal," *New Literary History* 40, no. 4 (Autumn 2009): 684–85.
10. For an account of *GLQ* as a home for the humanistic investigation of sexuality and as a part of the history of the theory journal, see David M. Halperin, "The Fulfilled and Unfulfilled Promises of *GLQ*," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2019). For an account of the literary foundations of the theory journal, especially the theory journal's emergence from both the

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little magazine and the literary journal, see Williams, "The Rise of the Theory Journal," 683–702.

11. Jacques Derrida, "By Force of Mourning," trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 172. Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago, 1994), 4. Indeed, Sigmund Freud's 1917 essay "Mourning and Melancholia" has experienced a robust afterlife in numerous forms of critical theory, so in part my own essay is motivated by a question about the longevity of Freudian melancholia at the end of the twentieth century. Queer and queer-of-color readings of this text include Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990); Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); and José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis, 1999). Readings of this essay in critical race studies include Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Oxford, 2001); David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation: On the Social and Psychic Lives of Asian Americans* (Durham, 2019); and Joseph R. Winters, *Hope Draped in Black: Race, Melancholy, and the Agony of Progress* (Durham, 2016). Finally, readings in postcolonial theory include Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York, 2004); and Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham, 2003).
12. Carolyn Dinshaw, "The History of *GLQ*, Volume 1: LGBTQ Studies, Censorship, and Other Transnational Problems," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 12, no. 1 (January 2006): 6. Performance artists Karen Finley, Tim Miller, John Fleck, and Holly Hughes became known as the "NEA Four" when their grants from the US National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) were vetoed in June 1990 on the basis of the their works' subject matter, despite having passed peer review.
13. Ibid., 7.
14. Ibid., 12.
15. Ibid., 14.
16. Ibid. For a diverse set of analyses of this controversy, see Talal Asad et al., *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley, 2009).
17. Dinshaw, "The History of *GLQ*, Volume 1," 18, 19.
18. Ibid., 18.
19. Ibid., 19.
20. Although Dinshaw insists that her essay "The History of *GLQ*, Volume 1" draws only its title from Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (New York, 1990), there are larger historical claims here that seem to be shared by both writers, especially around the construction of a secular modernity that distinguishes itself from the Middle Ages in particular. Just as Dinshaw's training as a medievalist leads her to contrast medieval time with a Western Enlightenment sense of a progressive and secular modernity, Foucault takes as pivotal the Council of Trent's (1545–63) intervention in the transformation of confessional practice, which is to acknowledge an important shift from what is implicitly characterized as medieval confessional sovereignty to the modern proliferation of disciplinary discourses and practices involved in the biopolitical control of populations. Importantly, Foucault's genealogical method does not, itself, adhere to a progressive model of time, even though it may suggest a movement from premodernity to modernity, from sovereign power to biopower. In other words, like Dinshaw, Foucault holds onto the persistence of sovereignty,

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of religious forms of confession, and of medieval time, even within an episteme that fashions itself as biopolitical, secular, and progressive. For Foucault's account of the Council of Trent's significance to his narrative about the transformation of confessional methods, see Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 17–35. For Foucault's explanation of the biopolitical deployment of discourse in modernity, see Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 135–59.

21. Dinshaw, "The History of *GLQ*, Volume 1," 19. The resources of medieval temporalities for queer theory, I would suggest, are also made available and necessary on account of the denigratory characterization of the Middle Ages and premodernity amidst the AIDS crisis. Susan Sontag writes, for example, "AIDS reinstates something like a premodern experience of illness" and functions, for some, like a form of theological retribution for the putative sin of homosexuality. See Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York, 1990), 134.
22. Dinshaw, "The History of *GLQ*, Volume 1," 20.
23. Ibid., 21.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 10.
27. Ibid.
28. Lori Branch, "The Rituals of Our Re-Secularization: Literature between Faith and Knowledge," *Religion & Literature* 46, no. 2 and 3 (Summer and Autumn 2014): 11.
29. This formulation of queer time that centers affective attachment across time is, indeed, not entirely different from that offered in Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*.
30. Judith Butler, "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time," *British Journal of Sociology* 59, no. 1 (March 2008): 1.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 5.
33. For a seminal account of the biopolitical strategies of homonationalism, see Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, 2007).
34. Judith Butler makes another attempt to connect performativity and melancholia in "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification," in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, 1997), 132–50.
35. Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1993): 24.
36. Ibid., 21. Even though Butler refers to the "theatricality of drag" here, she is not suggesting that only theatrical performance should be read in relationship to melancholia. Indeed, she is just as, if not more, interested in thinking about the relationship between performativity and melancholia. I understand her focus on a psychoanalytic understanding of the theatricality of drag to highlight the opacity of the unconscious and, thus, a nonvoluntarist formulation of performance. As she explains, a performance "can only be understood through reference to what is barred from the signifier and from the domain of corporeal legibility" (24). If, as Butler suggests, melancholia arises as an effect of preempted grief, then the performance of gender is less the choice to assume a gender and more the effect of a will conditioned and constrained by that which is barred from or prohibited as a loss for the subject. In this way, a psychoanalytic understanding of gender performance comes closer to gender

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performativity, which Butler describes as "the *effect* of a regulatory regime of gender difference in which genders are divided and hierarchized *under constraint*" (21). In other words, Freudian melancholia enables Butler's critique of voluntarist theatrical performance. Therefore, while Butler understands misreadings of *Gender Trouble* to rely upon a reduction of performativity to voluntarist performance and attempts to counter this elision by holding onto the analytic distinction between performance and performativity, her deployment of psychoanalysis ultimately destabilizes any notion of agentive performance, which is to suggest that a singular performance or act, in the parlance of speech act theory, cannot but be understood as bound to a theory of performativity.

37. Ibid., 21.
38. Michel Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse," cited in ibid., 17.
39. Ibid., 18.
40. Ibid., 23.
41. Ibid.
42. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York, 1993), ix.
43. Ibid., ix–x.
44. Butler, "Critically Queer," 26.
45. Ibid., 18.
46. Ibid., 19, 18.
47. Ibid., 21.
48. Ibid., 26.
49. Ibid.
50. For an important call for both mourning and activism—one that does not necessarily reduce mourning to the work of activism—see Douglas Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy," *October* 51 (Winter 1989): 3–18.
51. For an examination of the significance of ritual and ritualization in theories of performativity offered by J. L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler, see Amy Hollywood, "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization," in *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays* (New York, 2016), 213–31.
52. Butler, "Critically Queer," 26.
53. Ibid., 29.
54. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1993): 1–16; Kendall Thomas, "Corpus Juris (Hetero)Sexualis: Doctrine, Discourse, and Desire in *Bowers* v. *Hardwick*," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1993): 33–51; and Paul Morrison, "End Pleasure," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1993): 53–78.
55. Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning*, 361. Exemplary of traditional elegies, which adhere largely to the conventions outlined by Peter Sacks in *The English Elegy*, are John Milton's *Lycidas* (1638) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Adonais* (1821). The history of the term "elegy" is a long and complicated one, but for the purposes of this essay, I follow Sacks's articulation of traditional elegy in *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore, 1985).
56. Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning*, 362.
57. Ibid., 364.
58. The distinction between elegy and the elegiac mode is not a fixed one, but I follow Morton W. Bloomfield's assertion that the elegiac mode, which extends the function of elegy to other genres, arises in the Romantic period in the mid-eighteenth century. For Bloomfield's account, see "The Elegy and the Elegiac

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Mode: Praise and Alienation," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (Cambridge, MA, 1986), 147–57.

59. See esp. Melvin Dixon, *Love's Instruments* (Chicago, 1995); Paul Monette, *Love Alone: Eighteen Elegies for Rog* (New York, 1988); Mark Doty, *My Alexandria* (Chicago, 1993); and Thom Gunn, *The Man with Night Sweats: Poems* (New York, 1992). Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 1.
60. For the foundational interpretation of these and other conventions of the English elegy, see Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 1–37.
61. Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning*, 3.
62. Dagmawi Woubshet, *The Calendar of Loss: Race, Sexuality, and Mourning in the Early AIDS Era* (Baltimore, 2015), 30.
63. Ibid., 4.
64. For an attempt to distinguish between elegies of the dying voice, the reviving voice, and the surviving voice, see Diana Fuss, *Dying Modern: A Meditation on Elegy* (Durham, 2013).
65. For an account of the significance of English studies to the emergence of queer theory, see Kadji Amin, "Genealogies of Queer Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Queer Studies*, ed. Siobhan Somerville (Cambridge, 2020), 17–29.
66. Deidre Shauna Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago, 2015), 236.
67. Ibid., 245.
68. Ibid., 246.
69. Fuss, *Dying Modern*, 7.
70. Ibid., 8.
71. Lynch, *Loving Literature*, 245.
72. Ibid., 156–57.
73. Bloomfield, "Elegy and the Elegiac Mode," 157.
74. For an account of the impact of the rise of Protestantism on the English Renaissance elegy, see Scott Wayland, "Religious Change and the Renaissance Elegy," *English Literary Renaissance* 39, no. 3 (2009): 429–59. For an influential account of the Reformation attack on late medieval Catholicism, especially the attack on the doctrine of purgatory, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, 1992), 301–76. For an account of the dissolution of the chantries, see Phillip Lindley, "'Pickpurse' Purgatory, the Dissolution of the Chantries and the Suppression of Intercession for the Dead," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 164, no. 1 (2011): 277–304.
75. Lynch, *Loving Literature*, 236.
76. See esp. David L. Eng, Jack Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, eds., "What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?," special issue, *Social Text* 23, no. 3–4 (Autumn and Winter 2005); Janet Halley and Andrew Parker, eds., *After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory* (Durham, 2011); Judith Butler, John Guillory, and Kendall Thomas, eds., *What's Left of Theory: New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory* (New York, 2000); and Michael Warner, "Queer and Then?," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 1, 2012.
77. According to their account of the open call for articles commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of *GLQ*, then editors Jennifer DeVere Brody and Marcia Ochoa explain that a significant number of proposals offered to pay tribute, once again, to José Esteban Muñoz and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. See Jennifer DeVere Brody and Marcia Ochoa, "Introduction: On the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of *GLQ*," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2019): 3. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 74.

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