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How to Do Things with Forever: Marriage, and Other Queer *Blasphemies*

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The idea that any of us knows what we will do with the rest of our lives, let alone "forever," barely noses out its opposite—that we have absolutely no idea what we will do with them—for top honors in ego inflation. We cannot guarantee that a moment a year from now, or even tomorrow, rests within our complete, predictive comprehension; but neither can we honestly cast ourselves as becomings of pure and resistant improvisation who render each future moment (now, and now, and now, and . . .) in full immunity to the materialities, politics, habits, and normativities of our time. Nonetheless, those of us interested in same-sex relationships (a category that dissolves under the least scrutiny) as a component of our erotic/affectionate/identificatory lives sometimes make oaths of commitment until our deaths; and we sometimes criticize those who make such commitments (sometimes ourselves, as it turns out) as "assimilationist," colluding with the dominant sociality and therefore insufficiently queer. But most of us do so without, say, giving up our cars, jobs, bank accounts, degrees, languages, shoes, and/or myriad other accessions to the social symbolic. The success of such critiques of assimilation, despite their being conducted by those assimilating in myriad other ways demonstrates that,

> however antisocial queerness may be, it is hardly incompatible with more or less traditional forms of academic sociality (debate, publication, tenure, etc.). For all the sexism, racism, and occasionally overt homophobia we still face in the academy, there do exist spaces . . . where leading an explicitly queer intellectual life in print as a mode of professional advancement names an institutionally viable and socially intelligible path across the profession. (Weiner and Young 230)

As a result, whether swearing the marriage oath or critiquing it, we perform *both* a vow and an assimilation. The oath of marriage (at least traditionally) vows what it cannot foresee (inflating its epistemic authority as temporally unbounded—applicable to all time). The critique of marriage as assimilationist vows that it knows better (inflating its own *institutionally intelligible* epistemic authority as spatially unbounded—applicable to all cases). Likewise, the oath of marriage assimilates into a discursive possibility and legal structure previously dominated by heterosexuality—itself a

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remarkably divergent pursuit with extraordinarily porous boundaries. For its part, the critique of marriage also assimilates, but into a worldview predicated upon a utopian voluntarism vigilantly identifying and refusing normativity, often in the name of pursuing other political agendas (e.g., environmentalism, antiracism, immigration reform, redistribution of wealth, etc.) and/or "less dominant" sexual and relational practices, say, pony-play, S/M, medical fetishism, age play, or ployamory—just to name a few.

But these political commitments and sexual practices do not preclude marriage in any necessary way; imagining otherwise *institutionalizes* single-issue politics and the notion of a unified, consistent sexuality. It casts no particular aspersion on "alternative" sexual practices to question why they should enjoy exemption from critiques of assimilation into a capitalist symbolic. Why view their practitioners as "automagically" innocent of the exploitative anthrocentric histories of the barn or slaughterhouse? The ritual interrogation, torture, confession, submission, and correction of the inquisition, the dungeon, the precinct house, or the prison? The pathologization, exhibition, and normative "cures" of the surgical theatre, clinic, psych-ward, or electro-shock therapy suite? The interpellative discipline and ideological "care" of children's naked bodies in the "privacy" of the family home? Or the cultish new-now-next acquisitiveness of the marketplace? If these practices allow their adherents or passers-by to explore and elaborate intersections of archetype and agency in reflexive ways, often over long periods of time (and, in my experience with at least some of them, they do), why reduce *only* marriage to merely the worst of its past and strip those who seek it of any similarly reflexive potential to reform queer bonds? Why vow to know better what to do with forever?

Dustin Goltz's performance *Blasphemies on Forever* helps me ask these questions, less *of* it than *through* it, as a heuristic interpretive opportunity in a troubled time. I mean that "troubled" in at least two senses. In the first sense, I mean the hysterical reboot of the culture wars by a Republican party aligned with certain formations of Catholicism (among other fundamentalisms), and evident in the controversies over insurance coverage for contraception, mandatory trans-vaginal ultrasound/techno-rape for women seeking abortion, and—in performance terms every reader of this journal needs to know about—the president of Villanova University's decision to ban a previously scheduled workshop by queer performance artist Tim Miller. Villanova President Donohue banned the workshop with his own performative PR statement, saying that Miller's work (which he was not scheduled to present, by the way) was explicit, graphic, sexual, disturbing, and out of place with the institution's Augustinian Catholic mission. Miller's most recent performances, *Glory Box* and *Lay of the Land*, concern the marriage right and its impact on the immigration opportunities for the international partners in same-sex relationships. It troubles the Cardinal Newman Society, a right-wing watchdog group, enough that they began a web-based protest of Miller's visit, leading to the President's eventual decision to cancel. I have worked on this essay as all of this played out in the national news and my personal email, and, frankly, have felt a great deal of concern, as has Miller, precisely for Goltz, who does

such out work at a Catholic institution that has itself hosted Miller. Does creating a web-searchable document with "queer" and "DePaul" in it expose Goltz to similar treatment?

If it does, I suppose, one must simply proceed, and that tells us much about "now." Contraception and the very possibility of a same-sex marriage right troubles the Vatican enough to call upon American bishops to resist them politically. Given that the Catholic Church claims the status of Vatican City as its own nation with diplomatic immunity, thereby shielding itself from investigations of financial wrongdoing and the questionable ethics of covering up the extent of its awareness of, and tolerance for, child abuse, I find it difficult to read its starring role in the current culture wars as anything other than the success of a foreign power dictating relations between citizens of the United States. It's quite strange.

But I also mean "troubled times" in a second sense, using the phrase to mark queer theory's own internal struggles around the "antisocial thesis" and the critiques it inspires. The first few paragraphs of my essay trace but one aspect of these struggles, the one about marriage. But the concerns are broader than "same-sex marriage: yes or no?" Much queer theorizing of late has concerned itself with the degree to which we might view the nature, or perhaps less essentially, the *ideological purpose* of queer activity as necessarily corrosive of dominant social relations; how else we might view queerness, if not "antisocially"; and the politics of those choices and the relationships they foster or merely enjoy, menace or simply disregard. Joshua J. Weiner and Damon Young, in their Introduction to a special section of a recent issue of *GLQ* devoted to "queer bonds," argue that "Queer bonds reach beyond sexual self-recognition because we need a theory of queer sociality that cuts across identitarian positionings that will remain forever incommensurate, and that articulates a bond spanning differences that may remain irreducible" (227). Against this likely intractable irreducibility,

> "queer bonds" name[s] a mode of recognition to the side of this deadly epistemology [of the closet], a laterally constituted togetherness that persists in the face of homophobia, sustains us, and allows queer life to go on. How might queerness name a lived 'knowledge' rather than an emergence into the light of knowledge? Under what conditions might queerness name, then, an epistemological caesura in the field of the social, a radical uncertainty about what any event of coming together or bonding will have meant, and for whom? (228)

Goltz's performance challenges me to read this cultural moment through its manifestation of these contemporary political and theoretical issues and the bonds that form an excess beyond them. He raises the marriage question, but in the context of the larger concern of how both dominant and minoritized cultures solicit and demolish subjectivities, often in front of the big movie screen at the mall or the little one at the adult bookstore. He helps us speculate about how these subjectivities "make do" in or out of marriage, knowing or not knowing better about what to do with the forever they face alongside one another or "alone." *Blasphemies* models dialogic possibilities of queer bonds—not the least of which obtains between a

performer and a member of an audience—as arguments for and against this or that formal connection are exchanged in speeches about "love" made—with considerable historical precedent—across a banquet table.

I watched *Blasphemies* first as a respondent for the National Review Board maintained by the Performance Studies Division of the National Communication Association (NCA).[1] In what remains of this essay, as I did in my review for that body, I speak to the conditions of the production, retaining, as a political gesture of solidarity, my observations about what we might consider the "workload" aspects of mounting such a production in an academic context. Next, I describe the performance's formal ancestry to indicate how its strategies model and assist its reflection on the multiplicity of queer bonds. Finally, I briefly return to *Blasphemies'* thematic relevance in both contemporary culture and more specialized scholarly debates, demonstrating how the production's conditions and form contribute to that relevance.

Conditions of the Production

Goltz and I both attend a summer retreat for solo performers, where he work-shopped this piece, so I have had the opportunity to see elements of it in development as well as the full production Goltz performed with his partner, Jason Zingsheim, during the 2009 NCA Convention in Chicago. DePaul presented two evenings of performance, each of which paired an emerging performer on its own faculty with the work of an established artist visiting town for the conference.

I attended the production in the College of Communication's new performance space, with a stage of risers, capacity for video projection, and some exposure of the means of production—with Zingsheim controlling much of the media. In comparison to what one might traditionally think of as a theatre—with wings, a backstage area, etc.—the space complemented Goltz's presentational, rather than representational, performance. The overall quality of the production aesthetically and thematically; its situation in this appropriate space; and its audience of visiting scholars, as well as members of the local university community, came together in a rewarding evening of performed scholarship.

Goltz played multiple roles in *Blasphemies'* creation and execution. The Performance Studies Division of NCA's guidelines for evaluating creative work for purposes of tenure and promotion encourage institutions to recognize that practitioners—particularly those, like Goltz, whose ambitions draw upon a number of competencies—often do the work that departments of Theatre divide among many personnel, each of whom receives appropriate credit for purposes of retention, tenure, promotion, merit, etc. Keeping this in mind, I note the multiple "hats" Goltz wore during the course of the production, each of which warrants appropriate recognition. In this production, he served as:

[1] http://performancestudies.wordpress.com/guidelines-for-tenure-and-promotion/

- playwright (creating the script's textual components)
- dramaturge (developing strategies for staging and coordinating them)
- performer (embodying the script both on stage and in media elements)
- video artist (creating the media elements from the script, editing them, etc.)
- scenographer (developing the mise-en-scene, lighting, and environment of the piece)
- propmaster (securing the various elements and seeing to their condition)
- stage manager (coordinating pre-show activity to make sure everything is where it should be)
- costumer (developing a vision for the costumes, securing them, seeing to their condition), and
- director (coordinating the activity of each of these roles in both the gestation of the work and its transformation into a final aesthetic production)

Goltz conducted each of these roles in synchrony with the others, creating a unified production that represents a considerable *set* of achievement*s,* plural. Evaluators and audiences should not take the performance's phenomenological unity for a singularity of achievement or contribution to the university's mission or the theatrical opportunities for the community. Instead, *Blasphemies* represents a variety of achievements and contributions well beyond those required for the production of a typical article. In keeping with the National Review Board guidelines' desire to make the implicit explicit, I also noted in my initial review that this work was created without release time. It is best seen as a contribution to Goltz's research program and his exploration of contemporary performance strategies for representing the value and multiple meanings of queer lives. To appreciate how these strategies achieve that end, we need to look at their formal ancestries.

Formal Ancestry

Blasphemies on Forever partakes of a variety of performance traditions and practices: postmodern pastiche (Dyer; Hoesterey; Jameson); revelation of the means of production (Brecht); and mediated performance (Bourriaud; Dixon). While I separate them for purposes of analysis, each of them contributes to the others. Ingeborg Hoesterey identifies *Blasphemies*' principal aesthetic gesture, pastiche, as being "about cultural memory and the merging of horizons past and present. One of the markers that set aesthetic postmodernism apart from modernism is that its artistic practices borrow ostentatiously from the archive of Western culture that modernism ... dismissed" (xi). *Blasphemies* has a combinatory motor at its core, one that drives connections between a profusion of ostentatiously borrowed elements of popular culture, political observation, personal memory, and genres of storytelling. By the latter, I mean the conventions of melodrama, for example, as well as the kind of

personifying dinomorphism heretofore reserved for the children's show *Barney*, except that the song in Goltz's simultaneously corrosive and adhesive version goes more like "'I want you.' 'But you won't do. He's the one I'll bite into.'" And then of course, there's everything in between.

While some audience members for *any* production utilizing this strategy may report periods of bewilderment, others often experience pastiche as exhilarating and perhaps the most valid means for illustrating and critiquing the complexity of contemporary life. In the powerful conclusion of his study of pastiche, which I quote at length to preserve the turns in his argument, Richard Dyer attributes this divide in how people experience pastiche to differences in power and the presumption to know:

> [I]f you occupy positions of power and privilege in society, you may also glimpse—or even in certain psychotic cases permanently maintain—the sense that you are the only begetter of what you think and feel, that you are the centre and author of discourse. Yet surely few actually experience thought and feeling like that in any sustained way. If you have something invested in experiencing it like that, in occupying the originating position of knowledge and authority, then accepting that you are in the realm of the already said may be a source of anguish, but for others—in given circumstances, in given groupings—it is no more than what life is like and one had better get used to it. Pastiche articulates this sense of living permanently, ruefully but without distress, within the limits and potentialities of the cultural construction of thought and feeling.
>
> Pastiche articulates this not through intellectual reflection on it but by conveying it affectively. It imitates formal means that are themselves ways of evoking, moulding and eliciting feeling, and thus in the process is able to mobilise feelings even while signalling that it is doing so. Thereby it can, at its best, allow us to feel our connection to the affective frameworks, the structures of feeling, past and present, that we inherit and pass on. That is to say, it can enable us to know ourselves affectively as historical beings. (180)

Goltz's use of pastiche succeeds, in my view, because he refuses an either/or approach to the fragmentation of sources contributing to subjectivity or its supposed eventual unity in a voluntarist triumph. Instead, he uses repeated phrases and structures transformed into new contexts to create a sense of coherence *within* the show's differential play of thought. Its formal spine—a series of wedding toasts, each time less traditional and more critical—exemplifies this coherence at a site of difference. The toasts offer a periodic pulse of structural familiarity, on the one hand, and progressive differentiation of possibility, on the other. With each toast, we can measure the distances we've traveled since the last; consider new options for commitment (and the representation of it in oaths, toasts, and ceremonies); and prepare for the next departure into increasingly complex reflections on popular, familial, and personal experiences. Some days, this spine has felt perhaps a bit more teleological to me, winnowing down to the most politically characteristic assessments of marriage as if "queer" were a modernist genre in the purifying hands of Clement Greenberg. Its hauntological dimensions, pointing to a loss of all the fascinating queer

lives imagined but not lived, perhaps because of a certain willingness to "settle down," weigh on me, gesture to the radically other lives I'd imagined for myself, too—or at least read about in porn stories and novels like Cooper's. On other days, it has felt far less closed, situating the audience as the recipients of the final toast's last lines: "May you never fall victim to the burdens of 'what next.' And always play in the potentiality of 'what else?'" As if to underscore this possibility for viewing relationships as unburdened, generative play, The Muppets, fronted by Kermit, quickly appear in a clip to remind us that, "Life's like a move, write your own ending. Keep believing, keep pretending." On those more open days, I remember that The Muppets were themselves briefly the targets of fundamentalist conservativism, with Fox News declaring their most recent movie dangerous because, clearly, in their care for one another across difference, they promoted communism. Oh, sure, Fox didn't put it quite that way, but it's what they were saying.

Whereas realist theatre attempts to sustain the illusion of creating a world on stage (and this is subtly, although crucially distinct, from sustaining the illusion of a world on stage, something that most theatre goes realize has not occurred), much experimental performance, influenced by Berthold Brecht, someone a little more closely allied with Marxism than The Muppets, "reveals the means of production." Doing so resonates with Dyer's view of pastiche's ability to "mobilise feelings while signalling that it is doing so." From a theoretical standpoint, many of the strategies used in *Blasphemies* partake of this choice, exposing the audience to, for example, the "man behind the curtain," Zingsheim—as he runs the light-board and media. We also see fairly elaborate and sometimes intentionally "silly" moments of costume change that Zingsheim facilitates. It is as if we can see a performer and dresser backstage, hurrying to begin the labor of the next scene. Revealing these moments of production allows the audience to reflect on that labor, to remember that the work before them—like any discourse—is constructed, rather than a thing of nature. One can find examples of this revelatory aesthetic in work by, among others, The Wooster Group and Charles Ludlam. In *Blasphemies*, whatever else it does, such revelation also exposes the trust and care possible between two men. Analogically, it allows us to witness the effort it takes to craft a self as a response to times of political controversy. Goltz has chosen formal/aesthetic strategies appropriate for directing the audience's attention to both relational commitment as process and the sometimes panicked hurry to craft a response to difficult personal and political situations while trying to look relaxed.

When artists choose these strategies, they often open themselves up to charges of amateurism from those unfamiliar with the traditions these choices evoke. But in Goltz's case, the hurry becomes a context for revealing his reliance on his partner in a way that offers a counter-example to those who would dismiss same-sex couples as "less than," while simultaneously reminding same-sex marriage proponents that relationships also require work—not just the semiotic trappings of a license and set of vows with their own "automagical" pretensions. As a result, I find these Brechtian moments among the most poetic and political of the show, inviting me to witness what is often invisible. It is no accident that Zingsheim's character/function is listed

in the script as "The Ghost." I read this "ghostliness" in two senses, both as memory (he sometimes plays a childhood companion of Goltz) and as future relational possibility—the kind of thing we mean when we speculate on a phenomenon, like love, having or not having a "ghost of a chance" in these troubled times.

The relationship between media and performance occupies much critical attention these days, and Goltz's work offers a significant opportunity for those who wish to think through this intersection and the performance strategies it affords. *Blasphemies* operates on (at least) three levels in relationship to this question: it takes up media materials as objects of consideration, it theorizes the power of such objects as primordial sources of subjectivity, and it deploys a powerful agential response by taking up the work of media production as a means to conduct both documentary and fictive reflection on the intersection of object and subject. When I say that the show takes up media as an object, I mean to point to the array of popular-culture clips from film and television representations of courtship and family that appear in the show's video montages. These representations become objects of analysis, revealed as part of the deep structure of cultural representations of masculinity, marriage, childhood, and so on. While audience members may not recognize each image, their surplus allows for recognition of some images. In this way, we can reflect on our own subjection to and by these representations—or those like them—in our own childhoods, following Goltz's lead as he begins doing the same. The media allow our attention to multitrack. The focus begins to lift from the clips themselves—often hilariously anachronistic and estranged by the years of distance from their creation—to the effects of such representations on self-concept and scripts for behavior. This critical reflection keeps the clips from being merely exhibits, turning them into tools. (See Doty; Muñoz)

As the show unfolds, Goltz emerges as a producer of images. We begin to see clips in which *he* appears, at least to some extent leveling the distinction between popular culture "out there" and the passive spectator. One of my favorites, a bizarre black and white video, condenses noir, melodrama, and art films into a molten, ludic object, part play and part critique in fine camp tradition. From objects in themselves, to the reflection on their role in the formation of a subject, and then to a demonstration of agency, the media do not so much run what appears to be a telos toward that agency (and by no means guaranteeing it) so much as present a nested hierarchy in which each level remains present and my awareness can move from one to the other (object, subject, agent) in complex chains of association.

Again, this set of aesthetic strategies works well with the show's thematics. Among other things, *Blasphemies* champions an effort to get up out of mere consumption of images of marriage into the production and critique of such images in more authentic gestures of multiple possibility. The use and construction of its own media embody this effort. As a result, Dr. Goltz's work participates in what art historian and critic Nicolas Bourriaud terms *postproduction*. Bourriaud uses the term to point to reworkings and interventions within extant popular culture texts in order to critique and avoid the passivity of consumer culture. *Blasphemies* exemplifies the trend

Bourriaud identified in video and other fine arts, but playing out, here, in live performance.

Taken together, these three broad strategies of pastiche, revealing the means of production, and doing so through a contemporary "postproduction" orientation toward both using and (re)making media help distinguish *Blasphemies* as an ambitious and successful contemporary work that has value not merely as consumed on the evening one sees it or as a productive exemplar in contemporary aesthetic debates about the ubiquity of media in interdisciplinary arts; it also has considerable potential in the education of artist-scholars. Publishing it alongside responses, here in *Liminalities*, shows the continued relevance of the call others have made to make scripts available (Miller and Taylor; Gingrich-Philbrook), but with the distinctive addition of the video along side. The combination offers an opportunity to assess the work critically and explore it pedagogically in community.

Thematic Relevance

So far, I have discussed primarily the form of this production, while also arguing that these formal choices support the show's themes. Here I'll reprise its relevance for two aspects of contemporary consideration of the place of GLBTQ/queer subjects in our negotiations with dominant culture and one another. Like the best autoperformance presented as scholarship, *Blasphemies* works at and between general cultural issues and specific scholarly debates. It introduces the specialized in the context of the popular, the strange in the context of the familiar, making theoretical questions accessible, situationally more concrete and more complex, but without attempting to settle them.

The struggle for marriage equality produces equality in at least one way: almost no one agrees about the suitability of the terms in which special interests and news media represent the conflict. In our state of dissatisfaction, if nowhere else, we have achieved parity. Both terms, "marriage" and "equality," themselves become part of the dispute in a way that Jean-Francois Lyotard discussed as a *differend*. The "problem" he identified, "Given 1) the impossibility of avoiding conflicts (the impossibility of indifference) and 2) the absence of a universal genre of discourse to regulate them (or, if you prefer, the inevitable partiality of the judge)" is "to find, if not what can legitimate judgment (the 'good' linkage), then at least how to save the honor of thinking" (xii).

Performance has a long history of wading into such politicized terminological disputes in this country, precisely in order to "save the honor of thinking." While by no means identical, the work of the large number of productions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that preceded abolition and the coordination each year of "V-Day" projects built around Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues* offer popular theatrical analogues of such term-centered work. Each considers a problem of its time that centers on definition. Where the various adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* considered the meaning of "person," working to intervene in the dominant culture's perceptions of the beings whom it enslaved, Ensler's work considers how language—naming, prohibitions on

certain dysphemisms ("cunt," for example) that in turn give them extraordinary power and resources for reclamation, etc.—plays a role in self-esteem vs. shame, violence vs. resistance, and so on. Where a traditional theatrical approach might concentrate on such plays as canonical texts approaching the status of monuments, a performance studies approach—while appreciating these texts and their power—will often seek to proliferate works at the site of such a linguistic conflict, democratizing access to the stage. So it is that our field has produced a number of texts and productions concerning the contemporary debate about whether GLBTQ/queer persons are in fact "equal," whether their relationships are, in fact, even "relationships" at all, let alone ones worthy of, or perhaps even ethically "above" or "beyond" marriage.

That last notion, that same-sex relationships might be axiologically above or beyond marriage, stems from the kind of reflection on queer bonds in my introduction. Critical concerns loosely organized in queer-theory circles under the notions of "queer temporality" (most generally) and "queer futurity" (more specifically) challenge conceptions of the should-y timelines that structure presumptions about queer development and purpose, corrosive or adhesive. Scholarship in this area takes up a number of themes relating to what could be considered paradigms for the course of queer lives, including ascriptions and avowals of qualities or experiences to or by those seen as, or who see themselves as, participating in one or more these paradigms. This line of scholarship asks how these queer paradigms might differ from the grand narratives of heterosexual lives (which, it should be noted, often produce harm for many who are straight-identified, too). So, for example, one dismissive frequently hurled at same-sex couples is that they do not, short of various forms of intervention, produce children. This ascription to same-sex relationships implies a heteronormative narrative holding that the purpose of relationships is to provide a context for sexual activity that results in children. The fact that heterosexual couples aren't held to this standard *legally* doesn't protect those who cannot, or choose not to, produce offspring from *social* pressures to adopt or reconsider their choice. One aspect of queer futurity scholarship, then, challenges the wisdom of queers seeking marriage in traditional terms. Such scholarship asks if the institution of marriage is irredeemably tainted either by hypocrisy ("never mind that some of us straight folks don't breed; you queers can't, and so you're bad") or a legacy of ideological domination by the state and other apparatuses (e.g., the church, medicine, psychiatry, etc.) that often subjugate women (in particular, but not necessarily exclusively). These institutions frequently suggest that something is wrong with people who don't want to breed. Queer futurity scholarship challenges the ontological account that our *capacity* for breeding defines human being (particularly in these times of ecological devastation). It questions the axiological subjugation of queer persons to the desire of others to "protect" their children from any story that in any way suggests they need not necessarily grow up to find a mate and breed. It also questions the prejudicial epistemological habits that organize "what we know" about relationships and sexuality in the first place (Edelman is particularly, if controversially, instructive here).

I have taken the time to offer this brief (and by no means exhaustive) account of queer futurity because Goltz's work participates in this more nuanced set of scholarly questions even as it addresses the general political question about same-sex marriage. The title signifies this, drawn, as it is, from the quotation on the screen at the start of the show:

> *Time is a construct.*
> *Invented so we wouldn't miss*
> *mass and meals,*
> *births and bombing raids,*
> *weddings and wakes,*
> *meetings and monied accounts.*
>
> *What is time?*
> *A false finite; a blasphemy on forever.*
>
> *--Dennis Cooper*

Goltz's choice of an epigraph from Cooper, a central figure in the literary and 'zine movement known as "queercore," situates the show immediately for those familiar with this literature as—at least in part—a highly charged contribution to anti-assimilationist, critical queer temporality scholarship. Many moments in the show could attest to this contribution. Consider, for example, a ludic moment that some might be tempted to brush too quickly past as merely fun or silly, however pointed. In Scene 14, Goltz sings a campy song to the tune of the theme to the old television program *The Greatest American Hero*. As he sings, he and Zingsheim both wear red superhero capes. A video plays behind them, which the script describes as presenting "a sequence of normative and white gay media images with repeated imagery of patriotism and white middle-class" experience. The singer yearns—implicitly foolishly—for the right to marry and become as "normal" as the images the video presents. Situating this yearning as "white" and "WASPY," the song provides a textbook example of the concerns in queer temporality/futurity scholarship and the issues in Cooper's quotation. Here, for example, are the last few lines of the song and its final stage direction:

> *Believe it or not,*
> *We're white waspy gays*
> *I never thought I could be so suburban*
> *Flying away to the PTA*
> *Living our life by God's plan*
> *Three kids, two dogs, and my man*
>
> *Our lives are really a bore*

We don't even fuck anymore

(Jason walks off pissy)

The song condenses so much into a very small space. It frames the yearning as heroic, rather than ordinary, signaling the strength required to produce hope in a culture that simultaneously compels and disparages it, on the one hand, or perhaps framing that heroism as hyperbolic and romantic, on the other. The song recognizes that the testimony it provides may be met with incredulity. It's important that the phrase "believe it or not," from the original song, is retained. This retention anchors the parody in its original source and simultaneously acknowledges the potential of doubt. The song articulates surprise at the possibility of fulfilling a narrative of futurity previously unthinkable. It attaches this narrative to a divine telos not typically associated with queer lives, but is perhaps presented aspirationally or critically, re-framing/restoring the open gospel. With "Three kids, two dogs, and my man," the song evokes the averaging power of social demographics (e.g., "2.5 kids") as a metonym for middle-class life. But then the song shifts, disclosing a consequence relative to another, more liberatory, anti-assimilationist possibility. To do this, the song juxtaposes boredom and declining sexual activity to an unarticulated, haunting counter-narrative of sexual excitement and expression. Whose counter-narrative is this? Is it the narrative of hypersexuality ascribed to queer subjects by dominant culture? A more generalized wish for sexual freedom and fulfillment arguably avowed by many persons, gay, straight, queer, or other? Or is it the radical narrative of idealized and/or perhaps even *compulsory* sexual fluidity both ascribed to and sometimes avowed by those resisting assimilation in what we might think of as a second-wave gesture that celebrates and demands queer non-monogamy, the "corrosive," over and against dominant narratives? And what are we to make of that stage direction? What is the nature of Zingsheim's so-called pissy-ness? Have we just witnessed an old debate among the couple? Does he feel mocked? Does he wish for some other synthesis outside the stories dominant and queer cultures have, sometimes working together, sometimes apart, elaborated to date? Does he want to "save the honor of thinking"? It is this latter possibility that fascinates me, that seems—at least to my mind—the show's ethical core: to prove again and again the limitations of yoking relationship to prefigured stories so we won't "miss" those events the stories—radical or conservative—nominate as critical, formative, and valued, but often wind up institutionalizing, fetishizing, and converting into compulsory exercises that are *all*, in the end, the titular blasphemies on forever. That pissy-ness, then, in all of its ambiguity, is very, very powerful.

All of this, then, influences my judgment: I receive it in troubled times; I appreciate its labor; I recognize its formal ancestry as kin; and I take up its pastiche, Brechtian elements, and media as participating in a *precise* (if sometimes vertiginous) machine that blasts the hell out of certainties both old and new. *Blasphemies* does more than simply take a turn in the "Same-sex marriage: yes-or-no?" debate. The questions

run so much deeper, aligned with conversations and controversies within queer theory (Edelman; Goltz; Halberstam; Muñoz; and so many others). This line of scholarship labors to reveal and refresh the range of concerns the temporality perspective can reveal and nuance. *Blasphemies on Forever* contributes in a meaningful way to this literature. Indeed, to my mind—as one of the primary authors of the Performance Studies Division of NCA's tenure and promotion guidelines—it epitomizes the role that performance can play as a component in a research program that has relevance for both the civil concerns engaged university scholarship should address to be of service, and the disciplinary conversations it fosters as laboratories for the production, evaluation, and—most importantly—*perpetual scrutiny* of what we take to be knowledge about the queerest of our bonds, even when we know better.

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