

# Under the Fantasy of Sovereignty: Homonormativity, Relationality and the Potentialities of Queer Sex

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## **Abstract**

Working with queer, affect, and psychoanalytic theories, this paper conceptualizes sovereignty as an ideal that psychically structures interpersonal relationships as well as individuals' interactions with institutions. It explores the extent to which homonormativity upholds the ideal of sovereignty in ways that delimit possibilities for relationality and social transformation. It also examines how queerness and queer sex more specifically become sites of resistance which threaten to undo and expose the fantasy of the sovereign self.  
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## **Résumé**

À l'aide de la théorie queer, de la théorie des affects et de la théorie psychanalytique, cet article présente la souveraineté comme un idéal qui structure de façon psychique les relations interpersonnelles ainsi que les interactions des individus avec les institutions. Il explore la portée selon laquelle l'homonormativité maintient l'idéal de la souveraineté de façons qui délimitent les possibilités de relations et de transformations sociales. Il examine aussi comment l'état queer et la sexualité queer, plus spécifiquement, deviennent des sites de résistance qui menacent de défaire et d'exposer le fantasme du soi souverain.  
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Notions of free will, freedom, and control over one's own life and immediate surroundings circulate around us in the current social moment. What does this desirable freedom that has been popularized throughout the West assume about the subject? What do subjects assume about themselves in their assertion of such freedom? What does this freedom grant those subjects who seek it? What, ultimately, is this freedom *about*? Freedom, as such, hints at the problem of sovereignty and the fantasmatic ideal of the sovereign self. In contemporary Western society, the sovereign self is a phenomenon that looms at every level of the social world—that is, in the very ways in which we interact with others, the state, and ourselves. In general, the fantasy of sovereignty guides macro-level interactions and dealings within the world, setting the stage for the ways in which humans live and understand their lives and themselves. As a powerful and structuring fiction, sovereignty warrants further attention and exploration, particularly in terms of its everyday impact both personally and politically. As an ideal, it is also significant for understanding the state of human relationality—interpersonal as well as intrapersonal—in our day-to-day realities.

In this paper, I examine sovereignty in terms of its affective and political weight in the context of both intimate and public modes of relationality. Drawing from a variety of theoretical texts, I engage with multiple conceptualizations of sovereignty in order to construct a framework for understanding the ways in which this fantasy manifests itself and gets taken up in the social world. I address the affective impact of sovereignty and the kind of environment that it sets up for individuals. I am also interested in the ways in which the fantasies of sovereignty and the sovereign self play out in interactions with others and institutions. In so doing, I seek to examine the extent to which contemporary LGBT politics and the reality of homonormativity (Duggan 2003) uphold the imaginaries of sovereignty and the sovereign self in ways that delimit potentialities for relationality

and social transformation. Finally, through an exploration of queerness and the erotic, I propose the kinds of possibilities that might be opened up, or made possible, in and through queer sex specifically.

The question of relationality is an important one especially in a world where borders, walls, and boundaries separate groups and individuals both physically and psychically. In her book, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Wendy Brown (2010) considers the phenomenon of sovereignty in its contemporary manifestation as a structuring, yet phantasmatic, aspect of the political and social world. Sovereignty is a conception that circulates widely; the ideals it upholds shape and inform, in various ways, some of the most powerful institutions such as capitalism, nationalism, war, and colonialism (8-30). Brown reflects on the contemporary social and political landscape wherein the world has become increasingly bounded and bordered by elaborate walling systems in the midst of weakening nation-state sovereignty (26). These latter processes have occurred at a historical moment when globalization and the discourses of liberalism have become hegemonic (8). While their implications are explicitly political and economic, Brown suggests that their effects are also social and therefore experienced at the individual level.

According to Brown, “[w]hile the same forces of globalization challenge the sovereignty of both subject and state, liberal discourse also links eroded state sovereignty with the endangered sovereignty of the subject” (78-79). The lived experience of a disappearing sense of sovereignty at the national and individual levels has resulted in both physical and psychic wall building and bordering around nation-states, individuals, or groups of individuals. Waning state sovereignty, particularly in Western democracies, gives rise to a subject who is “made vulnerable by the loss of horizons, order, and identity” and such a position has resulted in a compulsion toward wall building (107). Given that notions of sovereignty suggest that individuals are, or at least *should* be, self-sufficient and autonomous beings, walls respond to and supposedly satisfy the subject’s sense of vulnerability. If individuals and nation-states desire boundaries and separation from different (threatening) others, what potentialities might exist for imagining human relationality that extends *beyond* one’s boundaries? What possibilities, if any, open up when an encounter with another occurs?

In her book, *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant (2011a) considers sovereignty as *fantasy*, which fits with other psychoanalytic understandings of sovereignty and the sovereign self. According to Berlant, “sovereignty, after all, is a fantasy misrecognized as an objective state: an aspirational position of personal and institutional self-legitimizing performativity and an affective sense of control in relation to the fantasy of that position’s offer of security and efficacy” (97). Sovereignty is, therefore, an imaginary way of being in the world, even though individuals and institutions in Western society consider it to be valid and not a misleading fantasy. Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips (1998) highlights the impact of the fantasy of the sovereign self, which is misrecognized as reality, when he states that such beliefs endorse “the impossibility, and therefore the violence, of all forms of sovereignty” (88). While sovereignty is altogether impossible, it persists in the psyche of individuals as something (a state, a position, a way of living in the world) that *is* possible, real, and, for many, desirable. In writing about sovereignty in the context of ordinary life, Jean Bethke Elshtain (1994) argues that, “Sovereignty as task and tale—operating on many levels—invites a disdain for life itself” (76). The impossible fantasy of control and security that sovereignty produces in the social world and in the sovereign self, while considered attractive or desirable to individuals and nation-states alike, results in the disparagement of life—that of others and our own. Like Berlant (2011a), Phillips (1998), and Elshtain (1994), I contend that sovereignty is a fantasy, an impossibility, and, ultimately, a form of violence and oppression that constrains our capacities for relationality and social transformation.

While sovereignty is a powerful fiction that is both oppressive and dangerous to the social order, what are some of the ways in which the fantasies of sovereignty and the sovereign self inhibit relationality in general? The task and tale of sovereignty appears as a politics of boundaries both physically and, more importantly for my purposes here, psychically. In terms of the individual or the sovereign self, boundaries function in conjunction with illusions of security and control, as Berlant (2011a) argues. Elshtain (1994) characterizes the sovereign self in contemporary Western society “as a unified, sharply bounded phenomenon” (79). As such, boundaries are integral for the establishment and maintenance of the fantasy of sovereignty. The sover-

eign self also strives to present a cohesive and intelligible identity that requires such boundaries in order to maintain its unity and therefore its sense of sovereignty. Indeed, the fantasy of sovereignty involves a lot of performative work at both the physical and psychic levels.

In his work on sovereignty in the context of necropolitics, Achille Mbembe (2003) further underscores the extent to which sovereignty and boundaries are integral to this fantasy: "Sovereignty is therefore defined as a twofold process of *self-institution* and *self-limitation* (fixing one's own limits for oneself)" (13; emphasis in original). Insofar as the sovereign self is a sharply bounded way of being in the world, Mbembe indicates that, with respect to the fantasy of sovereignty, boundaries must be experienced and affirmed as having been established by oneself; in this way, the setting of limits (and boundaries) for the sovereign self functions as one practice in the "institutional self-legitimizing performativity" associated with the imaginary of sovereignty (Berlant 2011a, 97). The fantasy of sovereignty and self-legitimation serve to make individuals feel as though they are free from the restraints and impositions of others and free to establish boundaries around themselves on their own terms.

Boundaries, in all of their manifestations, serve to protect and safeguard that which is bound from the threat(s) of the outside, the other. Boundaries also defend the outside/other from the threat—whether real or imagined—of the inside, the bound. In the case of the sovereign self, these sharp boundaries are self-imposed for the supposed benefit and protection of the bounded self. Protection and defense are two closely linked ideas that are essential to this discussion of boundaries, sovereignty, security, and control (whether fantastical or not). Insofar as boundaries serve to protect and defend, they appear as defenses against the threat of the other and the outside world, against forces that have the potential to expose or undermine the fantasy of sovereignty. Fundamentally, the sovereign self requires boundaries in order to defend against the reality that sovereignty is a fantasy. We *need* others and we need many aspects of the outside world in order to survive or, more importantly, thrive.

With reference to this politics of boundaries that is part and parcel of the fantasy of sovereignty, Phillips (1998) offers further insight into the material risks and dangers of the sovereign fantasy and particularly their

detrimental impact on the potentiality for relationality among collectives and individuals. Writing from a psychoanalytic perspective on the development of the child who becomes a productive (social) being in the world, Phillips proposes that

ultimately the child needs to abrogate his omnipotence... Accepting his dependence, and bearing the fact of his parents' independence of him, he makes good his survival and his pleasure by relinquishing his fantasies of self-sufficiency (his omnipotent self-satisfyings) (2).

For Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysts alike, this fantasy of omnipotence—that is, "of all the ways a person can attack or refuse his need for other people" (3)—is closely tied to the notions of sovereignty and the sovereign self I am concerned with here. In order for a human being to become a *social* being, they must give up their innate feelings of omnipotence by acknowledging their dependence on others, while also conceding to the reality that all people are dependent on others; basically, they must realize that it is not all about themselves. Such feelings of invincibility and control are tied up with the notion of boundaries insofar as sovereignty requires one to relinquish and deny one's sense of dependence on others so as to maintain the fantasy of omnipotence. The fantasy requires self-legitimation and self-limitation, as noted by Berlant (2011a) and Mbembe (2003) respectively, which necessarily abrogates (however fantasmatic) dependence on others. If the sovereign individual is to experience "an affective sense of control," sharp boundaries must be established in order to maintain that ultimate fantasy of omnipotence (Berlant 2011a, 97). Indeed, it is difficult to feel in control when a person acknowledges all the ways in which they are, in reality, fundamentally and ultimately dependent on others. As such, sovereignty is necessarily a fantasy; however, violence and social alienation as well as many other ill effects are the byproducts of the performance of this impossible fantasy.

While violent and impossible (Phillips 1998), sovereignty has become an "aspirational" state or way of being in the contemporary Western world (Berlant 2011a, 97). What, in reality, is very much a risk to humanity and relationality has become a desired objective for the sovereignty-seeking self. In and through the enactment of this fantasy, boundaries are instituted and

renouncements of one's ultimate reliance ensue. This contemporary manifestation of the affective market of sovereignty produces fantasmatically sovereign individuals who strive to refute their need for others—physically and psychically. At the same time, they staunchly guard and bolster the boundaries they have established around themselves in order to ensure their omnipotence and sovereignty, thereby amplifying the fantasy of being a unified, cohesive, sharply boundaried individual. The performative work that sovereignty requires of individuals (and institutions) produces in them an illusory sense of power and control over their own lives, along with a sense of freedom from the ideals or desires of others. The sovereign fantasy, therefore, is indeed a politics of boundaries. It is also a politics of singularity tied intimately to homonormativity.

To what extent do contemporary LGBT politics and the reality of homonormativity uphold the imaginary of sovereignty and the sovereign self in ways that delimit potentialities for relationality and social transformation? According to Lisa Duggan (2003), in her book *The Twilight of Equality?*, homonormativity “is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (50). Of particular importance here are the ways in which sovereignty, identity politics, and rights collude to reinforce the fantasy of sovereignty for individuals and couples within the homonormative paradigm that, in some ways, defines the contemporary moment of LGBT “politics.”

The contemporary homonormative paradigm of LGBT politics is, in many respects, preoccupied with identity. Homonormative identity politics are tied to the fantasies of the sovereign self and sovereignty as conceptualized by Phillips (1998) and Elshtain (1994). In *Commonwealth*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009) also indicate the ways in which identity and, by extension, identity politics are ultimately about private property and ownership. In the final section of the book entitled “Revolution,” Hardt and Negri argue that “identity itself is based on property and sovereignty” (326). They further suggest that, “identity is property. Notions of the sovereign individual and possessive individualism, which constitute the seventeenth- and

eighteenth-century origins of bourgeois ideology, pose identity as property in a philosophical sense: ‘Every man has a *property*,’ writes John Locke, ‘of his own *person*’” (326; emphases in original). Within contemporary mainstream LGBT politics, the assertion of a particularly (though, perhaps unconscious) homonormative identity is tied closely to the assertion of a sovereign sense of self, a form of the “self-legitimizing performativity” that is part of the overall fantasy of sovereignty (Berlant 2011a, 97). What one must assert is an identity that is sovereign insofar as the individual must present themselves to the world in a way that conveys “a unified, sharply boundaried” identity (Elshtain 1994, 79). Within this context, homonormativity necessitates the maintenance of boundaries around one's identity and sense of self which, as Hardt and Negri (2009) demonstrate, is integral to the perpetuation of capitalism and privatization in that notions of identity are tied closely to property and sovereignty (326). If, as Duggan (2003) argues, homonormativity “promis[es] the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (50), the fantasy of sovereignty, with its central connections to identity and property, works in the service of establishing a privatized population and culture of gay citizens who ultimately uphold the oppressive and violent practices of capitalism and neoliberalism. Accordingly, privatization, property, and consumption become the means through which homonormative individuals assert and maintain a sovereign sense of self. They also become the sources and sites of oppression and violence against those individuals and groups who refuse, or else fail by virtue of their gendered, racialized, and/or classed situation, to conform to the ideals of homonormativity. To the extent that homonormativity necessitates an identity or way of being in the world that is sharply boundaried and wholly unified, it offers little room for those whose identities or ways of life do not conform to its particular ideals.

Homonormativity, at this particular historical moment, offers privileged individuals a new means through which to assert a unified, boundaried, and coherent identity to the “rest” of the social world. The aim of this assertion is the ability to access the rights and privileges that are granted through fantasmatically sovereign institutions, which (fantasmatically) bestow on and confirm a sense of sovereignty in the homonorma-

tive individual. The preoccupation with identity in the context of homonormativity leads to the fortification of sharp boundaries around individuals and particular groups of peoples, boundaries which serve to further support and enforce the fantasies of sovereignty and the sovereign self in the social world. With reference to Duggan's (2003) conceptualization of homonormativity, this incarnation of LGBT "politics" upholds the dominant institutions of heteronormativity, capitalism, and neoliberalism, institutions that are firmly grounded in processes of exclusion, violence, and oppression. Under homonormativity, the maintenance of an identity and way of living that is cohesive, coherent, and ultimately boundaried is emphasized, particularly against the threatening fluidity and instability presented in and through queerness.

In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Muñoz (2009) defines queerness as "that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing" (1). Here, queerness serves as a performative way of being and feeling in the world that refutes the here and now—and particularly homonormativity. In the latter case, the fantasy of sovereignty is upheld insofar as the division between the self and society is maintained, and sexuality is privatized and channeled toward the maintenance of normative ideals that are in keeping with the white heteropatriarchal social order. Privatization works through monogamy and domesticity, which are instituted through marriage and consumption to uphold the nation-state as well as capitalism (Duggan 2003, 45-66). The reason for the promotion of homonormative identity politics, that necessitate the establishment and advancement of a boundaried and unified sense of self, is the desire to acquire individual rights, including the right to marriage and participation in institutions, such as the armed forces (60-66). As Elshtain (1994) points out, "rights have become to individuals in the modern West...marks of a sovereign self" (76). It is in the context of rights that an explicit correlation can be found between sovereignty and homonormativity.

Homonormativity can be comprehended as a means through which certain individuals who fit within, as well as defend, the sharp boundaries of homonormative ideals can gain access to rights conferred by the state that will impart and confirm a personal (yet fantasmatic) sense of sovereignty. Living one's life in a particular

way—as a unified and sharply boundaried homonormative individual—becomes the avenue through which privileged, liberal gay individuals can attain the fantasy of the sovereign self. Homonormative gays receive the approval of the state in their assertion of a coherent and stable identity; because such an identity appears stable and consistent, it is deemed to be less threatening to sovereign institutions to which these individuals appeal. This apparent stability and consistency is different than the supposed social threat posed by the instability, incoherence, and unboundedness of queerness. As the "marks of the sovereign self," rights give homonormative individuals access to the institutions which reinforce a sense of security and control over their own lives and thereby fortify the fantasy of personal sovereignty (Elshtain 1994, 76). While such individuals are, in reality, very much *dependent* on the state for these rights, receiving such rights nonetheless becomes the avenue through which these people come to feel free, in control, and secure. In this rather circular and self-perpetuating process (as is necessary in order to sustain such a widespread fantasy), boundaries are therefore validated and reinforced through the conferral of rights insofar as a coherent and boundaried identity is necessary in order to receive such rights in the first place. In short, homonormative individuals are compelled—through the fantasy of and desire for sovereignty—to live lives that are sharply boundaried and unified so that they might get what they want—rights—from the supposedly sovereign state. But what is at stake in conforming to homonormativity—and, concomitantly, rejecting the variability and fluidity of queerness—in order to establish and uphold the fantasy of the sovereign self?

Homonormativity is a form of violence which is instigated through appeals to the state for recognition and the extension of rights. These latter "marks of the sovereign self" (Elshtain 1994, 76) involve the oppression of queer, racialized, classed, disabled, and transgender lives and foreclose the potentiality and viability of other (non-homonormative) ways of life. In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler (2004) explores the devastating impact of the marriage debate in the US on political and sexual potentiality, and what is ultimately at stake in homonormativity and the quest for sovereignty: "the demand to be recognized, which is a very powerful political demand, can lead to new and invidious forms of social hierarchy, to a precipitous foreclosure of the sex-

ual field, and to new ways of supporting and extending state power” (115). In other words, the violences of state recognition are matched by the violences of the performance of sovereignty via assertions of a homonormative bounded identity. Queerness looms in the fantasy of sovereignty as a danger for both hetero- and homonormative individuals who are ensconced in the charade of sovereignty. I want to suggest that queerness threatens sovereignty and boundaries; it is the antithesis of the Western sovereign homonormative subject. Queerness threatens to *undo and expose* the fantasy of sovereign identity and subjectivity that is enacted through homonormativity.

As I am concerned with the ways in which the fantasy of the sovereign self delimits and inhibits the potential for relationality in the world, homonormativity as a means to a personal sense of sovereignty forecloses this potentiality, particularly in its relationship with or, rather, repudiation of queerness. In this way, homonormativity “invites a disdain for life itself” (Elshtain 1994, 76). If we take queerness as allowing for a fluidity of expression as well as a way of living or existing that seeks to disrupt stability, it stands in contrast to homonormativity which desires to produce individuals whose identities and lives conform to normative standards and ideals that maintain the white heteropatriarchal social order. As such, homonormativity produces a repudiated other whose difference must be barred and who becomes the object of oppression and violence. Undeniably, sovereignty via homonormativity incites violence and disdain for life in general and difference in particular.

In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Jasbir K. Puar (2007) addresses the violence of homonormativity, which operates in a way similar to the violence of sovereignty. Puar examines how homonormativity as a phenomenon and way of life reinforces sharp boundaries which foreclose the potential for relationality among people:

[n]ational recognition and inclusion...is contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary. At work in this dynamic is a form of sexual exceptionalism—the emergence of national homosexuality, what I term ‘homonationalism’—that corresponds with the coming out of the exceptionalism of American empire. Further, this brand of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script not only of

normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects. (2)

Boundaries are very much at work in the logic of homonormativity, particularly in terms of the production of queer others against whom the homonormative subjects must guard themselves. Moreover, homonormativity, like sovereignty, regulates the lives of those who wish to uphold the fantasy such that homonormative individuals might protect themselves—through the construction of boundaries—against the variability and seeming volatility of queerness. Because queerness is fluid and unstable, boundaries are not clear nor are they even desired; therefore, the ability to maintain the fantasy of sovereignty becomes difficult, perhaps even altogether impossible. In the quest to become a sovereign individual, homonormative—and, in particular, homonational—identity politics foreclose the potential for relationality across difference, across boundaries.

With reference to relationality and its foreclosure, Phillips (1993) offers the following proposal: “We could wonder, for example, what we are starving ourselves of by being too concerned about ourselves” (30). The sovereign and homonormative self is one who is preoccupied with self, particularly the self-protective boundaries that have been established against the threat of the Other and in order to ensure a sense of security and control which is aided through the bestowal of rights from the apparently sovereign state (Elshtain 1994, 76). In this quest for a fantasy, we starve ourselves of human relationality and meaningful contact; we starve ourselves of the potentiality for social transformation. This “fantasy misrecognized as an objective state” (Berlant 2011a, 97) endorses violence against as well as exclusion and oppression of those whose lives do not conform to the self-legitimizing ideals of homonormativity as a way of attaining personal sovereignty. We also erect boundaries that maintain our own isolation.

Queerness persists as a menace in a society preoccupied with the fantasy of sovereignty. As “that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing” (Muñoz 2009, 1), queerness threatens to *undo and expose* the fantasy of the sovereign identity and subjectivity that gets enacted through homonormativity. If we understand queerness as a form of interdependency and connection to the other/others, it stands to reason that it threatens to undo the bound-

aried-ness necessitated by sovereignty and exposes the violence and oppression instantiated by this fantasy. The eroticized being-together that is queerness, which is enacted in the world through queer sex and pleasure (as well as anti-normative intimacies more broadly), offers the possibility of breaking down the boundaries that have been erected in order to protect the fantasy of sovereignty. Queerness and sex are therefore sites in which relationality and social transformation are potentially enacted.

Queerness and eros are about relationality and the recognition of our dependence on the other/others. Berlant (2011b) argues that “sex is not a thing, it’s a relation” (81). I would add that *queerness* is also not a thing, but rather a relation.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, as a relation and a doing (Muñoz 2009, 1), queerness and sex—and, more specifically, queer sex—have the potential to disrupt the fantasy of sovereignty and uphold the “fundamental sociality” for which Butler (2005) advocates (33). As a relation and a doing, queer sex becomes a site where our dependence and involvement with the other is acknowledged and upheld. Our interdependency on the other/others becomes apparent to the extent that pleasure is mutually constituted and enabled in an erotic encounter. Eros becomes one of the vital modes of relationality through which, as Muñoz (2009) writes, we might begin to “enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world” (1).

Queer sex challenges the ideals associated and necessitated in the fantasy of sovereignty: boundaried-ness, control, and security. Queer eros provides an opportunity to glimpse, taste, and feel “new worlds” (Muñoz 2009, 1) and social transformation becomes possible through the erotic. In “Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death,” Elizabeth Grosz (1995) argues that sexual encounters open up other worlds: “one is opened up, in spite of oneself, to the other...It is in this sense that we make love to worlds: the universe of an other is that which opens us up to and produces our own intensities” (200). This queer erotic encountering of bodies becomes a site where intensity, too-aliveness, and unknown potentialities emerge: “The point is that both a world and a body are opened up for redistribution, dis-organization, transformation” (200). Grosz, however, notes that these encounters should not be considered a means to an end, given that the ends, and perhaps even the means, cannot be predetermined (200). That said,

in the process of opening up to an other/others in the way that Grosz proposes, bodies disrupt the fallacy of impermeability, defensiveness, boundaries, and sovereignty. Being vulnerable and experiencing the pleasure of one’s own openness hold great potential for intimate and transformative relationality. In the introduction to her book, *The Better Story*, Dina Georgis (2013) discusses the ways in which eros and, more specifically, sex disrupts the fantasy of sovereignty. She writes:

Nonetheless, in sex we let ourselves forget about body image and modest conduct. We lose our self to our self and to the other. It becomes hard to keep things clean, bounded, and separated. Bodies leak, spill, and contaminate one another. The walls constitutive of social symbolic bonds dissolve for another kind of bond. In seeking pleasure and feeling hungry for it, *sex is a reminder of our forgotten dependency on the other*. Indeed, sex makes us aware of how vulnerable we are to the other and in this way stages what is at stake in all social relations. When sex feels queer, the residues of unsocialized sexual memory are recalled. That is because community is by-product of carnal love. (15-16; author’s emphasis)

Queer sex, then, occasions the recognition of our fundamental, yet forgotten, dependency on the other. Such encounters create possibilities for the creation of new relationalities as well as ways of being and doing in the present world and, most importantly, in new worlds. Understood in this way, sex opens up the potential for relationality within the context of queerness, in that such eroticized being-together enables us to revisit our vulnerability and dependency on the other/others and particularly the necessity and beauty of their difference.

In conclusion, I have discussed how (queer) sex disrupts sovereign subjectivity and fantasy. I have also hinted at the ways in which sex generates a taste of and desire for social transformation, and enables relationality and intimacy in a world structured by the fantasy of sovereignty. Audre Lorde (2007) emphasized the necessity and importance of eros for creating connections across differences: “the sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference” (56). As a doing and relation, sex (the sharing of physical joy, in Lorde’s concep-

tion) allows for the dissolution of the boundaries between bodies and worlds. As Georgis (2013) maintains, our humanity “renders us vulnerable to the possibility of being undone by each other” (13). Queer sex elicits an undoing that is possible because of our differences as humans, because of the differences between and among humans. Queerness undoes the mythic and sovereign homonormative subject, and queer sex can undo each one of us if we make ourselves vulnerable to the relationality and openness it requires. In becoming undone, the defenses that keep us boundaried and isolated come down: relationality is possible and new and better worlds get created, worlds not as structured by violence and oppression as those imagined in the fantasy of sovereignty.

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**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz (2009) similarly maintains that “queerness...is not simply a being but a *doing*” (1; author’s emphasis).

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