Article

Accidental Orientations: Rethinking Queerness in Archival Times

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Abstract

This paper critically interrogates the viability of “Queer” as an ontological category, identity, and radical political orientation in an era of digital surveillance and Big Data analytics. Drawing on recent work by Matzner (2016) on the performative dimensions of Big Data, I argue that Big Data’s potential to perform and create Queerness (or its opposites) in the absence of embodiment and intentionality necessitates a rethinking of phenomenological or affective approaches to Queer ontology. Additionally, while Queerness is often theorized as an ongoing process of negotiations, (re)orientations, and iterative becomings, these perspectives presume elements of categorical mobility that Big Data precludes. This paper asks: what happens when our data performs Queerness without our permission or bodily complacency? And can a Queerness that insists on existing in the interstitial margins of categorization, or in the “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, and overlaps” (Sedgwick 1993: 8), endure amidst a climate of highly granular data analysis?

Introduction: On the Impossibility of Queerness

The last half century of scholarship has shown Queerness to be a matter of curation—a way of comporting oneself in opposition to or defiance of heterosexist norms (Butler 1988; Butler 1990; Ahmed 2006). “Queer” no longer implies a fulfillment of some biological inevitability, but a becoming: an iterative solidification of identity or a resistance to the “straightening devices” of our collective medico-legal hallucination of what constitutes sexual or gender normalcy. No longer a euphemism for deviance, Queerness positions itself now as a positive, radical alternative to all normative ontologies. As such, for many individuals who live under its sign (or lack thereof), Queerness constitutes a potent antidote to the oppressive regimes of categorization that one might trace through the interpenetrating histories of surveillance, sexuality, and power.

In the work of both Michel Foucault (1990) and George Chauncey (1995), it is surveillance that precipitates the very identification of sexuality as a site from which power might be articulated. To Foucault, the “homosexual” emerges as the target of both medical and legal scrutiny that aimed to unite the “soul” of the subject with their sexual history, marking them as a distinct “species” of deviant. To Chauncey, surveillance becomes most important with respect to sexuality after the medico-legal demarcation of the homosexual from the heterosexual. With homosexuality now deemed a medical, judicial, and cultural problem, a tense atmosphere of male–male sociality emerged, characterized by unrelenting suspicion and the subsequent need to “read” the behaviors of other men for signs of homosexual inklings and to carefully scrutinize one’s own behavior to ensure an uninterrupted narrative of heteronormative masculinity.

Taken together, Foucault and Chauncey gesture toward a historical fracture in the way that sexuality, gender, and identity appear in relation to one another. On the precipice of the Victorian era, sex between men or

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between women, although considered unbecoming, was possible without calling into question the fundamental nature of those involved. With the rise of Victorian sensibilities, however, we are introduced to a wide variety of medical and criminological systems of classifications as well as the proliferation of cultural and domestic practices surrounding the maintenance and performance of heteronormativity in both the workplace and on the home front.

In its contemporary usage, “Queer” is a rejection of all these historical schematics that sought to produce the “Other” from raw materials of sex, gender, and deviance. To the Queer theorists of the 1990s, Queerness was a way of living at the margins of intelligibility—at the points of disjuncture and disarticulation between different modes of being and historical contingencies. It was not a clinical condition or immutable state of being. Borrowing Eve Sedgwick’s (1993: 8) words, Queerness was identified as existing in the “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, and overlaps” where “the constituent elements of anyone’s gender [or anyone’s sexuality] aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically.” Elusive and iconoclastic, Queer theory emerged as a method troubling systematized circumscription, scientific sense-making, and legalistic scrutiny. In other words, Queerness was theorized—during this time period—not as a stable identity or state of being, but as a project set in motion against the social categorization and delimitation of sexuality and gender. Seen from this perspective—as an interstitial, evolving phenomenon—Queerness not only addresses a certain fluidity in gender and sexual identity but also grants us a language with which to talk about and understand the circumvention of all systems of classification and their associated power-dynamics. Thus, “Queerness,” as defined by the theorists of the ’90s, achieved escape velocity from its association with sexual alterity—inserting itself into a diverse array of discourses that sought or relied on an “outside” space and that did not return to binary (male–female, heterosexual–homosexual) modes of thinking.

This definition of Queerness fleshed out in the works of theorists like Judith Butler (1990), Eve Sedgwick (1993), and Lee Edelman (1995) requires margins and interstitial spaces for its subjects to inhabit. It must defy the essentialisms that come alongside the familiar categories of gender and sexuality by existing outside their reach, in a space unconquered by scientific or legal description. In this sense, Queerness is a response to all monolithic organizing principles that surround gendered and sexual behavior. And yet, it cannot be seen as a mere shadow or counterpoint to heterosexism since that position might also fall victim to classificatory scrutiny and the kind of foundationalist thinking born out of neat binaries and simple dialectical oppositions. Queerness requires a space that is transient and appears on no map: a space where all those among us deemed monstrous and unhuman might go to lick our wounds and set up shop before setting off to seek the in-between.

Queerness has lived in these spaces for nearly six decades now, with literary formulations expanding most notably during the past four. The theoretical canon born from this period has served as a place of temporary refuge, promiscuous theorization, and ad hoc identity experimentation. It has provided a fertile ground for a new politics of recognition, belonging, and legal protection. Its existence is also unsustainable. This paper investigates how the rise of our current “surveillance society” serves to undermine the radical potential of Queer scholarship by demonstrating how surveillance works to eliminate the margins and in-between spaces where Queerness was once fostered. It also gestures toward new Queer potentialities that emerge in the construction of Big Data archives and, as a corollary, new ways to disrupt or short-circuit the flows of power that move through the techno-surveillant assemblage in which Queer people are embedded.

At this juncture, it is important to differentiate the particular brand of Queer theory toward which this article is directed from more populist manifestations of Queer discourse. This article takes aim at the sort of Queerness developed out of a tradition of radical feminist scholarship, psychoanalytical thinking, and structuralist and post-structuralist theorization. Such an intellectual history has little in common with contemporary identity politics or the homonationalist respectability politics that Jasbir Puar (2007) and others have so elegantly problematized. Indeed, as Julian Awaad (2015), referencing David Eng (2010), has pointed out, such formulations of Queerness have already become “unmoored from [their] original references to a political movement and to a critique of normative and exclusionary practices” (20) “and has come to demarcate more narrowly pragmatic gay and lesbian identity and identity politics, the economic

interests of neoliberalism and whiteness, and liberal political norms of inclusion” (xi). Moreover, “gay marriage,” while an important milestone in the quest to establish LGBTQ legal parity (one born out of the tragic dispossession of Queer persons robbed of a solid legal claim to their deceased partner’s estates during the HIV/AIDS crises), can only guarantee political or economic traction for a small fragment of the Queer population. Indeed, the move toward legalizing gay marriage required harnessing the power and privilege associated with monied whiteness to sustain a homonormative parody of heterosexist society.

And yet, the real tragedy of Queer theory may be that as we move toward a new era of Big Data archives and dataveillance that rely on highly granular forms of classification and social sorting to fuel a new and hungry information-based economy (Lyon 2015), this homonormative vision may be all that remains of a once radical and disrupting literature. Given the unbridled expansion of surveillance into the quotidian mechanics of identity and self-making, the prospect of a Queerness that remains free, uncircumscribed, or counter-normative seems increasingly untenable. In this paper, I argue that our emerging climate of intensive dataveillance not only negates the potential for Queerness to exist in opposition to normative systems of classification or capture but that the targeted advertisements and algorithmic curation that consumer-oriented dataveillance enables might also “turn” or “disorient” us either toward or away from intended performative scripts. Here, I draw on work by Tobias Matzner (2016) and Sara Ahmed (2006) to provide an interpretation of Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson’s (2000) “surveillant assemblage” that recognizes both the performative capacities of our “data doubles.” Additionally, I present several strategies for recovering Queerness—albeit in ways that radically depart from embodied expressions of gender or sexuality—inside the growing archive of information and the overlapping circuits of information extraction.

The degree of granularity at which subjects are assessed, classified, and sorted has shifted under our new regime of corporate and state-sponsored digital surveillance (Andrejevich 2007; Tufekci 2014; van Dijck 2014). Big Data analytics are, by design and purpose, anathema to categorical ambiguity; they aim to both increase the resolution at which subjects come into view and to shrink the categories into which they are sorted down to the size of their subatomic parts (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). These units of analysis are plastic and malleable. They adhere to the shifting contours of lives in motion. Borrowing from Rob Kitchin (2014), Big Data can be identified by a few major characteristics. Their archives are large in volume, fast moving and changing, exhaustive in scope, fine-grained in resolution, relational in nature, and both flexible and scalable. Key to Kitchin’s definition of Big Data is relationality. That is, the propensity for data to “leak out” from one archive and join with another. The liquid properties of dataveillance (see Kitchin 2014; Pasquale 2015; Bauman and Lyon 2013) constitute a free-flowing nexus of information overlap. As such, it works to effectively eliminate the in-between spaces in which Queerness once took root, while anticipating and preventing breakage, rupture, or escape and rendering the notion of an “outside” to categorical scrutiny meaningless.

The notion of the “data double” is key at this juncture. Separated into a series of discrete data “flows,” the subject is dissolved into a homogeneous medium of digital information from which they may be reconstituted and categorized. The “surveillant assemblage” responsible for these processes of abstraction and reconstitution place the subject under continuous surveillance, allowing the categories into which their data doubles are sorted to shift in response to the steady flow of new information. This agile, adaptive regime of uninterrupted classification and reclassification eliminates the subject’s ability to move in the margins between stable categories and precludes the possibility of establishing the kinds of interstitial spaces so necessary for the production of a Queer ontology that claims to move through the “open mesh of possibility, gaps, and overlaps” (Sedgwick 1993: 8).

This does not mean, however, that one’s classification within the surveillant assemblage must remain static. Indeed, the prospect that one may appear to identify as LGBT in one data set but not another is central to thinking about Queerness during these times. Here, I opt to make another distinction: that between LGBT politics and Queerness. LGBT identity politics, while often located in partnership or association with Queerness follows a different, more pragmatic trajectory than the one we have traversed. LGBT politics are, by definition, comfortable with categorization. This does not mean that LGBT people are comfortable with

the surveillance to which they are subjected. Rather, it means that the project of LGBT liberation adopts a standpoint perspective, and is, as such, a pragmatic formulation that has, unfortunately, been colonized and settled—as previously noted—by a homogeneous politics consisting of monied, white heteronormativity set in opposition to the image of the sexually-repressed, violently homophobic figure of the “Muslim woman terrorist,” herself a product of an assemblage of surveillant practices and mechanisms (Awaad 2015; Eng 2010). Moreover, I do not want to separate the production of accidental or technologically modified Queer orientations from those that are in some sense “authentic.” Authenticity is already a slippery concept, crosscut by various cultural and microcultural expectations. Moreover, to place digitally mediated sexual orientations in a separate ontological realm of the “digital” is to reinforce the notion that digital “spaces” are ontologically distinct and do not intersect with “real world” ontologies (see Boellstorff 2016).

In other words, all expressions of Queerness, whether critically examined in this article or not, can be seen as authentic. Yet, those that I take issue with—those developed out of decades of critical theory—however authentic they may be in their individual expression must be understood to be sitting on shaky theoretical and epistemological grounds. While it might be argued that Big Data analytics capable of the high-resolution identification of various “typologies” of Queer persons might constitute a degree of political recognition previously unavailable to Queer peoples, such a system of identification is largely tied to their exploitation by corporate entities and refers back to the financial exploitation of Queer persons within a homonormative program. Thus, what might seem to be recognition is really an erasure of those who exist outside of the financial and societal privileges conferred by homonormativity. Moreover, much of the “recognition” conferred by high-resolution data gathering is entirely superficial (see Bivens 2015) and, aside from offering token forms of recognition, quickly sorts individuals back into more profitable categories.

This techno-social production of homogeneity and erasure of difference can be observed in other political arenas as well. In her analysis of voter manipulation in the 2008 US federal election, Zeynep Tufekci (2014) provides a striking example of this process in action. While election campaigns once relied on the coarse-grained approach of pamphleteering or broadcast propaganda aimed at specific neighborhoods, zip codes, or other low-resolution identity markers, modern campaign efforts harness Big Data’s capacity for hyper-specificity and targeted intervention. The internet has provided a nexus point at which the myriad systems, interfaces, and digital spaces that we inhabit may interpenetrate freely; it is the conduit through which all the data we generate must pass in the homogeneous form of digital information. This allows the formation of diverse data sets that may stitch together disparate domains of private and public life and generate powerful predictive models rooted in cross-referential inference and statistical extrapolation. These models are highly granular in scope and shift the scales of targeted campaigning from the level of the neighborhood or broad demographic category to that of the individual voter. Big Data enables campaign messages to be tailored to suit a specific target’s tastes or reservations. A single user’s financial history, credit card statements, magazine subscriptions, domestic or international flight purchasing patterns, and many other points of data may be harnessed by campaign strategists to tailor a broad suite of individualized engagement tools.

Historically, the broadcast model of campaign propaganda presented voters with a unified, monolithic platform, allowing public opinion to form in response to a stable set of partisan policy choices and promises. Inevitably, these coarse-grained strategies failed to appeal to or adequately address all voters. Large segments of the population, primarily minorities, found themselves relegated to the margins of mainstream political discourse, alienated by both sides of the party divide. It is within these cracks—these spaces of inadequate political representation—between disparate ideoscapes (Appadurai 1990) that resistance was fostered and civil rights movements grew. Read through a Queer lens, the elimination of the gaps or spaces that the broadcast model of campaign propaganda failed to penetrate is also the elimination of a wider array of political opinions or identities. It is to reassert the binary logic of bipartisanship in a way that erases a spectrum of political loci. Here the logic of binaries connects, in a broader sense, to the reification of the male–female or homosexual–heterosexual binaries against which Queer scholarship directs its critique. It might be argued that Big Data sets capable of addressing voter concerns or parsing categories of gender and sexuality at a higher granularity than ever before might represent a move toward more equal representation.

The problems with this interpretation are twofold. First, to dislocate a political candidate from the ideological parameters they purport to represent is to weaken the foundations of democratic society. No political party may stand for anything if they, through the targeted alteration of their platform, stand for everything. Second, to reduce the experience of “Queerness” into subatomic components or “moments” of data-double performativity is to reproduce the heterosexist gaze that the history of Queer theorization sought to undermine.

This difference is compounded by technological means in situations where “Queerness” is intentionally fostered by commercial platforms that function by way of large scale dataveillance wherein binary categorization is inevitable. Indeed, to return to the question at hand: whether or not high-granularity datasets might lead to more adequate representation for all by providing additional data that “fills in the gaps.” Such representation is still marked by anti-democratic political campaigns that obfuscate and twist the central party-line, as well as the multiplication of “Queer” interest groups that enhance their own visibility and thus their potential to be managed and controlled by way of surveillance in ways that more radical forms of Queer thinking attempted to circumvent. Furthermore, even when technologies attempt to “fill in the gaps” with highly granular solutions that promise elevated visibility and political agency, the results often fall flat. In “The Gender Binary Will Not Be Deprogrammed: Ten Years of Coding Gender on Facebook,” Rena Bivens (2017) shows how Facebook permits users to select from a wide array of fifty-eight gender identity categories yet, in its deeper architecture, reduces the possibility space of gender expression to only three options: male, female, and other, with the binary taking precedence over the (intentionally rarified) third category. Thus, Facebook simultaneously challenges the liquid malleability of Queerness by providing a set of categories through which users might self-identify—in itself a challenge to radical Queer politics—while also reinforcing the familiar M–F gender binary. As such, Facebook undermines the Queer project on two levels. First, it presents users with a system of highly granular classification, effectively eliminating the ability of Queer users to move through an “open mesh of possibility” (Sedgwick 1993: 8). Second, it reaffirms the “validity” of the gender binary, crystalizing it within the operative architecture of the software itself—where it exists in a state of greater “realness” than the more superficial categories of “authentic” gender expression. This process mirrors observations by Kathryn Conrad (2009) that contemporary digital surveillance practices are inherently conservative and serve to impose normative modes of gender expression onto Queer individuals.

To be categorized, while subject to its own complex politics of surveillance and coercion, is to be recognized by the political establishment and to assert some manner of recognition. Yet, it is also to relinquish a valuable arena of calculated erasure and disaffection where pathologized bodies may congregate and strengthen their claim to individuality and their right to exist outside established orders of belonging and value. Put another way, it is to lose the ability to choose when and how one is erased and how one is rendered both invisible and visible. For Queer people—especially Queer Persons of Color—important identity work is accomplished in these areas of reclaimed exile. Here we might use the term “identity squatting” to clarify and elaborate on work done by José Muñoz (1999) who named disidentification as the primary characteristic of Queer life for Persons of Color. To theorists like Muñoz, to be both Queer and of Color requires a constant negotiation at the borderlands of exclusion and sanctioned lifeways. Queerness never settles into any singular system of classification: it is a process of continuous disidentification, movement, and repair. Like nomads, Queer Persons of Color must drift between categories (often deemed paradoxical, such as being both Muslim and Genderqueer). In this way, identity is strategized and negotiated in response to external pressures, applied along axes of race, gender, and sexuality that impel flight, denial, and reinvention.

As such, Queerness exists mostly in the liminal spaces between the various, rigid identity categories that one flees when their religion or traditions come into contact with their homosexuality or their politics label them as “bad gays.” There is always a retreat to the most stable category within which one might survive. The avoidance of fixed categorical identification—a necessary part of intersectional Queer identity—requires, by its own logics, the avoidance of stability, title, address, and one’s “transformation” into static object of scientific, medical, legal, or political scrutiny. In this sense, Queerness provides political agency not because it rejects the movements of power—indeed, to flee categorization is to recognize power’s

inherent dangers—but because it subverts the rigid mechanics through which power operates. This may seem untenable since it is power in the first place that necessitates categorical nomadism. And yet it is a refusal to let power dictate identity—a possibility soon to be foreclosed upon by technological developments in the art and science of human classification. If disidentification, as a technique or strategy, acknowledges a “ludic space of textual indeterminacy” (Morton 1995: 373), it certainly does not celebrate it. For Queer Persons of Color, it is no refuge. Rather, it is a heavily fraught territory under continuous threat of colonization by various scales of surveillance seeking to absorb the margins that surround them and to incorporate them into systems of intelligible belonging, normative identity, racial stereotyping, and commodifiable aggregates. And yet, disidentification, or the occupation of spaces of textual indeterminacy, posits a place outside of discourse to flee toward. While discourse, in the Foucauldian sense of the term, operated at a level of granularity associated with various subtypes or “species” of human being (e.g., the homosexual), contemporary data analytics includes techniques that address the individual subject and their subatomic components. When the individual subject itself—rather than the homosexual or heterosexual, for example—becomes the target of converging, strangulating discursive analysis, there can be no space or cracks between categories in which to fall, no space to claim in the name of disidentification.

While the tightening of categories does serve to render Queerness, in some sense, “impossible,” the next section shows how it also might facilitate the accidental performance of non-heteronormative sexual or gender identities, albeit within their own classificatory or categorical parameters.

Tracing Queerness: Accidental Orientations

Up to this point, I have been uncritical of a definition of Queerness that places it within the margins of categorization or even how “the Queer” itself might constitute an anti-heteronormative ontology. Queerness is a fraught terrain, crosscut by tense identity politics and difficult, irreconcilable theorizations. Thus far, I have concentrated on establishing how a particular “brand” of critical Queer theory might be rendered “impossible” by contemporary dataveillance. This section engages with Queerness in a different register. First, it interrogates a definition of Queerness that is rooted in the reconstitution of desire as a strategy for sexual deregulation. Second, it aims to critically examine the question of agency in the production of Queer identity against a backdrop of consumer surveillance and targeted advertising. Third, it considers how the curation of cyberspace, as a result of consumer surveillance, may inadvertently or “accidentally” generate Queer ontologies that are incongruent with users’ own internal subject positions, though they are no less Queer because of it. Although I have taken pains to highlight the potential for incongruent identities—that is, the accidental performance of one’s data or information to perform Queerness in their absence—it is also worth considering that the continuous orientation toward objects of Queerness might capture one’s own self-identification, entraining it toward the predetermined rhythms of dataveillance and curation.

In his 1995 article “Birth of the Cyberqueer,” Donald Morton questions how a Queerness anchored in the fulfillment of desire might accomplish, or more accurately, fail to accomplish its own emancipatory agenda. Morton argues that, rather than serving to undermine heterosexism, a Queerness defined by desire only serves to further dissociate the project of LGBT liberation from the material domain and, as a corollary, from any tangible impact. Referencing Sedgwick’s essay “White Glasses” (1992), Morton takes aim at what he perceives to be a nefarious current of bourgeois apologetics underpinning Queer theories of desire. Originally written as an obituary for Sedgwick’s close friend Michael Lynch toward the end of his battle with AIDS, “White Glasses” takes up Sedgwick’s desire to reformulate herself as gay man through the appropriation the titular white glasses—a symbol of “Queerness” that marked Lynch as a cultural innovator inside the gay community. Morton identifies this transformation—of object into symbol of Queer belonging or Queer becoming—as an emergent form of commodity fetishism that, he claims, has colonized and subverted efforts toward true LGBT liberation. Morton does not interpret Sedgwick’s definition of queerness as emerging inside a vacuum. Rather, he sees her work as exemplifying a larger trend toward stripping LGBT politics of their materialist concerns and re-orienting them toward a “notion of sexual deregulation proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari ... in which desire becomes a space of ‘pure

intensities” (Morton: 370). Morton sees these intensities, and the freedom to organize identity in relation to them, are emblematic of cyberspace, which he positions as a “bourgeois designer space in which privileged Western or Westernized subjects fantasize [that they may] choose their own histories” (375).

In the same way that cyberspace presents users with an open frontier capable of adapting to, or being honed by, one’s own desires, so too do some corners of contemporary Queer theory permit the production of sexual or gender identity through the realization of desire vis-à-vis the manipulation of commodity-based modes of signification. In Morton’s own words, “the white glasses produce the same effect as VR [virtual reality] goggles: the bourgeois subject, whose desire is (relatively) autonomous, is in a position not only to have the latest commodity first but also, more broadly, to write her own virtual history” (378). What Morton seems to have uncovered is the beginning of the encircling and partition of Queerness through capitalist means. Although such a formulation of Queerness might be considered authentic from an individual level of expression, it dispenses with the larger goals of critical Queer theory that aim to move nimbly through the webs of signification that a commodity-driven model of Queerness might permit. Here I am not trying to say that such a rendering of Queerness is incorrect or “wrong” for an individual or group to espouse. Merely, that it represents a shift in the politics of critical Queer theory—gesturing toward its death and aiming for a reinvention of the term rooted in consumer-driven surveillance practice. It is to accept, enroll, and appropriate the politico-consumer forces that undermine Queerness as a radical political movement or injunction.

Of course, Morton could not have anticipated the tying together of commodity fetishism, sexuality, and notions of “the virtual,” and yet he provides a provocative nexus of articulations from which it is possible to explore the intersections between Queerness and systems of commercial and participatory surveillance. It is now thoroughly apparent that cyberspace does not constitute a field of ludic possibility in which Western subjects may freely craft their own histories. Indeed, contemporary cyberspace is marked more by its tendency to manufacture or produce consumer desire than by its malleability and responsiveness to the pre-existing whims of “users” (see Turow 2006; Andrejevic 2014; Tufekci 2016). As such, it is prudent to explore the ways that the surveillance and curation of cyberspace has come to impact Queer ontology and how our emerging information economy (see Castells 2000) structures the kinds of identity performances and modes of being available to platform users. Indeed, referencing Robert Payne’s (2015) work on networked promiscuity, we can envision the curatorial potential of dataveillance as enrolling a multitude of human behaviors, including sexual gratification and Queer identity formation, into a matrix of entrepreneurial extraction. My intention here is to resurrect and repurpose arguments borrowed from Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s (1993) writing on the culture industry, albeit within a bold new context wherein consumer desires are not only fabricated and adopted as tokens of identity signification, but where dataveillance-based hyper-capitalism has infiltrated domains that were once private and tightly guarded and acted to sculpt them in its own image. Moreover, it is important to consider that one’s performance of digital identity is, in some sense, not one’s own—that is, it is owned by those corporate entities that determine both how an individual is categorized and the curatorial response to one’s own internal social sorting. Thus, the modes of being made available to platform users are subject to new forms of fracture, ownership, and commodification, both creating the potential for accidental Queer orientations and harnessing the power of Queer labor to solidify categorical boundaries and bolster curatorial strategies. In this way, we can see the political potency of Queerness as a radical ontological injunction doubly undermined.

As Matzner (2016) points out, current trends in surveillance and Big Data analytics have moved beyond a representationalist framework for understanding information and now interpret and act upon their performative capacities. Drawing on Butler’s (2011: 1993) concept of citationality, Matzner highlights Big Data’s ability to perform in the absence of the body by generating archival points of citation—points of data that correlate with established identity narratives or life trajectories. Citationality is, thus, concerned with the subjectifying capacity of relational acts wherein the “power of the speech act stems from its relation to similar acts, where particular structures of power and authority are already established” (Matzner 2016: 205). As such, the data footprints we leave behind contribute to the formation of narratives that confirm or

deny our membership within an array of normative categories. In other words, Matzner is arguing that data not only signifies or gestures toward one's subject position, but actively constructs it through a performance that more or less aligns with the narrative arc of previously established identity categories. To Matzner, these citational data are leveraged to construct images of the "terrorist" face, body, and lifeway.

To Butler (2011), the citational performance of gender or sexual identity references deeply seated cultural expectations regarding the divisions between sexuality, gender, and citizenship. Unlike Matzner, however, Butler points toward the intentionality of the performing in managing her own citational performance. If we examine her now famous dictum that "since the age of sixteen, being a lesbian is what I've been" and that "to say that I 'play' at being one is not to say that I am not one 'really,' rather how and where I play at being one is the way in which that 'being' gets established, instituted, circulated, and confirmed" (Butler 1993: 310–11), her intention to constitute the "I" as lesbian seems self-evident. Indeed, Butler (1988: 522) directly claims that gender is both intentional and performative. And yet, when data perform without permission, in the way that they might perform for individuals marked as terrorists, no intentionality, beyond that possessed by algorithmic sorting technologies, is required. As Matzner (2016: 207) states, "[the] focus on algorithms ... taken up in research on preemptive digital surveillance [and] based on risk calculus [provide a context where] Butler's and Derrida's reflections show that no intentional, authoritative actor is necessary to engage the force of citationality." In this way, data may perform Queerness in the absence of intention, referencing or "citing" datapoints that reflect established Queer ontological trajectories.

It is important to note here that by "intentionality" I mean only the intention to perform Queerness. All digital practices are, in some sense, entered into voluntarily and, as such, exist along a continuum of intentionality related to a desired use, effect, or affective result. The question here is not about intentionality as an existential concept, rather the absence of intentionality refers to an instance of "accident," curiosity, the slip of a finger, a misplaced "like," or a Google search from which a new curatorial landscape might arise. It is about an accidentally performative instance that may prompt a continued performance of Queerness due to an algorithmically induced entry into a new landscape of signs, signifiers, commodities, and connections. This possibility exists in defiance of Morton's contention that "Queerness" represents a ludic system of signification tied to the bourgeois capacity for self-determination. Indeed, Morton's critique of Queerness is rooted in its realization through desire: the ability to write one's own history through the curation of personal objects of signification. And yet, when data perform without permission, intentionality and "desire" are rendered irrelevant alongside any need for continuity between one's self-perception and the performance one's data enact. And so, an already questionably radical version of Queerness—one rooted in the manipulation of commodity signs—might be subject to forces of digital curation and coercion that move Queerness further away from its radical potential.

In his book *We Are Data*, John Cheney-Lippold (2017: 194) describes a scenario in which Google is able to speak univocally and without rebuttal on the subject of sexuality and gender. He notes that "[despite] the complexities of your lived experience ... Google analyses your browsing data and assigns you to one of two distinct gender categories (only "male" or "female") [and that] your algorithmic gender may well contradict your own identity needs, and values." Further, he goes on to state that "because Google's gender is Google's, not mine, I am unable to offer a critique of that gender, nor can I practice what we might refer to as a first-order gendered politics that queries what Google's gender means, how it distributes resources, and how it comes to define our algorithmic identities" (194). Thus, we are presented with the statistical application of gender identity by a monolithic corporate entity that harnesses its predictions regarding who we are—those programmed visions—to curate an entire online world of manufactured desires, orienting objects, and commodities.

In a similar vein, a 2013 article in *The Guardian*, titled "Facebook Users Unwittingly Revealing Intimate Secrets, Study Finds," Josh Halliday reveals that by mapping and comparing users' "likes," its algorithms can determine a specific user's sexual orientation with eighty-eight percent accuracy. While the ability to predict a subject's sexual orientation is thought-provoking, it is the remaining twelve percent of users—those whose sexuality either remains opaque or is incorrectly determined—that interests me here. The

potential for one's data double to betray their bodily desire and perform either Queerness or heteronormativity in opposition to the subject's intent is perhaps the most provocative point of intersection between Queerness and Big Data analytics. If Queerness gained its connotations of self-determination by way of the realization of affective desire, it must presuppose a freedom of desire or the presence of an object toward which desire might orient itself. Yet as Mark Andrejevic (2014: 65) notes, "we are entering a world in which the searches we perform online, the information we show about our friends, family, and acquaintances, and the world we see around us will be designed in increasingly sophisticated ways to influence our behavior and responses." Thus, the field of "objects" toward which one might direct desire is limited by curation. Moreover, the presentation of objects may lead away, or present an alternative "pathway," from that which might fulfill the genuine expression of sexual or gender identity.

In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed (2006) argues for a conception of Queerness rooted in a spatial frame and constituted through a "turning away from" or a reorientation in opposition to a heteronormative line drawn through our collective consciousness by the straight path of genealogical progress. To Ahmed, to be Queer is, from its onset, an act of resistance against the "straightening devices" of heteronormativity: those same Freudian, Oedipal discourses that Deleuze and Guattari (2009) implicated in forming the very fabric of capitalist hegemony. In an era where our past behavior—those points of data that constitute our citationality—inform and dictate the array of objects toward which we might orient ourselves, this definition of Queerness is rendered impotent. Returning to Andrejevic (2014: 66) we now live inside a system:

in which the information [or objects] made available to consumers by powerful new information and communication technologies will be filtered so as to promote consumerism Rather than exposing us to the wide range of viewpoints that characterize a vibrant democratic culture our information filters will increasingly show us the information that is most likely (according to market research) to create a positive association with accompanying advertising and to keep users coming back for more [and most importantly] ... such forms of influence go far beyond the associational image-based advertising of the twentieth century by trading upon detailed information about consumers' social, personal, and professional lives, about the psychological and emotional states, and even, eventually, about their genetic makeup.

As Tarleton Gillespie (2014: 167) points out, the algorithms that determine the curation of our own personal, individual "cyberspace" not only "help us find information, [but] also provide a means to know what there is to know and how to know it." Frequently referenced in popular discourse as the "filter bubble," the shrinking of cyberspace in order to better adhere to one's overall historical tendencies hearkens back to the question of citationality and the ongoing solidification of identity in reference to past behaviors. In this new configuration of surveillance and Big Data analytics, the digital objects or others in relation to whom we might orient ourselves are subject to a process of curation directed by our citationality and the manufacturing of desire. When our internet search histories, purchasing patterns, or social networking activity belie an indicator of either "Queerness" or heteronormativity (as defined by way of citational reference to narrative construct), we are swept along a road of curated objects that may orient us toward a kind of accidental Queerness or its opposite. These processes are iterative and self-perpetuating. In the same way that gender discourses are self-reifying and strengthen with repeat performance, the citational imprint and subsequent curation of object choices exist in a feed-forward process. This represents the destruction of Queerness as a subversive act. This is, of course, not to delegitimize Queerness as an individual identity but rather to complicate its viability as a political injunction when transposed onto digital spaces.

When Queerness is perpetuated through curation and entrainment to normative trajectory, it ceases to either contain or supply radical political potency. Of course, it is possible outside of any digital or new media context to be misidentified as either Queer or heteronormatively inclined, and yet, what is so nefarious about the digital surveillance and curation of orienting objects is the inability of subjects to "speak back" or to "clear the air" regarding their true orientation. As with most dataveillance, the flow of power is decidedly one-sided. To correct the algorithmic determination of one's digital milieu requires both knowledge of one's

accidental Queering and the ability to “speak” the language of code. It requires an un-boxing of the black box—a tricky negotiation bound up with the educational inequality that computational literacy evokes, itself often crosscut by gendered lines.

While I have argued the case here that Big Data and its associated project of digital curation constitute an undoing of Queerness as a radical political injection, it has been argued that the circulation of intimate media between partners, friends, and eavesdroppers might, in itself, serve to trouble the fragile nature of heteronormativity, exposing the Queerness hidden by quotidian heteronormative performativity (Manning and Stern 2018). I contest this on two fronts. First, I reject that unmasking the non-heteronormative dimensions of obligatory heteronormativity constitutes a reification of Queerness. Rather, it merely serves to expand the boundaries of the category of “heterosexual.” Second, the circulation of intimate media serves to “open up” sexual desire and identity to public scrutiny, permitting their categorization, and, as such, initiating curatorial action. To be “read” is not only to be marked as Queer, but to be enrolled in a process of further homonormative “Queering.”

This process is deeply ensconced in commercial enterprise and, as such, exists in line with Morton’s (1995: 378) cautionary observation that the cyberqueer is inexorably wedded to consumerist processes. And yet, his note that the “bourgeois subject, whose desire is (relatively) autonomous, is in a position not only to have the latest commodity first but also, more broadly, to write her own virtual history” is rendered false. Big Data’s capacity for performance, as articulated through citationality, is stripped of the need for both intent and agency. To Morton, Queerness is a process of self-motivated production through the manipulation of agents of signification. Yet, underlying his critique is the assumption that those objects through which Queerness is constituted (or made to signify) are chosen under the auspices of one’s own genuine desire and are, thus, indicative of a ludic, bourgeois postmodernity. Contrary to Morton, I would conclude that these new iterations of Queerness are artifacts of the late modernist project. While Morton was interested in demonstrating how ludic postmodernity could not escape systemic oppression and domination by foregoing material analysis in favor of affectivity, Queerness under the new surveillance assemblage has shown its potential to be subsumed, adapted, and reincorporated into the very systems of oppression it once rallied against. Where Queerness was once a matter of reclaiming unnoticed spaces and marginal positions, its radical potential is undermined by the manner with which dataveillance and predictive analytics capture and undermine the agency and desire of even commodity-driven Queer expression—a version of Queerness already deeply ensconced within the white, homonormative remaking of “Queer culture.”

Although this argument privileges “code” and algorithm in the accidental orientation of subjects, it is worth considering the machinic and human assemblages that serve to “execute” the unintentional performance of Queer identity. Social sorting, categorization, and curation are certainly artifacts of algorithmic governance, and yet, code cannot function in the absence of a device to transform code into the “orienting” forms of media under scrutiny here. Borrowing from Wendy Chun (2011), it can be said that implicating code in the transformation or Queering of sexual identity treads dangerously toward the metaphorical and that the primacy afforded to code—in all its unknowable invisibility—is tantamount to invoking the occult. Chun’s cautionary *Programmed Visions* must, indeed, be contended with. The orienting processes I have described here do not function without nested forms of labor, produced and reinforced by both individuals and corporate entities. It is not code that places portable computers into every pocket nor does it force the daily subjective encounters we employ them toward (although code and software do prompt us to lose ourselves in doing so). Orienting code only functions insofar as we absorb the cultural media presented to us, incorporating it into our fashion, lifestyle choices, and general sense of the world. This too is labor, and while it is tempting to ascribe sole agency to the algorithmic production of sexual otherness or Queering, it is merely one actor in a network of subjective becoming. I consider orienting code to be a “prime mover” of sorts—a beginning to a new hermeneutics of subjectivity that, if taken up on its initial curatorial selections, prompts a cycle of reorientation toward new objects and others in ways that deviate from the straight line of heteronormativity.

Haunting Archives: Reclaiming Queerness through Melancholia

Thus far, I have discussed radical Queerness as existing in the margins between categories and, to a lesser extent, as a depoliticized entity intertwined with commodity fetishism in order to satisfy a Deleuzian notion of unbound desire. I have shown how both of these interpretations of Queerness are complicated by our current regime of dataveillance. I have argued that, as a greater portion of our day-to-day activities move into digital spaces, a Queerness located in the margins or interstitial spaces has become untenable and that a Queerness that depends on the actualization of desire is undermined by the challenges to personal agency and desire that Big Data analytics pose. Queerness may now occur by accident—as the result of miscategorization, over-eager analytics, and the curation of digital environments. The margins and in between spaces where it once took hold have all but been eliminated by adaptive systems of classification and social sorting.

While it may now be impossible to escape the unrelenting categorization and loss of authentic desire that Big Data analytics seem to have ushered in, the emotional toll of an offline identity lived in the cracks can be made to speak across the fiber-optic cables that unite on/offline ontological realities. Taking up Muñoz's notion of melancholy—defined here as the psychic burden of marginal identity—I argue that it is possible to formulate new modes of resistance rooted in both the destructive and emancipatory potential of sadness and the weight it carries. This is translational work, moving between the domains of digitality and affect, attempting their unification. Although the systems of surveillance and Big Data collection that operate beneath the surface of our digitality are machinic and unfeeling, the reinterpretation of affect to mean the occupation of psychic space and the use of cognitive or other bodily resources allows a clear path for Queer affect to enter and affect Big Data archives.

I begin here with the notion of Melancholia, borrowed from Muñoz (1999), as the primary affective “material” through which we might short-circuit digital memory. Melancholia holds a central place in the life of Queer persons, and as such, provides a logical point of departure in the formation of a Queer intervention into digital surveillance. Quoting Muñoz (74):

Melancholia for blacks, queers, or any queers of color, is not a pathology but an integral part of everyday lives ... it is this melancholia that is part of our process dealing with all the catastrophes that occur in the lives of people of color, lesbians and gay men ... 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—in our names.

Living as Queer persons do in a state of continuous compromise and partial belonging makes Melancholia a constant companion. It is a life of precarity, dogged by the persistent threat of both emotional and material eviction. Melancholy haunts the “coming out” processes most markedly: that time of upheaval when all negotiations, armistices, and boundaries are either dissolved or solidified. Coming out, as it unfolds for many Queers, often requires strategizing an array of performances and appeals drawn from a desire to maintain a sense of normalcy, community, or safety. To be Queer is, more often than not, to wound both oneself and others. It is a tactical orchestration of both strength and vulnerability, need and rejection, belonging and exile. Melancholy is embedded in this process of “coming out” and expresses itself in the heavy toll of psychic exhaustion brought on by compulsory identity obfuscation and calculated performance. Yet, as Muñoz (1999: 74) points out, Queer Melancholia is not indicative of some persistent pathology. Rather, it is a productive force contained within a shared history of marginalization and political erasure. It impels us to “take our dead with us” and “wage war in their names.”

Melancholia is to be haunted. It is to have vengeful spirits rattling around in one's attic. As Big Data analytics eliminate those spaces of refuge that once existed in the in-between, Melancholia remains, albeit robbed of a home. It is this persistent Melancholia—this haunting—that I propose as a response to the elimination of categorical interstitia. I propose a haunting of archives: an insertion of the dead weight of our collective memory as Queer persons into the growing catalog of our digital information. This is not merely

the desire to metaphorically replicate a sense of trauma through an emerging technological medium. Nor is it a desire for some brand of politically motivated revenge or the destruction of informational assets. Rather, it is to be done in the spirit of accuracy and completeness. It is to be done in the name of reprogramming a system of modernist teleology—bent on the classification of all its human subjects—by way of introducing all those broken, half-lived lives excluded from its original calculus. It is a corrective issued, in the name of the Queer, to those systems of highly granular categorization that benefit from the informational wake of our trauma. Our only recourse is necromancy: to bring the dead with us. It is to spread contagion through the architectures of an all-encompassing archive—to make it reflect the melancholy, absurdity, and loss that Queerness connotes. It is to bring the weight of Queerness to bear on an emerging surveillance economy that seeks the recognition and classification of Queer persons for the sole purpose of hardwiring them into the circuits of global information capital. A haunting requires a total re-evaluation of the relationship between truth and fiction and a renegotiation of the perimeter drawn around reality. The power of the ghost—all those ghosts of Queer injustice—is to induce doubt: to render the difference between personhood, body, memory, and illusion unclear. It is also to follow one around the house, stalking to the point of madness, breakdown, and insomnia. To haunt the archive with the ghosts of our dead is to not only introduce nonsense into the archival architecture but to grind it to a paranoid halt.

In *Obfuscation: A User's Guide to Privacy and Protest*, Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum (2015: 46) offer obfuscation as one possible avenue for dissent against Big Data analytics. Defined by the authors as “the production of noise modeled on an existing signal in order to make a collection of data more ambiguous, confusing, harder to exploit, more difficult to act on, and therefore less valuable,” obfuscation permits the infiltration of Big Data archives and the introduction of disarray into their operational mechanics. To obfuscate is not only to interrupt and bewilder but to avoid the difficulties of digital abstinence as a method of dissent. Obfuscation favors participation over erasure and malicious compliance over absconding. In doing so, it preserves the active energy of political dissent and the affective positivity of Queer sexual expression that have sustained Queer activism as an emancipatory project for the last several decades.

Brunton and Nissenbaum offer a variety of methods by which obfuscation might be mobilized. While each can be read through a Queer lens, offering a unique avenue through which Queerness might express itself in digital spaces, here I will focus on only two: group identity (digital collectivization) and cloning. I have limited my analysis to these two strategies due to their amenability to the project of Queer haunting and the infiltration of digital archives by the ghostly and unmanageable presence of unbound data. At this point it is important to answer a potential critique: that the use of obfuscatory strategies merely causes an erasure of mourning and a blending-in of the Queer subject inside an archive that homogenizes data, thus undermining any attempt to “wage war by taking our dead with us.” I argue, however, that such a critique, while important and provocative, is drawn from the wrong vantage point. To mourn and to carry the dead with us are both consistent cultural and cognitive burdens. They eat away at our ability to think through things clearly and to wrap our thought around the meaning of individual identities and bodies in relation to each other. Obfuscation in data systems is about transplanting that burden and responsibility into the physical systems that form the basis of data collection and storage. It is to force them to carry the existential weight of mourning by overloading their existing technological capacity to parse and make sense of information. It is designed to use the memory of the dead to occupy random-access memory. It is to distill the hours spent mourning our dead and the missed connections the HIV crisis brought us and bring them with us, wrapped in an essential metaphor—haunting—that allows their translation between mediums.

Other methods of obfuscation carry their own metaphors of Queer intervention. Assuming a group identity online is to dissolve oneself into otherness. In digital contexts, assuming a group identity is to delink one's digital passports—one's Google, Facebook, Twitter accounts, and so on—from one's identity as an individual. It is to adopt a community approach to an individualistic platform. Platforms like Gmail, Facebook, Twitter, and myriad others depend on establishing links to individual identity in order to collect data that is attractive to advertisers or in order to function as advertisers in their own right. To open one's accounts to multiple users is to allow one's digital footprints to lead in multiple, confounding directions. It is to invite Legion in and to solicit one's own possession. Alongside Brunton and Nissenbaum, I am

suggesting a digital recreation of Leo Selvaggio's (2015) "URME" project: a transformation of digital information into a swarm of identical prosthetic masks. While URME promotes the collective assumption of Selvaggio's identity (by wearing a 3-D, resin replica of his face) in order to foil facial recognition software and other forms of video surveillance, digital collectivization allows platform users to dissolve into one another's data. It encourages a kind of digitally enabled schizophrenia: a blending of data doubles.

Read from a Queer perspective, group identities are a way of not only "taking our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their name" (Muñoz 1999: 74) but also the living. While Big Data analytics may produce and depend on systems of classification and prediction shrunk down to the level of the individual, digital collectivization stretches categories to the point of rupture. As such, it counteracts the forces of curation that act on and orient subjects toward or away from inauthentic identity scripts or citational trajectories. This is an accelerationist argument. Delinking data from digital identity detaches Big Data analytics from its object. As such, the cycle of citation, orientation, and becoming is destabilized in such a way that the forces exerted by a totalizing digital archive might tear itself apart in a catastrophe of its own physics. We can find the forces of melancholy at work in the breakdown and collapse of archive. In the same way that Queerness and "coming out" require the maintenance of multiple identities, so too does digital collectivization introduce the burden of multiplicity into archive. The melancholy of negotiating between identity performances in response to fear and marginalization is, thus, uploaded into archival memory where it can do its destructive work. Digital collectivization is to work a contagious magic in the folds of archive—to trouble it with the psychic panic of non-belonging and the labor of continuous identity work.

Cloning oneself is another strategy through which space might be reclaimed for Queer persons. Cloning is to become multiple and to use the proliferation of one's clones to take up residence in uninvited places. Much like employing group identities that render archives useless through their ability to circumvent having one's digital footprint attached to their real identity, cloning allows one's authentic, individual identity to roam archival systems in the company of dozens of false "selves." While digital collectivization presents Big Data with the problem of the many masquerading as one, cloning operates in an inverse fashion, allowing a single subject to fracture inside a hall of mirrors. Brunton and Nissenbaum (2015: 36) offer Apple's cloning service—part of a 2012 bulk patent purchase from Novell—as one avenue through which this can be achieved. They describe the process thusly:

A "cloning service" observes an individual's activities and assembles a plausible picture of his or her rhythms and interests. At the user's request, it will spin off a cloned identity that can use the identifiers provided to authenticate. ... These identifiers might include small amounts of actual confidential data (a few details of a life, such as hair color or marital status) mixed in with a considerable amount of deliberately inaccurate information. [This information] may draw on the user's actual [patterns] as inferred from things such as the user's browsing history but may begin to diverge from those interests in a gradual, incremental way.

Cloning, as such, is a technologically enabled way to obscure the difference between truth (the real subject) and fiction (its cloned doppelgänger). It is a method bringing the power of doubt to bear on archive and the predictive analytics that it enables. With cloning, the subject is rendered transient and tricky. She is made indistinguishable from her fantasy guardians and disappears into a gang of uniformed cronies. Cloning permits the duplication of self in such a way that occupies visible space in archive—effectively multiplying the size of one's "data double" in ways that a physical body restricts. In this sense, cloning is a true haunting. The subject appears unevenly across space and time, moving in and out of view against a backdrop of half-realized apparitions of itself. Hauntings swell to fill the size of their container—whether a house, archive, or asylum. They also stall the positivist, forward-march of empirical science: what Donna Haraway (1988: 189) has called the "god-trick" that "fucks the world to make technomonsters." Cloning, however, carries with it another trick. To repeat oneself—to duplicate one's imprint—albeit in ways that encourage minor permutation—is to translate the plurality and consistency of Queer trauma into archive. It is to inject the

drawn-out repetition of Queer trauma by flooding archive with a million iterations of oneself that stake their claim to a wounded life inside the surveillant assemblage. In this way, the clone augments both time and space. Cloned data profiles do, indeed, occupy storage space but also provide a glimpse at the ontogeny of Queer trauma, as if each new moment were a new clone and each new clone a conduit for recognition.

Both cloning and digital collectivization engage archive in an inefficient project. More directly, they increase the infrastructural requirements that permit the actualization of nascent archival data and its transformation into actionable analytics. To haunt archive is to interrupt its mechanics and grind its operations to a halt. It is to superimpose the existential burden of Queer living onto the circuitry that supports archival function. Big Data analytics run on the power of random-access memory, a finite resource. If Queer memory is occupied, colonized, and burdened by the weight of our own history, so too might RAM be wasted by the disorienting introduction of flak or nonsense code. Unreadable code is the essence of Queerness distilled into syntax. It is the speech act that does not signify intelligibly in the register of normative understanding.

In *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*, Benjamin Bratton (2016: 15) notes that “it may be that our predicament is that we cannot design the next political geography of planetary computation until it more fully designs us in its own image.” Indeed, the manner through which surveillance, analytics, and curation might operate on us promises to transform us in ways that are opaque and cannot necessarily be anticipated or engineered. The accidental orientations that curation implies may act to undo or reinforce processes of Queering or straightening. And yet, to intentionally act to Queer archive permits us to design our own designing and designation as Queer persons. It allows a breakdown in the operation of Big Data analytics and a prying open of the tightening mesh of categorization. While haunting may not supply sufficient space to contest the elimination of the interstia in which Queerness once made its home, it does stake a claim to memory, function, and the form of archive. Ghosts do not require a claim to space; they invite themselves into things as they are. They exist everywhere and nowhere in particular, wasting analytic resources and inserting error into sense-making. Queer life may no longer require a space in between, only a flicker of existence in the circuitry of power: a short circuit, a spark, a fire.

Conclusions

In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Muñoz (2009) questions whether an authentic Queerness has ever really existed. Rather than seek out its historical manifestations (however ephemeral), he looks to the future in order to glimpse a Queerness that has not yet crystalized—one rooted not only in the securing of LGBT rights but in the realization of a more imaginative utopia. Writing against the dim future for Queer persons envisioned by his contemporary Edelman (see Edelman 2004), Muñoz chos to disavow the nihilistic defeatism that comes from extending the contemporary Queer experience—and all of its attending loss and pain—into the future. Rather, he takes the future as a starting point from which to imagine a new politics of Queer emancipation, one that generates the space in which alterity might flourish and in which the relations of power are reconfigured or equalized.

Like Edelman, surveillance scholarship so easily lends itself to defeatist thinking; it seems to require that we entirely abandon the old critical canon of Queer theorization. Indeed, throughout this paper I have shown how the granularity with which Queer persons are apprehended by the new surveillant assemblage, and the absolute size and stability of Big Data archives, has eliminated the potential for existing in the margins or the “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, and overlaps” as radical Queer scholarship once demanded. Moreover, I have shown how the categories of “Queerness” generated by the overlapping surveillant apparatuses that produce “Big Data” feed back into a dialectic of Queer measurement and control, articulated by way of digitally mediated advertising and, as such, coercive measures. Additionally, I have argued that the twists and turns away from the heteronormative that Queer-targeted advertising compels, and the feed-forward manner through which they operate, constitute both a phenomenological and ontological disorientation of sexual and gender identity when measured from the perspective of the data double. And yet, returning to

Muñoz, it is important that we look toward new avenues of intervention and theorizing our Queer present and future. Indeed, this article has shown how a Queer perspective may lead us away from our pessimism. Mourning, obfuscating, cloning, haunting, and identity sharing all have parallels in both the Queer theoretical canon and in its day-to-day realities. Thus, when we think Queerly about surveillance, we discover not only precisely what is at stake but also how we may carve new inroads for resistance.

This article, however, was not meant to merely gesture toward digital interventions into an unpalatable Queer present as our only hope. Rather, its aim was to unsettle, playfully undermine, and subject now academically dogmatic ways of thinking about Queerness to new kinds of phenomena that blur and confuse once rigid boundaries. Where Queerness was once a matter of oppositional retreat and taking up refuge at the margins of intelligibility, new surveillant assemblages have subsumed that potentiality within the counter-project of total-information storage and analysis. Moreover, the ability of the surveillant assemblage to orient and reorient subjects—through advertisements, social networking suggestions, event suggestions, media recommendations, and so on—either toward or away from citational points that reference Queerness should serve to trouble any stale notions of Queer ontology. New possibilities, such as one's data double being assembled as Queer without one's knowledge or without one's embodied complacency, seriously destabilize any presumed ontological divide between the online and off or the performance of homo- or heterosexuality.

To conclude, Queerness as a radical political strategy is under threat. First, the notion that Queerness may take up space in the open mesh of possibility or at the margins of intelligibility is no longer tenable. Second, the consumer-fetishism noted by Morton in 1990 has accelerated into a feed-forward process of making and unmaking the consumer in the image of the Queer or its opposites. Such a landscape, interpenetrated by various directions of surveillance and myriad institutional agendas, raises important questions regarding the epistemology of Queerness: can archival “information” know that you are Queer before you do? And, most importantly, how shall we think through these emerging problems with the promise of powerful general AI and increased cyborgification just over the horizon?

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