Patriotic Penetration: Gay Bombs, Queer Times and Homonationalist Assemblages

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This paper is an attempt to think through various lines of relationality concerning inquiries on time and space, homonationalism and its relationship with American queer cultures, the production of racialized and sexualized others in discourses on the War on Terror, and heteronormative constructions of what constitutes a model patriotic citizen. I do this by focusing closely on two recent books dealing with these topics: *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgendered Bodies, Subcultural Lives* by Judith Halberstam (2005), and T*errorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* by Jasbir K. Puar (2007). Although neither author deals with all of these issues, I believe putting these two authors into dialogue together, along with contemporary examples expanding on their discussions, helps illuminate the productive potential of their combined ideas and analysis.

Rather than doing a simple one-to-one reading of these two books, I believe using their insights to deconstruct and reconstruct the issues they engage with can help us begin to outline a productive queer theory framework, a queer assemblage, as Puar might say, that seeks to fuse the most productive insights from both arguments into a revised theoretical trajectory for future queer research. So this project seeks to both clarify useful claims already made, as well as point out new connections and lines of flight that I hope will add to a richer and more elaborated discussion of these issues in the future.

Central to this project are several sets of questions which I trace through the course of this paper. First, what do we mean when we talk about queer time and queer space? Is this a real, spatiotemporal configuration in the sense of a physical counterpublic and a temporary autonomous zone as outlined by Hakim Bey in *T.A.Z.* (1991), which is outside of, or within, a larger heteronormative time and space? Or is it a theoretical construct that provides a way to rethink practices and points of contact, but without necessarily implying a groundedness that might be thought of as more imagined than real? What are the implications of each, and what seems possible? Second, what are the visible connections that can be traced and mapped out between a heteronormative national project of American exceptionalism and the incorporation of queer populations as citizens, consumers and political agents within this national project? What do they look like? What are the implications of incorporation? How is incorporation being resisted, and what are their political implications for domestic and international relations, including the War on Terror? Finally, what relationships exist, and what tensions are evident, within queer politics concerning notions of family and

reproduction, religion and secularism, community and subculture, race and sexuality, and consumers and producers? How much are these discussions informed (implicitly or explicitly) by heteronormative politics, and how much are they a reaction to or against them? Where can we see useful political resistance in practice, and where do we want to re-examine the form of various practices and debates?

Ultimately, this is a project which seeks to better understand the complex concept that is queer, as a subject, an idea, a theory, and an in-between and state of eternal becoming. It is a political project as much as a personal exploration, but also a thought experiment and embodied practice that has important implications. How we define and theorize queerness matters. In a time when, as Achille Mbembe describes in his article *Necropolitics*, the necropower political vortex is growing increasingly oppressive, a critical part of queer futurity must be to offer forms of critique and resistance against these practices, less we ourselves become just one more reproductive cog in the living death machine that is the American empire (Mbembe 15). I. A Working Definition of Queer

For the purposes of my paper, I take queer to mean both a way of living and a form of seeing. A way of living, in that queer life is often in tension with dominant heterosexual practices and values (herein referred to as heteronormativity), and is *not* defined purely by sexual identification and gender practices. In this sense, a queer life is parallel to, but also distinct from, heterosexual forms of living. It is a way of seeing in that normative assumptions about what is desired, what is acceptable and what is normal for queers are often in conflict with, and in many ways defined against, heteronormative practices and assumptions. This is not to say that they can't overlap, but that a queer way of seeing can offer a radically different view of the world and the possible ways to live in it. This divergence has been clearly highlighted in the recent debates over gay marriage and civil unions, but this is only one of many politically charged examples of hetero-homo political tensions within the nation.

Halberstam defines queer as “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” (Halberstam 6). Puar never offers a working definition for queer, but rather considers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersexed individuals as assemblages, and often uses the umbrella queer label of LGBTIQ. The closest to a formal definition of queer that Puar offers is when she is discussing a “queer methodological philosophy,” stating that “there is no exact recipe for a queer endeavor, no a priori system that taxonomizes the linkages, disruptions, and contradictions into a tidy vessel…I veer away from the instinctual, the natural, or the commonsensical as the basis of a queer sensibility” (Puar xv). While this is less conceptually clear compared to Halberstam, there are important implications for the work these two definitions do, as we will see later, and the political ramifications embedded in these different notions will be critically important to many of the problematics this paper seeks to address.

II. Queer Time

What exactly do we mean when we talk about queer time and queer space? This is a concept that both Halberstam and Puar work through in their books, albeit quite differently, and therefore offers us a useful starting point for our entry into the topic. Queer time for Halberstam is conceptualized in several different ways, but her formal definition of queer time is “those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (Halberstam 6). She also argues that by “articulating and elaborating a concept of queer time, I suggest new ways of understanding the nonnormative behaviors that have clear but not essential relations to gay and lesbian subjects,” and that this process of developing a notion of queer time “requires and produces new conceptions of space” (ibid.). In relation to her definition of queer time, she offers an important remark on her conceptualization of postmodernism that I want to signal here, and return to later.

Halberstam writes that postmodernism, “takes on meaning in relation to new forms of cultural production that emerge both in sync with and running counter to what Jameson has called the ‘logic’ of late capitalism…I see postmodernism as simultaneously a crisis and an opportunity—a crisis in the stability of form and meaning, and an opportunity to rethink the practice of cultural production, its hierarchies and power dynamics, its tendency to resist or capitulate” (Halberstam 6). This question of crisis and opportunity as it relates to postmodern cultural production will be important in our later discussion of queer consumption and Puar's claim that certain practices linked to homonationalism are complicit in reproducing the very heteronormative project Halberstam is interested in critiquing.

Unlike Halberstam, Puar has a much different notion of time, and more often talks about temporality as it relates to both ontology and becoming-time, such that time for Puar is conceived in snapshots and flashpoints, hauntings, entanglements and a folding back of futurity, and time does not require postmodernism nor an impossible stepping outside of the postmodern logic that Halberstam seems to argue for in her notion of queer time. However, the two authors do share an overlapping critique of the notion of time as natural, albeit in different ways.

Halberstam points to the work of David Harvey and other critical geographers who have deconstructed the apparent naturalness of time in order to show its constructive elements in relation to production and capital, but simultaneously critiques them for a reinscription of time within a normative framework which “misses the opportunity to deconstruct the meaning of naturalization with regard to specific normalized ways of being” (Halberstam 8). Puar takes a slightly different tactic, arguing for a notion of nonmetric time and deviant chronopolitics as developed by Elizabeth Freeman and Manuel DeLanda. “Nonmetric time deconstructs the naturalization of the administrative units of measurement of the “familiar, divisible, and measurable time of everyday experience” and challenges the assumption that

the repetition of identical units, these “stable oscillators” at different scales, is “composed of identical instants” (Puar xxii). While this may seem fairly esoteric when compared to, for example, the straightforward discussion of heteronormative reproductive time which Halberstam opposes to queer time, Puar's emphasis becomes clearer in her conclusion on queer time when she states: “I allude to queer praxes of futurity that insistently disentangle the relations between representation and affect, and propose queerness as not an identity nor an anti-identity, but an assemblage that is spatially and temporally contingent” (Puar 204). So for Puar, time is an always past-present-future which is entangled with the here and now and which constructs the queer subject in a three-fold mechanism of temporal and spatial power; that is, the queer is haunted by the past, constituted in the present, but always projected into the future. A concrete example will, I believe, help make this distinction clearer.

So for example, past constructions of the queer as a sexual deviant informed American immigration legislation in the form of the Immigration Act of 1917 and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 by targeting homosexuals as socially deviant and mentally defective, and as William Ong Hing notes, “the ostracism that gays and lesbians endure in American life also has immigration-related underpinnings…” (Ong Hing 82). And while he notes that the Immigration Act of 1990 removed the language of sexual deviation linked to homosexuals, “immigrant visas for spouses of U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents continue to be limited to spouses of the opposite sex” (Ong Hing 91). Not only that, but as Siobhan Somerville points out, the INA replaced racial with sexual categories of discrimination. “At the same time, the 1952 INA also introduced two sexual categories, homosexuality and adultery, into the laws determining eligibility for citizenship: Congress ensured that a finding of homosexuality could be used to exclude immigrants from eligibility for immigration and naturalization, and also explicitly named adultery as one of the many prohibited acts that constituted an automatic bar to finding of ‘good moral character’ necessary to qualify for naturalization” (Somerville 3). This highlights the element of present temporal entanglements of queers and issues of marriage rights, while pointing simultaneously to the future entanglements over marriage which continue to haunt queer temporality. While at first Puar's notion of time may seem overly deconstructionist, I believe it actually offers a highly productive way to conceptualize notions of queer time that, while sharing similarities with Halberstam's conception of queer time, also goes beyond it in important ways. Halberstam does try to capture some of this triadic temporal framing we see in Puar in her discussion of inheritance time.

The time of inheritance refers to an overview of generational time within which values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next. It also connects the family to the historical past of the nation, and glances ahead to connect the family to the future or both familial and national stability. In this category we can include the kinds of hypothetical temporality—the time of “what if”—that demands protection in the way of insurance policies, health care, and wills. (Halberstam 5)

For Halberstam, family time is negatively linked to reproduction of the heterosexual family and its naturalization, and therefore, “upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality” (Halberstam 4). She develops this notion of reproductive time further when she states that the “time of reproduction is ruled by a biological clock for women and by strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples,” while on family time she writes that it “refers to the normative scheduling of daily life (early to bed, early to rise) that accompanies the practice of child rearing…governed by an imagined set of children's needs, and it relates to beliefs about children's health and healthful environments for child rearing” (Halberstam 5). These definitions raise several distinct and important questions.

First, why should gay coupled be worried about biological clock time in the first place, much less feel they have to conform to it, if child rearing is not in the picture? And if child rearing in the form of artificial insemination (for lesbians) or adoption (for queer couples) is desirable, should we then make an implicit assumption, as Halberstam seems to do here, that they would a priori want to maintain a different time schedule for their lives than a similar heterosexual couple? This seems to be slipping dangerously close to a blanket claim against family and child rearing in general, rather than an implicit critique of heteronormative reproductive time in particular.

Second, how realistically can we talk about “strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples” in this day and age? While I agree with her claim to the underlying white, middle-class heterosexual norms that are implicit in discussion of respectability, I am more skeptical of her claim about strict rules for scheduling of married couples. She makes this claim but never provides any evidence to support it, leaving us to take her word for it. I must admit I am at a loss to think of what rules for scheduling my married friends observe, that aren't tied to their work schedule or their children's school schedules, and it is possible to see this as another passing attack on any positive readings of marriage, family or child rearing. Her use of Marxist language here also suggest that by bourgeois she means middle class, another encoded way of referencing the heteronormative family model, and it is unclear how her notion of bourgeois rules maps onto other class subjects, such as working class families or those at poverty level, where the economic realities imposed by capitalism are as likely to dictate couples working two jobs or working night and graveyard shifts, further destabilizing her divergent construction of queer time, and suggests queer time may be normatively linked with an anti-family and anti-child politics.

Third, and this builds on the last two points, she attacks the artificiality of “normative scheduling of daily life (early to bed, early to rise) that accompanies the practice of child rearing…governed by an imagined set of children's needs, and it relates to beliefs about children's health and healthful environments for child rearing” without seeming to recognize the problematic normative assumptions implicit in this claim. First, anyone that has a 9-5 job, regardless of being straight or queer, is already temporally constrained by the logic of

capitalist labor time. This is not something unique to straight people, nor is it something which her queer time automatically solves. We can argue that by rejecting this model of capitalist labor queer time could be potentially liberatory, but I fail to see an imminent anti-capitalist critique linked to queer time developed in her theory. If this is not her aim, then it appears to simply be a broad critique of childhood life cycles, rather than heteronormativity per se, and appears to read queer child rearing out of the picture. This suspicion gains support in the second part of her quote above where she suggest family time is "governed by an imagined set of children's needs," leading one to the logical response of, what then are the "real" set of children's needs that queer time brings to light? I think the answer is none; Halberstam's theory of queer time offers no alternative queer space in which to locate the child or the queer family. If true, this is a problem she avoids addressing.

My aim here is not so much to attack Halberstam's notion of queer time tout court, but to show her own homonormative assumptions and trace their influence on how she theorizes queer time. I believe it is also important to note that queer time seems to depend on the stability of a particular construction of heteronormative models of marriage that may themselves be less stable than Halberstam implies, and as such, limits her conception of the potentiality of queer time. But we should also acknowledge that for her, queer time is liberatory precisely because "it is also about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing" (Halberstam 2). The real issue then becomes one of asking how her model of queer time is productive for the queer individual while simultaneously restrictive for the queer family, and whether we want to rework her concept of queer time to account for the more subtle and fluid conjunctions that Puar offers with her assemblage model of queer time? While I think that both models of queer time considered here offer useful insights into larger debates within queer theory, it is beyond the scope of this paper to try and work out a solution that would be a fusion of these two notions of queer time. Having considered these various notions of queer time, I want to move next to a discussion of the concept of queer space, and offer a similar close reading of the notion of queer space and its theoretical and practical implications.

III. Queer Space

The notion of queer space for Halberstam, as mentioned earlier, is in part contingent and built upon her notion of queer time. In her book she defines queer space as "the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it also describes the new understanding of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics" (Halberstam 6). She develops this idea of space through a reading and critique of Marxist thinkers like David Harvey and Fredric Jameson, applauding their deconstruction of the naturalization of both space and time, while simultaneously critiquing their apparent blindness to how heteronormative assumptions within Marxist theory continue to foreclose a broader critique of naturalized logics of space and time.

Harvey argues for multiple conceptions of time and space, but he does not adequately describe

how time/space becomes naturalized, on the one hand, and how hegemonic constructions of time and space are uniquely gendered and sexualized, on the other. His is an avowedly materialist analysis of time/space dedicated understandably to uncovering the processes of capitalism, but it lacks a simultaneous desire to uncover the processes of heteronormativity, racism and sexism…Only a single-minded focus on the history of the white working class and an abstract concept of capital can give rise to the kind of neat scheme that Harvey establishes where time dominates critical consciousness and suppresses an understanding of spatiality (Halberstam 8).

As a solution to these problems, she argues that the approaches used by Anna Tsing and Lindon Barrett are much more productive for the type of questions she wants to explore around queer space and time. She applauds Tsing's sensitivity to new dynamics within global capitalism which must be accounted for in a way that Harvey and other fail to do. Tsing "theorizes global capitalism much more precisely in relation to new eras of speed and connection, travel, movement, and communication; she lays out the contradictory results of global capitalism in terms of what it enables as well as what forms of oppression it enacts: Tsing reminds us that globalization makes a transnational politics (environmentalism, human rights, feminism) possible even as it consolidates U.S. hegemony" (Halberstam 9). This is all important for Halberstam because she wants to argue, in opposition to Harvey and others, that there can be a productive queer counterpublic, a queer space, which does not have to be defined solely in opposition to a dominant capitalist public or logic. Instead, she wants to argue that queer spaces act as counterpublics with their own logic, all of which operate for her in a space distinct from, but not defined by, dominant heteronormative logics of capital.

[A]ll kinds of people, especially in postmodernity, will and do opt to live outside of reproductive and familial time as well as on the edges of logics of labor and production. By doing so, they also often live outside the logic of capital accumulation: here we could consider ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers, and the unemployed. Perhaps such people could productively be called "queer subjects" in terms of the ways they live (deliberately, accidentally, or of necessity) during the hours when others sleep and in the spaces (physical, metaphysical, and economic) that others have abandoned, and in terms of the ways they might work in domains that other people assign to privacy and family (Halberstam 10).

Fiona Buckland, in her book *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* (2002), points to these productive queer spaces in the context of queer clubbing in New York City. "Many people who identify as queer are made worldless, forced to create maps and spaces for themselves, without the support of these more traditional realms. In such circumstances, any queer lifeworld is itself a critique as well as a place from where

participants critique these realms" (Buckland 3). While I agree that subcultures have the potential to produce an understanding of space and time distinct from or on the borders of dominant heteronormative logics, it is less clear how they operate outside of these logics.

To highlight one problematic aspect of her theory of queer space and subcultural counterpublics, I want to explore the ways in which many of the practices of her "queer subjects" mentioned above are actually deeply enmeshed—and in some instances reproductive of—rather than operating outside of, dominant logics of capital. Fully exploring these linkages is important, for as Puar notes in her discussion on homonationalism (cf. Puar xii), there is a dark underbelly to Halberstam's idealized queer subject.

The first problem that emerges within Halberstam's conceptualization of a queer counterpublic is that even her idealized queer subjects seem unable to extricate themselves from a capitalist logic of accumulation. For ravers and club kids, there are two inter-related economic logics which are embedded in countercultural notions of style, a term she explores later in her book, which she seems to ignore here. Being a raver or club kids requires both excess leisure time and excess capital in order to partake in such a lifestyle. Leisure time in the ability to be a regular part of the club scene, and capital in order to meet certain expectations of dress and consumption, be it in the latest club clothes or in the cost of entrance and venue fees. Both of these require a certain level of conspicuous consumption, which is already a marker of capitalist logic internal to rave and club subculture.

So for example, a club kid in New York going to the Roseland Ballroom to see world-famous dj Paul Van Dyk on New Years could spend between $100 for general admission to $700 for a Premium VIP ticket. A more thrifty clubber might choose dj Raven at Quo Nightclub in Chelsea, but would still have to spend between $100 and $225 for a ticket. Buckland points to these economic dynamics, as well as gender and identity politics within the queer community itself, based on her own studies.

However, being queer in and of itself does not guarantee entry to queer clubs, or even the desire to go. Open access to queer dance clubs was problematic because although they may exist outside some traditional institutions, they are firmly situated within a market economy in which some clubs charge thirty dollars for entry. Clubs also operated within economies of desirability based on ideas of beauty, status, race, gender, sexuality, and age. Not all clubbers criticized these economies. Even my early pre-research experiences in dance clubs contained a few voices that wanted to exclude those who did not fit communities based on identity politics (Buckland 3).

So it is problematic to consider the rave scene and club kids as outside of a capitalist logic, even in the production of queer space. This is not to deny, however, that these subcultural practices do create an important safe space for expression of queer identity and

community. Rather, we must recognize that in producing a queer space there is a simultaneous reproduction of *other* logics which are in *tension* with this notion of queer space as operating in a sphere outside of the heteronormative logic of capitalism.

This same economic logic operates in the context of what are called "rent boys," another queer subject that Halberstam holds up as a creator of a queer space and counterpublic.

In a January 27, 2009 article in the *New York Observer* titled The Hipster Rent Boys of New York, reporter Joe Pompeo explores the dynamics of rent boy lifestyle here in New York, finding that in almost every case the rent boys were involved for economic incentives, such as fast cash and entrance into the extravagant lifestyles of older queer clients. Pompeo narrates the experience of one rent boy named Shy, who talked about the extravagant lifestyle he was a part of with one of his wealthy clients.

One such individual, a wealthy 70-year-old whom Shy [who is 28] said was prominent in the theater world and New York society, responded to his plea. They met for the first time over dinner at Craftsteak to discuss their new arrangement. Shy would be paid $2,000 each month just to hang out two or three days a week. Score!

Over the next year, Shy's new friend took him to Broadway shows and fancy dinners. There were expensive shopping excursions and weekend jaunts to L.A. Shy also got $3,000 worth of cosmetic dental work out of the deal. And yes, he became as intimate as it's possible to become with another person. (Pompeo)

A hipster rent boy from Williamsburg getting $3,000 worth of dental work in between Broadway shows and "weekend jaunts" to L.A. is hardly operating outside of the logic of capitalism. Robert, another of the New York rent boys interviewed in the article, is described as "escorting more or less full time for about half a year now, making as much as $3,000 a week" (Pompeo). He also spoke with Columbia sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh, who noted that in "the secretive world of high end male escorts...rent boys who ascend to the topmost ranks of the business can make thousands upon thousands of dollars an hour. At the upper crusts of society, they said, the bulk of compensation is not tendered in currency, but gifts, property, tuition, etc." (Pompeo). This last statement raises a paradox that seems to provide partial support for Halberstam's claim about rent boys as outside of the logic of capital (also see Puar, p. 22). If a rent boy can gain access into the "upper crusts" of society, they enter into a form of elite barter economy that could be seen as a queer space outside of the logic of capitalist accumulation. However, the gateway to this economically liberated queer space seems to be so exclusive that it is hard to imagine it as a useful theoretical model for thinking about rent boys and queer space.

But even here, it would seem we could make an imminent Marxist critique to say that, rather than operating outside of the logic of commodity and labor power, the rent boy actually transforms his sexual labor power into a commodity that can be bought and sold

for individualized and commodified periods of time, thus transforming a queer subcultural space that could operate outside of logics of capitol into a virtual sex work economy as witnessed in Web site like RentBoy.com and displayed on the personals sections of Craigslist and the back pages of the *Village Voice* (Pompeo). A final complication to this rent boy as queer subculture picture emerges in Pompeo's discussion with the CEO of RentBoy.com, Guy Van Sant, who noted that of the rent boy listing on their web site, “at least one-fifth…are actually straight; “gay for pay” heterosexuals” looking for extra income (quoted in Pompeo). Where a heterosexual rent boy would fit into Halberstam's model of rent boy as queer subject and subcultural space producer is unclear, and illustrates one more facet of an incredibly complex picture of sexual practices which I fear her normative view of queerness as inherently liberatory fails to account for sufficiently. This moves her dangerously close to Puar's concern that such normative assumption of the queer subject as a priori liberatory reinforces a notion of queerness as “an exclusively transgressive one” (22), thus blinding our analysis to the ways in which “resistance to heteronorms may be privileged in a way that effaces the effects of this resistance in relation to possible complicities with other norms, such as racial, class, gender, and citizenship privileges” (23). And as we saw in Buckland's discussion of queer clubs in New York, there are problems of race, class and gender clearly operative even in the very subcultural queer spaces Halberstam believes “preserve the critique of heteronormativity that was always implicit in queer life” (Halberstam 154). In order to try and further disentangle some of these problems between queer subculture as liberatory and queer exceptionalism as complicit in other forms of disciplinary power, I now want to turn to the concept of homonationalism as developed by Puar.

IV. Homonationalism

Homonationalism, a term which fuses the notions of homonormativity and nationalism, operates as a central axis in the work of Puar. She describes homonationalism as a nexus of various biopolitical forces and political logics linked to the rise of the homosexual as a citizen of the nation.

National recognition and inclusion, here signaled as the annexation of homosexual jargon, 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 (2).

Puar is primarily interested in tracing the ways in which queer subjects and the rhetoric of sexual exceptionalism within queer discourses and practices actually serve to reinforce the heteronormative foundations of the nation, even while making token gestures towards acceptance of queer bodies and lives within the body politic. For Puar, this is most clearly demonstrated in the construction of the terrorist as the epitome of the deviant queer subject, a production which she argues is only possible by first constructing a “proper” queer subject—conceptualized as a white, middle class patriotic consumer—as an

acceptable citizen of the nation. Once this model queer citizen becomes part of the nation, claims of American exceptionalism, both in terms of sexual rights and practices, as well as conceptions of freedom and liberties, gain greater traction and legitimacy.

This homonormative cover which the queer citizen lends to the nation, through complicity with state practices, allows for racialized and sexualized discourses embedded in heteronormative logics to be mobilized against people of color and ethnic minorities both inside the nation and abroad. In this sense, homonationalism produces certain disciplinary effects both on the domestic and international political levels, thus magnifying what Puar sees as "the intractability of queerness from biopolitical arrangements of life and death" (3). So for Puar, far from challenging heteronormativity, homonormativity can actually help consolidate it further.

I argue that the Orientalist invocation of the terrorist is one discursive tactic that disaggregates U.S. National gays and queers from racial and sexual others, foregrounding a collusion between homosexuality and American nationalism that is generated both by national rhetorics of patriotic inclusion and by gay and queer subjects themselves: homonationalism. For contemporary forms of U.S. nationalism and patriotism, the production of gay and queer bodies is crucial to the deployment of nationalism, insofar as these perverse bodies reiterate heterosexuality as the norm but also because certain domesticated homosexual bodies provide ammunition to reinforce nationalist projects (Puar 39).

As one primary example of this incorporation process, Puar points to the proliferation of American flags in queer spaces and pride parades following 9/11. Her book offers a wide range of examples in which the racialized body and the sexualized body are manipulated in order to provide cover for American military aggression in the form of the War on Terror. A powerful example of this incorporation was the support from a broad range of the queer community for the invasion of Afghanistan and later Iraq, arguing that, for example, America was morally obligated to "liberate" women and queers from oppressive Islamic regimes (Puar 43). By pointing to the sexual oppression of women and queers abroad, and contrasting it to the relative freedom queers have in the US, they not only provided ideological cover and explicit support for American militarism abroad, but also allowed for the internal suppression and increased profiling of ethnic and immigrant communities seen as tied to these queer terrorists abroad. Such ideological constructions deny the possibility, for example, that someone could be both Muslim and queer at the same time. One particularly intriguing example of this queer terrorist construction that problematizes rather than supports the Muslim-homophobia nexus is evident in the photo book *Taliban* by T. Dworzak, where he documents numerous Afghani Taliban in homosocial positions (*Illustration 1 and 2*). Paur provides a powerful example of this negative in the case of the British activist group OutRage! and their perpetuation of a liberal, secular rhetoric of Islamic homophobia. "The Muslim or gay binary mutates from a narrative of incommensurate subject positionings into an 'Islam versus homosexuality' tug of populationwar: a mutation

that may reveal the contiguous undercurrents of conservative homonormative ideologies and queer liberalism" (Puar 19). While not specifically linked to queer politics, we can find examples of queering the terrorist and projections of deviant sexuality in the form of Playgirl magazine spoofs (*Figures 1* and *2)* and skin flicks.

Preempting the common rebuttal that queers aren't responsible for American racial and Orientalist narratives, as they themselves are also targets of the same heteronormative state, Puar argues that some "may strenuously object to the suggestion that queer identities, like their 'less radical' counterparts, homosexual, gay, and lesbian identities, are also implicated in ascendant white American nationalist formations, preferring to see queerness as singularly transgressive of identity norms. This focus on transgression, however, is precisely the term by which queerness narrates its own sexual exceptionalism" (22). Puar further expands this nexus of homonationalism as complicit with U.S. racial politics by pointing out how heteronormative assumptions inform the production of queer citizens.

That is to say, we can indeed mark a specific historical shift: the project of whiteness is assisted and benefited by homosexual populations that participate in the same identitarian and economic hegemonies as those hetero subjects complicity with this ascendancy. The homonormative aids the project of heteronormativity through the fractioning away of queer alliances in favor of adherence to the reproduction of class, gender, and racial norms. The ascendancy of heteronormativity, therefore, is not tethered to heterosexuals; neither is it discretely delimited to white people, though it is bound to whiteness (Puar 32).

Halberstam notes a similar inclusion-exclusion dynamic at play within rural queer communities, where "rural queers in particular may participate in certain orders of bigotry (like racism or political conservatism) while being victimized and punished by others (like homophobia and sexism)" (39). One of the reasons that she points to behind this dynamic is reflected in the tendency within historiographies of rural queer life to focus on the individual rather than the community, making it "harder to talk about class and race, and it has seemed much more relevant to discuss gender variances and sexual practices" (45). As someone who grew up and lived in a rural area most of his life, I would agree that racial and economic homogeneity tend to shut down critical interrogations of issues such as race and class, but I am less inclined to agree that it is easier to discuss gender variance, at least based on my own experiences of gender dynamics in rural Ohio.

So far we have been looking primarily at how Puar conceptualizes the link between homonormative practices as incorporated into the logics of the state, and how they help sustain discourses of exceptionalism. Two of the most visible, as well as important ways that queers are brought into the nation building project, are through the twin logics of economic citizenship and patriotism. Being a good queer also means being a patriotic consumer, or so the story goes. This applies not only to white queers, but also what Puar describes as the idealized multicultural ethnic. "As with the class fraction that projects a model minority, we

have here a class, race, and sexual fraction projected to the market as the homonormative gay and queer consumer. This is a consumer without kin, the best kind, projected to the state as a reproducer of heteronorms, where associations with white national hetero-and homonormative bodies trump the desire for queer alliances across class, race, and citizenship" (28). My experience has been that the economic aspects of this dual incorporation process are easier to trace visually than the patriotic ones, and therefore it is to those practices that I want to turn to next.

However, before doing that, I want to point out one interesting example of the patriotic queer citizen that is particularly conspicuous, and will serve as a useful segue into a discussion of economic consumption. K. Pearson Brown, writing for SheWired.com's *2009 Holiday Gift Guide for Smart, Sexy, Sporty, Sassy and Savvy Women*, recommends an "eco-friendly" glass dildo sold by Babeland. "Give her the shaft that will last for years to come with a unique, handblown Candy Colored Glass Phallus, made of seamless and eco-friendly glass that can be warmed or cooled for extra sensation" (Brown, "Savvy Woman"). The Babeland web site is kind enough to provide the ultimate in illustrative examples, not only offering the dildo in a range of designs, one being a patriot red, white and blue, but also posted a YouTube clip entitled "Patriotic penetration with color coordinating glass dildos," where a Babeland employee offers up this ultimate consumer display of queer patriotism. It is also worth noting that they have glass dildos for Christmas and Hanukkah, but not Eid ul-Fitr. Apparently queer Muslims don't exist in the world of Bableland either.

V. Queer Consumption

Halberstam discusses this neo-liberal fascination with flexibility in all forms as one of the darker sides of queer youth subculture, defining their practice as "transgressive exceptionalism," which she sees as "a by-product of local translations of neo-liberalism," and which she equates with a new neo-liberal form of sexual politics that Lisa Duggan dubs the "new homonormativity" (Halberstam 19).

[N]ew neoliberal sexual politics…might be termed the new homonormativity—it 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 (qtd. in Halberstam 19).

This is precisely the dynamic which Puar is pointing out and tracing in her book, and it is a practice that Halberstam both wants to critique and attempt to partially salvage. For her, this notion of flexibility, particularly as it relates to constructions of space and time in subcultures and counterpublics, are ultimately productive and liberating for a queer politic, but she wants to disentangle these practices from the logic of capital and the heteronormative practices of family, kinship and reproduction. For her, a flexible and productive queer politic is most visible in the transgender body, which accounts for why she placed emphasis on the Brandon Teena story and drag kings in her book.

Transgenderism, with its promise of gender liberation and its patina of transgression, its promise of flexibility and its reality of a committed rigidity, could be the successful outcome of years of gender activism; or, just as easily, it could be the sign of the reincorporation of a radical subculture back into the flexible economy of postmodern culture. This book tries to keep transgenderism alive as a meaningful designator of unpredictable gender identities and practices…" (Halberstam 21)

As mentioned earlier, what I want to trace out in this section are the economic aspects of queer consumption which are visible in a number of sites of queer cultural production. This will also allow us to examine visually some of the ways Duggan's "new homonormativity" can be seen in operation within the queer community today. In the final section on queer resistance, I will return to the second part of Halberstam's discussion of transgenderism by examining strategies and tactics of queer resistance to the logics of capitalism and heteronormativity.

Perhaps one of the most powerful example I found of the queer as ideal consumer was on the Gay.com website in their Out Gift Guide, a holiday gift guides for queers selected from *Out Magazine*. In this series of five video clips, each with a queer lifestyle theme—The Adventurer, The Bad Boy, The Mogul, and The Technologist--hosts Joshua David Stein (Editor-at-Large of *Out Magazine*) and Matt Vella (a writer for *Out*) give us *Out Magazine*'s hot picks for holiday gifts (*Illustration 4*). The Mogul package includes among its top items the Acqua di Parma Collezione Barbiere De Luxe Razor and Brush with Stand ($600), a Christian Louboutin Glass Slipper with accompanying bottle of Piper Heidsick Champagne ($500), and a Cartier Roadster Fountain Pen ($570). If we add in the ideal mogul power suit and attire, featured on the accompanying Out.com page, we would add another $1000 to the price tag. All told, the queer mogul package rings up at a whopping $3000 of conspicuous queer consumption.

While not nearly as pricey, SheWired.com offers queer consumers their "Power Dyke" bag (*Illustration 5*): "Even lugging a laptop your lady will look chic carrying a WaterField Designs Muzetto Bag…Nicknamed the "urban man bag" for its handsome styling and gender versatility, this classy and cool bag sports a soft brown leather exterior with a splash of color inside. And it's made in the good ol' USA, right in San Francisco" (Brown, "Savvy Women"). Note here again the patriotic language of "good ol' USA" and the "gender versatility" as marketing points. But not only is the power dyke provided for in their holiday gift guide, so to is the homonormative queer family, with their "In The Family Way" ornaments (*Illustration 6*): "Start a family tradition of adding a special decoration to the tree each year, from *Ornaments With Love,* which offers more than 1,400 custom, personalized ornaments to give to loved ones. Choose from categories such as "family," "couples," "friends," and "weddings" to celebrate your own alternative family configuration" (Brown, "Gay Parents"). One can almost hear Halberstam gagging somewhere offstage while looking at this queer rhetoric of family incorporation and its admonition to "celebrate your own alternative family

configuration." It is worth noting, however, that of the "more than 1,400" custom ornaments available, only three have any clear link with queers, all of which incorporate some variation on the rainbow flag, as seen here.

And finally, lest we forget that little girls have holiday consumption needs that must also be fulfilled—SheWired offers the "Kids Will Be Kids" doll (*Illustration 7*): "Your little darling wants a doll, but you can't bear those expensive princess-in-pink girly dolls that every snotty kid on the block has. Battat's Our Generation "Hally" Doll to the rescue. She's not only dressed like a real kid, she's affordable at Target" (Brown, "Gay Parents"). Here we can productively expand Halberstam's criticism of the heteronormative construction of the family as normal and natural and see just how deeply it re-inscribes not only patriarchal gender roles, but also the *production* of a "proper" future girl. Hally (Eva), seen here in both her "daily wear" and "evening attire" outfits, reminds the queer parent that girls wear pink, while boys wear; girls wear dresses not pants and have long hair. The effect is to further distance this girl from any possibility of visually embracing Halberstam's female masculinity. Last but certainly not least, the ideal girl doll is, of course, white. There is little wonder as to who exactly the "Our Generation" being referred to here signifies through racial encoding. If we consider the entire line of the Our Generation dolls sold by Target, we find only two black dolls, and no other discernible race or ethnicity, and both of the black dolls are relegated to the category of "Non-Poseable Dolls" with a single accessory (*Illustration 8*), while the white "Poseable Deluxe Dolls" each with many accessories.

In looking at these various examples in which the neo-liberal market has started to target specifically gendered niches, my aim has been to show the ways in which queer consumerism, when linked with an understanding of the complicated processes operating with homonationalism, allows heteronormativity to be simultaneously produced, and reproduced, through queer consumption. As Puar notes, "the nation benefits from the liberalization of the market, which proffers placebo rights to queer consumers who are hailed by capitalism but not by state legislation. Therefore, the familial-and kinship-delineating heteronormativity of the nation and the "value-free" homonationalism of the market are convivial and complicitous rather than oppositional entities" (62). As we have seen, there are a number of ways in which this process operates: in gay fashion, in shopping guides and products, even in dolls and dildos. With such examples in mind, I want to now turn to the final concerns of this paper, queer resistance, and look at how these processes of incorporation and collusion with the state and heteronormativity are being challenged and resisted through queer subcultures and counterpublics.

VI. Queer Resistance

So far we have been concerned with the problematic ways in which queer subjects are folded into state and market practices to support, rather than challenge, heteronormativity. But to suggest that every queer practice is merely re-inscribed into the market or the state is too simplistic, and belies the many ways in which queer practices, lifestyles and forms of

resistance are creating oppositional spaces, queer counterpublics and queer subcultures, both as a form of resistance and as way of life. Halberstam spends considerable time in her book exploring the ways in which drag kings and dyke punks serve as counterpoints and alternatives to mainstream lifestyles and norms, and how the transgendered body serves as both an example and a strategy to resist not only heteronormativity, but also at times, homonormativity. As she notes in her discussion of the transgendered gaze, it "becomes difficult to track because it depends on complex relations in time and space between seeing and not seeing, appearing and disappearing, knowing and not knowing" (78). In this sense, Halberstam encourages us to think of the transgender body and gaze as a "multidimensionality" and queer as an "interactive modes of recognition" (92). This concept shares many similarities to Puar's use of queer assemblages and the philosophical concepts of multiplicities developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). On the principle of multiplicity, they write that it "is rhizomatic," and that "there is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object or 'return' in the subject...it has has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature...an assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections" (Deleuze and Guattari 8).

I am inclined to agree with Puar's claim that the notion of assemblage is "a pertinent political and theoretical frame within societies of control," especially when looking at how "spatial, temporal, and corporeal convergences, implosions, and rearrangements" occur and inform the process of constructing a fixed subject, such as terrorists and queers (Puar 205). However, I also believe that we need to be sensitive to the fact that concepts like assemblage and multiplicity can be hard to grasp and make sense of even in academic circles, much less to the general public, and so I want to turn to one example of how these ideas are being deployed in queer activism and link these ideas to actual practices.

On October 11, 2001, as the US military was entering the fifth days of our war in Afghanistan, a picture surfaced through the AP of a fighter jet on the USS Enterprise carrying a bomb with the words "High Jack This Fags" scrawled on the side *(Illustration 9).* The incident caused an outrage in the gay community, and the image was quickly pulled by the AP, with both they and the Navy apologizing for the incident. In 2008, UCLA Design and Media Arts student Zach Blas produced an MFA thesis entitled Queer Technology (QT), which included a concept called Gay Bombs *(Illustration 10)*.

The abstract describes the idea behind the thesis as seeking to "explore the possibilities of queer technologies—political tools for queer technical agency," and notes that "biological/ technological intersections have formed not only new representations and expressions of gender and sexuality but have also created new genders and sexualities," thus his project sought to "address how queers and queerness mutate technology to create social

interstices for connectivity and communication" (Blas). His concept of Queer Technologies also articulates many of the ideas we have been exploring here, both in the context of queer time and space, as well as ways of being.

The discourse of queer theory operates as a rhetoric of freedom for those positioned outside of heteronormative configurations. Queer theory moves beyond discourses of sexuality and gender to approach larger "way[s] of life." This work attempts to understand and explore—in the queer style of "strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices"—the effects of queer life on technology and technology on the queer way of life (Blas).

The Gay Bombs project, then, as one aspect of his thesis, is a queer re-appropriation of the image and rhetoric of the "High Jack This Fags" into a "technical manual" for producing Gay Bombs that fuses Puar's notion of queer terrorist assemblages and Halberstam's queer resistance and subcultural practices into an innovate form of political resistance operating in both the economic and visual registers.

Gay Bombs can be considered a reverse discourse, a reinscription, a mutating body politic, a multitude—literally, a queer terrorist assemblage of networked activists, plotting the redeployment of new technologically queer meanings, vulnerabilities, and sensibilities.

The Gay Bomb is a hacked concept, intercepting flows and signals of terrorist paranoia, networked fear, distributed warfare, and homophobic weaponry. The Gay Bomb takes on the climate of its cultural production in order to more effectively subvert the United States Air Force's original goal of constructing a gay bomb.

The Gay Bomb is a queer bomb, a tactical understanding of action, community, resistance, struggle, and strategy.

Here, Gay Bombs are outlined in a technical manual manifesto. Appropriating the style of any guide that is packaged with propriety software, the Gay Bombs manual manifesto outlines a "how to" of queer political action through the understanding, use, and distribution of queer technologies. (Blas)

This project has since spawned a Queer Technologies web site and QT is developing three components of the MFA thesis—Gay Bombs, ENgenderingGenderChangers, and the transCoder: Queer Programming Anti-Language, into queer technologies for circulation and sale. The web site also offers what they refer to as the Disingenuous Bar: Political Support for Technical Problems.

Disingenuous Bar attempts to generate a performative platform of political inquiry through the examination, discussion, and distribution of various queer technologies—that is, political tools exploring the technologically queer. The space and performance of the Disingenuous Bar functions as a "disidentification"—what José Esteban Muñoz describes as a queer tactic of resistance against dominant ideologies(QT).

QT describes themselves, and their practices, as a hybrid of business, art and activism, and we can see elements of guerrilla media tactics, culture jamming and queer counterpublic space production fused into and around both a conceptual project and a series of physical products in queer space and time.

Queer Technologies is a company, an art collective, and an activist group that produces a product line for queer technological agency, interventions, and social formation…products are also shop-dropped in various consumer electronics stores, such as Best Buy, Circuit City, Radio Shack, and Target. Queer Technologies produces flows of resistance within larger spheres of capitalist structurations, "identifying" and "disidentiying" with these spheres in tandem. All pieces are designed as product, artwork, and political tool, materialized through an industrial manufacturing process so that they may be disseminated widely (QT).

Even in the discourse and idea behind the Gay Bombs we see an engagement with the same issues Puar is worried about. So for example, the "gay bomb" was originally a concept proposed by the Wright Air Force Research Lab in 1994 as a "nonlethal chemical weapon" which could be used in military applications against enemies. Although never developed, the concept was described in explicitly homophobic language.

Chemicals that affect human behavior so that discipline and moral in enemy units is adversely effected. One distasteful but completely non-lethal example would be strong aphrodisiacs, especially if the chemical also caused homosexual behavior (Wright).

The efforts of QT would seem to be a concrete example of Puar's highlighting of the value of queer assemblages and praxis. "The political import of this queer rereading should not be underestimated: in the upheaval of the 'with us or against us' rhetoric of the war on terror, a queer praxis of assemblage allows for a scrambling of sides that is illegible to state practices of surveillance, control, banishment, and extermination" (221). And here, we might productively think of James Scott's notion of seeing like a state and the context of his discussions about the art of domination and resistance, in particular the way in which a narrow focus on delineation and measurable indexes—in this analysis gender identities—allows the state, and the market, to maintain disciplinary control over the population.

As Scott points out, this process of measurement and control is inseparable from certain forms of knowledge, or what Foucault terms Knowledge/Power. "Certain forms of knowledge and control require a narrowing of vision" which "brings into sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality," which "makes phenomenon at the center of the filed of vision more legible and hence more susceptible to careful measurement and calculation…making possible a high degree of schematic knowledge, control, and manipulation" (Scott 11). As we have seen in the context of homonormativity, both politically and economically, this is precisely what the state and the market have attempted to do by bringing queers into the fold, albeit in highly problematic

ways. QT, then, can be seen as an attempt to subvert while simultaneously manipulating this function of the state and the market, or as they describe it, through a strategy of intentional queer capitalism.

*Queer Technologies practices Queer Capitalism. As Muñoz has carefully explicated, acts of disidentification are not characterized by a dia*lectical positioning. These acts move between the normative and non-normative through a complex web of interconnections. The act is never an argument of x counter y. Queer Capitalism buys itself political power, in part, through using the capitalist system for the fastest means of replicating itself widely with minimal effort. (QT)

In this sense, the very productive power of capitalism and heteronormativity is turned into a weapon against itself: the "gay bomb" and the "High Jack This Fags," both explicitly designed for homophobic warfare and counterterrorism, are re-appropriated and fed back into the same homophobic consumptive system that produced these memes. "The design of Queer Capitalism can locate itself easily within the company of other consumables in varieties of shops, stores, outlets…Yet, the tension of the design resides within closers readings—layers of depth—that render visible from closer inspection or the point when the product moves from the shelf to the consumer's inquiring hand" (QT). Coming to a store near you just in time for a queer Christmas?

These are classic and timeless tactics of culture jamming, of disinformation feedback loops and of hacking and social engineering, all forms of information warfare and desire manipulation which speaks to the logic of Halbermam's critique of neo-liberal youth "style" and Duggan's "new homonormativity." QT describes the circulation of the Gay Bomb in the user manual, where "technologies of the self mutate with these technologies of discourse…This use of knowledge, fashioning theSoftQueerBody, cuts networks into technotopias and determines flows of life and death. Use situates biopower anywhere between the queer body and the product" (QT). This notion of use, of assemblage, of lines of flight, are precisely where the power of queer theory can be most productive, and also where, because it is not stable, it is also most illegible to systems of discipline and control.

If we are seriously concerned with challenging the ways in which Puar's homonationalism reproduces the repressive aspects of whiteness, homophobia, racialization and discrimination, then we must always be alert to how our own practices may unintentionally be re-inscribing the very problems we seek to critique. Simultaneously, we need to think in new and creative ways which allow us to hold onto the positive and productive uses of queer while looking for ways to strengthen Halberstam's elaborations of queer counterpublics and subcultures as central to constituting new forms of queer time and space. In looking at how both Puar and Halberstam discuss queer time and queer space, I have tried to point out problems as well as important insights in their arguments, and expand on them where it seemed useful.

As regards queer time and space, I think Halberstam is too restrictive in her conceptualization, in part due to what I see as an overemphasis and, at times, borderline hostility towards notions of family, community and children within the queer community. While I agree with her claim that there are deeply problematic aspects of the family which continue to cleave to heteronormative rules, writing off queer families as largely negative is equally problematic. Therefore we need to think about how to salvage the bonds, desires and support which the family offers without the heteronormative gender roles and practices that are clearly not desirable and should be resisted.

Puar's queer assemblage concept is extremely productive, but her analysis of homonationalism leaves one wishing for a comparable examination of the ways in which queer practices are liberatory and productive in the same ways that Halberstam traces drag kings, queer art and the transgender gaze. Such an analysis would be immensely productive, as well as helpful in identifying linkages that should be supported or expanded as rhizomatic nodes of resistance that are particularly productive. Yet we are left on a Deleuzean plateau on this account, lost to ponder queer assemblages. By focusing on the Gay Bombs and Queer Technologies strategies, I have tried to offer a hopeful end note to the ways in which queer theory and queer practices, albeit hard to define in stable or fixed terms, continue to point the way towards productive forms of queer political resistance.

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http://www.newyears.com/events/showevent.aspx?eventid=2040

http://www.newyears.com/events/showevent.aspx?eventid=6735

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8P1MZxfI8XI

http://out.com/giftguide/product.asp?cat=The%20Mogul&pid=27

The doll which SheWired.com pictures is actually the Eva model, not Hally. I discuss the image they used on their site.

http://www.target.com/b/ref=in_br_browse-box/177-5153026-7538138?ie=UTF8&node=2229923011

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fag_bomb

It is worth noting here as well the Judith Halberstam was a member of Blas's thesis committee.

http://www.queertechnologies.info/

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay_bomb

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*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 3: Homonationalism at its finest.*

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 5: An man bag for the urban power dyke.*

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 7: Our Generation dolls.*

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 10: Gay Bombs.*

Figure 1: Playgoat: Entertainment for the Taliban.

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 1: Taliban men in Afghanistan.*

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 2: Taliban men in Afghanistan.*

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 4: Just what every gay mogul needs.*

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 6: A gay Christmas to all.*

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 8: Our Generation "Non- Poseable" Sally ballet dancer doll.*

*Illustration SEQ "Illustration" *Arabic 9: AP photo of the "gay bomb."*