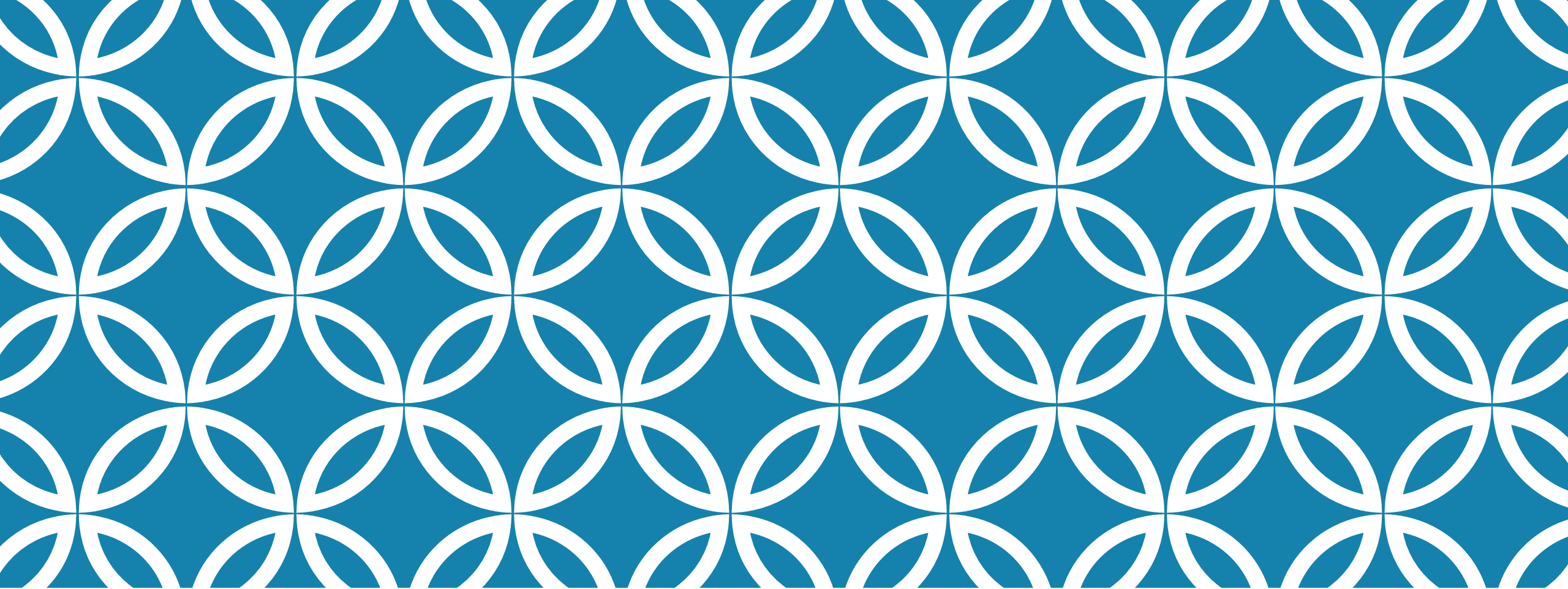
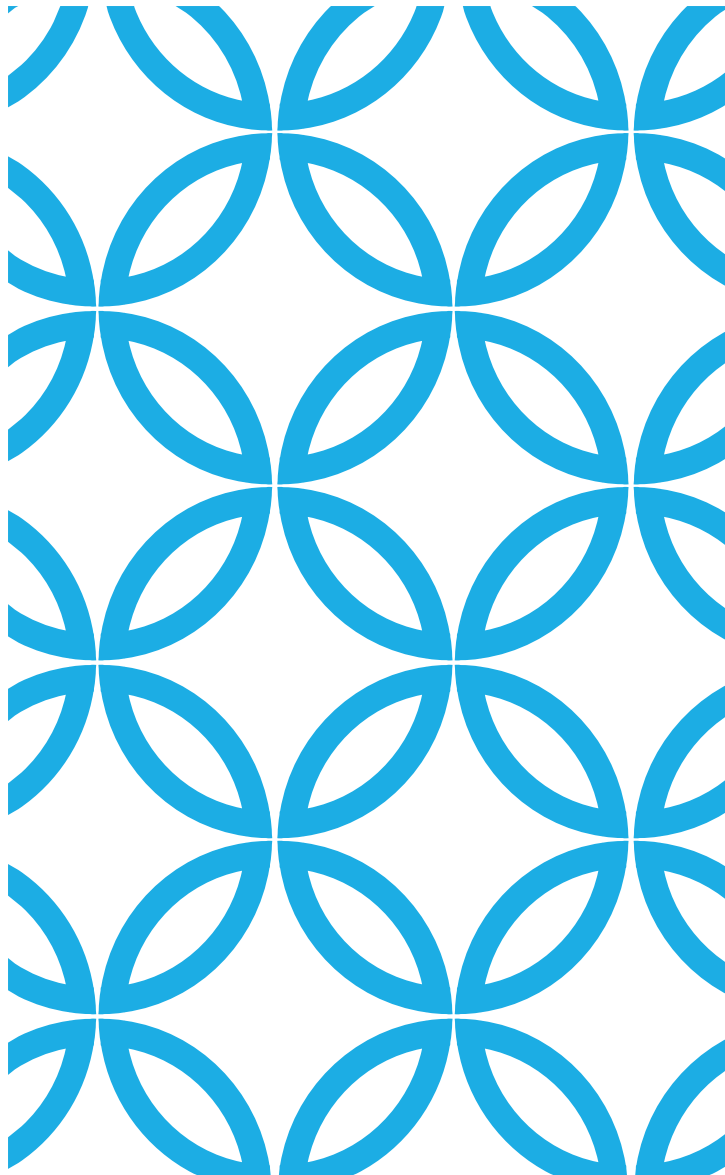




COMPLEX BODIES: QUESTIONING GENDER, RELIGION, AND SEXUALITY

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REVISION

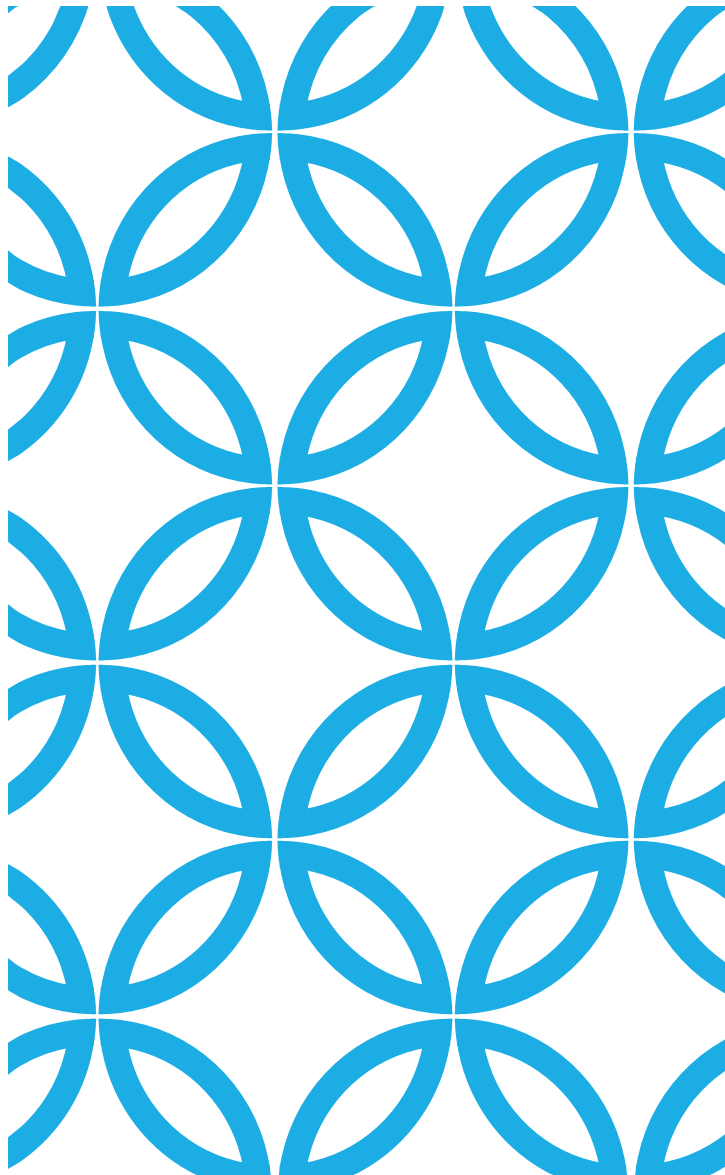
ROUND UP

We have looked at two ways in which hyper-masculinity, the adoption and accentuation of masculine traits, has been deployed in the gay male community.

Both ways take on heightened masculinity as a process of reclamation, but also as a process of subversion.

Our bodily performances, while largely structured by the society around us, have the potential to undercut social assumptions about our gender, sex, and sexuality.





QUEER FUTURES

QUEER FUTURES

In this module so far, we have largely been concerned with aspects of the past or of current society.

In this lecture, I want to move us towards the future, applying some of the same critical and theoretical tools you have picked up to concepts connected with the future

Things like:

politics
economy
children
race





QUEER(ING) POLITICS

The key thing that drives this assessment of our society is Queer Theory's understanding of the **personal as political**.

Every time we choose to act in a certain way, whether it is in conformance with gender norms or against them, **we are choosing**.

In choosing, we are developing an idea of the way the world should be, and working towards it.

We are always being political in our everyday personal choices.



QUEER(ING) POLITICS

If everything we do is innately political, because it is a choice to either conform or resist our construction by society, then our actions have the power to change the meaning of things around us and to change society.

By choosing to conform or not, we disrupt and de-naturalise the assumptions that underpin our current society.

Much queer theory sees these assumptions as marginalising / oppressive / discriminatory and therefore aims for their constant disruption



QUEER(ING) POLITICS

While this political goal can be most clearly seen in issues surrounding discriminatory assumptions regarding sex, sexuality, and gender (the classic campaigns against Section 28 for example, or for the equalisation of the age of consent), Queer Theory moves beyond this in attempting to critique other assumptions operative in society, such as assumptions about our economic system, our immigrations policies, or our environmental policies etc.

These critiques take aim not only at established conservative social norms, but also those new norms often argued for by liberal or left-wing politics.

QUEER(ING) ECONOMICS

An example of this is in the field of economics, where queer theorists such as JK Gibson-Graham critique the underlying assumptions of our current capitalist hegemony in order to de-emphasise the 'naturalness' of our current system.

In the opposite quote, we can see the process by which this question of assumptions operates – Gibson-Graham utilises the tools of queer theory to ask difficult questions about why we assume the way things currently are is the best or only way for them to be.

How might we re-imagine capitalism?

'What if we were to 'queer' capitalist hegemony and break apart some of its consolidating associations?

How might we re-envision that body as more open and permeable, as having orifices through which non-capitalism might enter?

What violence do we do to these when we normalise all commodity production as capitalist commodity production?

Surely the market is a mobile and membranous orifice into which can be inserted all kinds of non-capitalist commodities, whose queer presences challenge the pre-eminence of capitalism and the discourses of its hegemony.'



QUEER(ING) ECONOMICS

Most, but not all, Queer Theory operates as an anti-capitalist critique of our current economic system – but why is this?

1 – our current economic system is seen to be unjust on the basis of gender – the 2nd shift (Hochschild), childcare expectations, etc

2 – our current economic system is seen to be doing the same thing as heterosexuality – presenting a subjective and particular system of oppression as the only possible and ‘natural’ form



QUEER(ING) THE FUTURE

So where else does our current society assume a lot of things?

For Lee Edelman, the location of many of the norms and assumptions that underpin our current society lie in the way our society imagines the future.

What the future is for?

Who the future is for?

Why the future is valuable?

How our current actions are governed by our vision of what the future could be like?

QUEER(ING) THE FUTURE

In his famous book, 'No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive', Edelman attempts to interrogate our vision of the future by putting forward a very simple argument:

“Children are awful.

Well, the figure of the child. You know, the blond-haired, blue-eyed Aryan on the Huggies commercial? Politics is mostly about that little asshole.”





QUEER(ING) THE FUTURE

This obviously isn't a critique of actual children, or any child in particular!

Edelman is critiquing the way in which future conceptual "children" are used to enclose our politics and our current society within certain assumed boundaries — we assume that children are the end-goal of society, and that furthering this goal is a good thing.

We rarely take the time to question why, or what aspect of power this assumption serves...



QUEER(ING) THE FUTURE

In one of the readings for this class, you will have the chance to read this chapter by Edelman and assess for yourself how convincing his argument is:

‘Edelman opens “The Future is Kids Stuff” (a prelude to No Future) with President Clinton’s appeal to save the children.

After all, if you’re not for the children then you’re clearly a rampaging monster intent on destroying the magic of Disney Land. And you hate America.

To which Edelman replies, “yes, fuck those kids, and fuck their Disney Land.”

QUEER(ING) THE FUTURE

For Edelman, it is the concept of the child that rests at the heart of our contemporary society and politics – it is what binds together the present, the future, and the past.

Most politics revolves around appealing either to save the planet for future generations in some way, or for exploiting the access to resources we do have in order to provide for our children now – whether that is day-to-day food, or another plastic barbie playhouse...



QUEER(ING) THE FUTURE

But what does any of this have to do with sex, sexuality, and gender?

For Edelman, it is precisely in the non-reproductive nature of most queer relationships that this privileging of the future can be most effectively challenged from.

Edelman goes as far as responding to conservative assaults on homosexuality as “degrading to our moral fabric” by completing agreeing with them.

Responding to conservative claims that:

“Acceptance or indifference to the homosexual movement will result in society’s destruction by allowing civil order to be redefined and by plummeting ourselves, our children and grandchildren into an age of godlessness. Indeed, the very foundation of Western Civilization is at stake”

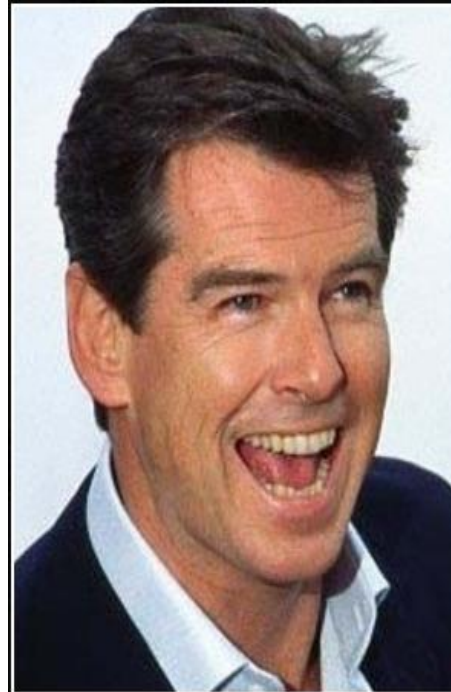
Edelman says “Yes, you’re absolutely right”:

“Dare we take a moment and concede that Mr Edelman might be right, that the queerness of queer theory should tend precisely toward such a redefinition of civil order itself through a rupturing of our foundational faith in the reproduction of futurity?”

QUEER(ING) THE FUTURE

Edelman is a really interesting example of the application of Queer Theory beyond the concerns of sex, sexuality, and gender because his work forces us to rethink an area of our contemporary society that is rife with assumptions and naturalised norms.

Edelman also highlights the way in which these assumptions interconnect and support each other – concepts of the future, the economy, gender roles, the child, the political, “appropriateness” – in a way that critiques their deployment across the political spectrum.



We owe it to our children to be better stewards of the environment. The alternative? - a world without whales. It's too terrible to imagine.

— *Pierce Brosnan* —

AZ QUOTES

Thanks, Pierce...



imagine a world ...

... where the challenge of riding on
rough and rocky seas
is also a chance
to climb the highest peak.

QUEER(ING) THE FUTURE

This rather neatly leads us back to the beginning of this half of the module, where you read “Resisting Normativity” which sought to re-imagine aspects of our current society beyond norms of sex, sexuality, and gender.

What this lecture has hopefully done is showcase the way in which queer theory is a constant two step process of:

- 1) Asking why we assume the things we do
- 2) Imagining alternative ways in which we can construct our society



**WHAT WOULD YOU QUEER ABOUT
OUR SOCIETY?**



READING

Edelman, L – ‘The Future is Kid Stuff’, *Narrative*, Vol 6 No 1, (January 1998)

Stewart, C – ‘The Future is Queer Kids’, *Politics*, Vol 1 No 16, (July 2018)

Have a read of both pieces – they are doing different things, particularly the second one, and they inter-connect.

Have a think about what the pieces are doing and why...