

# Family Guy's *Queer Child*

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A rift has emerged in the academic literature on *Family Guy* (1999–present) between those who emphasize the adult animated sitcom's problematic depictions of marginalized groups and those that demonstrate the possibility for alternative and “reparative” readings despite them.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, many scholars have remarked that *Family Guy*'s humour often comes at the expense of those marked by race, class, gender, sexuality, and/or ability. For example, Matt Sienkiewicz and Nick Marx argue that the show's “cutaway gags” (or plot-de-railing non-sequiturs) use racial stereotypes as “click bait” in the contemporary “convergence” era in which television has merged with online platforms such as YouTube (2014, 103–4). In their words, cutaways are “amenable to the recirculation and remediation processes central to the contemporary, multi-screen media environment experienced by members of the most industrially attractive demographics” (ibid, 104). Likewise, Lauren Rosewarne argues that *Family Guy* stereotypes gay men and makes a troubling connection between homosexuality and pedophilia, as evidenced by Herbert, an elderly neighbour who regularly pursues Chris Griffin, the teenage son of the show's principal family (2013, 7). In contrast to the interpretations that hold *Family Guy* as a vanguard of racist, homophobic humour, Frederik Dhaenens and Sofie Van Bauwel claim that *Family Guy* “exposes the discourse of heteronormativity as a discourse that in the course of each episode will be mocked, uncovered, or defied, without abolishing it or replacing it with viable counterdiscourses” and that its subversive acts “reside in between the articulations of complicity and critique, sometimes masked as pastiches putting outdated stereotypes of queerness to the fore, and sometimes as parodies holding normative and repressive practices up to mockery” (2011, 129–36). Similarly, Matthew W. Hughey and Sahara Muradi contend that *Family Guy*'s humour functions as an “economy of manic-satire and hyper-irony” wherein Middle Eastern and South Asian stereotypes double as sites of social critique (2009, 206). Resting awkwardly between hegemony and resistance, *Family Guy* is perhaps best understood as a discursive media object that produces, reflects, and subverts normativity.

With a radically intertextual diegesis and a capricious temporality that permit considerable physical plasticity and inconsequential destruction—subverting the typical episodic narrative structure of the contemporary sitcom—the *Family Guy* world is organized around no legal, moral, social, cultural, or spatio-temporal coherence. Time and space are continually disrupted, while baby Stewie and dog Brian walk, talk, have sex, travel on their own, and otherwise operate like human adults. Rather than dismiss this formal and narrative liberty as meaningless or profligate, I take the position, after Dhaenens and Van Bauwel, that the queer dynamics of *Family Guy* are tied to the show's “postmodern textual strategies” (2011, 126).<sup>2</sup> Eschewing medium specificity and therefore risking the logical leap that what is true of film is true

of television, I pursue the idea that if films can do philosophy (Sorfa 2016, 3), then arguably a television show with complex sex/gender dynamics and postmodern formal tactics can do queer theory. Placing the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze in dialogue with queer theories of animation, temporality, and posthumanism, I frame *Family Guy*'s formal and narrative structure as queering the ways in which the show's characters relate to time, space, futurity, and community. More specifically, I envisage *Family Guy*'s extremities and aberrancies as productive of what I term, after Deleuze and Elena del Río, a "queer ethology" with affective, (anti-)relational, and futural consequences for Stewie and those whom he affects and is affected by. While ethology literally refers to the science of animal behaviour under "natural" circumstances, I use it in the Spinozan-Deleuzian sense as the evaluation of human/animal behaviour in the absence of laws and moral codes wherein affect—the capacity to affect and be affected by others—remains the preeminent means of governing social relations (Deleuze 1988, 125). Stewie's universe is not only physically and temporally unrestrained but relatively unpoliced in terms of gender and sexuality. While he possesses superhuman intelligence and access to a time machine, Stewie also expresses his attraction to other male characters and performs what would be considered in a Western heteropatriarchal society to be a non-normative queer gender. Yet, because the *Family Guy* universe abjures consistent sex and gender norms (or refuses to legislate a binary between normativity and difference), Stewie's desires and mannerisms are mostly unregulated and not particularly subversive. Further, Stewie's parents (as well as other adults in his community) remain absent from many facets of his life and refuse to fight for his ostensible innocence. In this sense, they diverge from "reproductive futurism," which Lee Edelman defines as the social and political framework wherein "the image of the Child" functions to "regulate political discourse—to prescribe what will *count* as political discourse—by compelling such discourse to accede in advance to the reality of a collective future whose figurative status we are never permitted to acknowledge or address" (2004, 11). Effectively, I argue that Stewie is placed in a range of scenarios where, in the absence of reproductive futurism and the near total absence of structure, he affects and is affected by others just as he navigates and (re)produces queerness. *Family Guy* thus shows us a world in which the queer child is free to, in Kathryn Bond Stockton's terms, "grow sideways," or adjacent to cultural ideals (2009, 6), but these ideals are inconsistent, and adulthood remains perpetually deferred. While Stewie does not grow in any "chrononormative" sense in that he does not age and is not presented with consistent norms to grow into, he is also not entirely relegated to queer time and space.<sup>3</sup> He remains in a liminal state in which he is always growing sideways, forever producing and testing both the limits of queerness and the ethological implications of a non-reproductive futurism in which the child, the queer, and Edelman's "*sinthomosexual*" are one and the same.

### **Foucault, Queerness, Film Philosophy**

I take it as given that *Family Guy* resists both a centrally imagined audience and a consistent political agenda. Therefore, I devote little space to representation and spectatorship, or what is known in cultural studies as "reception theory." Twice cancelled and revived, *Family Guy* first premiered in 1999 as part of a wave of adult animated sitcoms that followed from the popularity of *The Simpsons* (1989–present). It follows dad Peter Griffin, who has worked as a toy factory employee, fisherman, and brewery worker; his wife Lois, a housewife who teaches piano from home; their teenage children Meg and Chris; baby Stewie; and family dog Brian. Like *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy* satirizes the wholesomeness of American live-action sitcoms, although it departs from its predecessor in key ways. While Jason Mittell argues that adult animated sitcoms have always been controversial because of their alleged "[in]appropriateness for children who are presumed to be the 'natural' target of animation" (2004, 194), *The Simpsons* takes few formal liberties and, despite its relative irreverence, always plays to a liberal audience. By contrast, *Family Guy* mocks a wide range of identity groups and political figures while deploying fart jokes and obscure intertextual references, entertaining some while offending and distancing others. It not only rejects children as a target audience but defies the notion of target demographics. To be clear, however, my aim is not to emphasize *Family Guy*'s multiple meanings or the ways in which it both reinforces and resists normativity. The former risks falling into the similar trap of

moralizing the show's off-colour jokes (pointing out the obvious while withholding any new insight), while the latter has the potential to duplicate extant scholarship. What I am pushing for is a paradigm shift, one that carries with it alternative, non-obvious readings that divest from representational and moralistic paradigms. To that end, my aim is to *think with* and *otherwise* about *Family Guy* "from an non-representational angle," privileging in part the Deleuzian notion "of the body as an assemblage of forces or affects that enter into composition with a multiplicity of other forces or affects" (del Río 2008, 3). More aptly, I would like to think through the ways in which *Family Guy* experiments with form, temporality, and the animated body to queer effect, deploying a multitude of formal/temporal breaks, ruptures, and ellipses to pronounce sites of queerness. This is where film philosophy and queer theory overlap: as the show adopts no firm stance on queerness but merely illustrates queer encounters, my task is not to read for complicity or resistance in these encounters but for their affective dynamics and performative effects.<sup>4</sup> As David Sorfa writes, "cinema can do philosophy in a way that is unique to the medium" as it "is not only capable of presenting extended thought experiments or illustrating philosophical concepts, but is philosophy itself" (2016, 3). *Family Guy* can be said to *do* queer theory because it renegotiates corporealities as distinctly queer, posthuman entities; stages queer thought experiments; evinces queer concepts; and experiments with queer temporalities and futurities. Notably, it does so without reinforcing binaries like normal/queer or liberationist/homonormative. As Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth A. Wilson might say, *Family Guy* marks "an invitation to think queer theory without assuming a position of antinormativity from the outset" (2015, 2).

Michel Foucault writes that "limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows" (1977, 34). Because media texts hold dialectical tension themselves and between themselves and audiences, I would argue that *Family Guy* remains subversive insofar as it transgresses the heteronormative, formal, and textual boundaries upheld in and through contemporary Western society and iterations of mass culture. It reminds us of our limits and then defies them. When I say that Stewie is queer, I mean that he is queer by the Western, heteropatriarchal standards that are simultaneously reproduced and challenged in *Family Guy*. Indeed, while the show issues no *binary* between normativity and difference (or between heteronormativity and queerness), discipline and power relations do manifest as processes of perpetual negotiation and struggle. As J. Jeremy Wisniewski states, "postmodernism sees the world as disjointed, with pockets of power relations and politics and nothing to unify it all... The postmodern world is a ruptured world—and *Family Guy* just oozes these ruptures" (2007, 5). Following Wisniewski, we might consider *Family Guy* as an extreme example of the clichéd Foucauldian aphorism "power is everywhere," in that no centralized power structure governs the Griffins or any other characters. Rather, power is diffused across the body politic, perpetually produced, encountered, and resisted at macro and micro levels, from the Griffin family home where Meg finally stands up to her family after years of bullying ("Seashell Seahorse Party," 2011) to the obstreperous, idiotic Peter flagrantly skipping work, driving drunk, and destroying public property without consistent legal discipline. As Foucault might say, *Family Guy* images the idea that "at the heart of every power relationship and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (1982, 790). In fact, we might characterize all power relationships in *Family Guy* as agonistic, or as a "relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle, less... a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation" (ibid). Characters are never truly "free" but continuously produce and subvert power structures or circumvent them altogether, specifically with respect to gender and sexuality. In the episode "You May Now Kiss the... Uh... Guy Who Receives" (2006), Brian's cousin Jasper, also a dog, comes to Quahog (the fictional Rhode Island town where *Family Guy* is set) with intent to marry his Filipino human boyfriend, Ricardo. Later, Mayor Adam West outlaws same-sex marriage. It is only when Brian takes him hostage that it is rendered legal again. Further, Peter is usually made to feel or look stupid for dressing up as a woman. In the episode "Trading Places" (2011), Peter and Lois switch roles with Chris and Meg. The parents will go to school while the kids will work and take care of the house. Peter makes the

mistake that everyone is also switching genders and enters the kitchen dressed as a teenage girl. After a prolonged, punitive silence, it is assumed that Peter will change. Yet, as Dhaenens and Van Bauwel have noted, Peter is at times permitted considerable freedom with respect to his gender performance. Commenting on a cutaway gag in the episode “Brian Sings and Swings” (2006), Dhaenens and Van Bauwel write that the show “visualizes an elegant water ballet recital to the gentle score of Tchaikovsky’s *Waltz of the Flowers*,” in which Peter performs with two bulls (2012, 132). As the performance “receives high scores from the jury, the scene aims for laughs through its concurrence of physical masculinity and perfectly executed ‘feminine’ performance,” and yet it also “represents successful nonnormative masculine behavior” (132).

### **Deleuze, Animation, (Non-)Reproductive Futurism**

Deleuze, film philosophy, animation, as well as queer and posthuman theory are useful for analyzing the way *Family Guy*’s postmodern formalities work to pronounce the plane of immanence of Stewie’s gender and sexual performances and futurities. Indeed, it is within the context of animation’s potentialities (as well as specific formal and textual liberties) that heteronormativity is destabilized in *Family Guy*. While Deleuze’s film philosophy accounts for the manifold ways in which cinematic time and movement produce new concepts, his wider theoretical architecture overlaps with queer theory. In particular, his conceptions of desire and identity synthesize with the concept of queerness itself, defined by (non-Deleuzian) queer television scholar Tison Pugh as that which challenges “cultural concepts of gendered and erotic normativity, dismantling the rigid binary codes of licit and illicit desires” (2018, xi). Indeed, much like Foucault, Deleuze and his frequent co-author Félix Guattari divest from theories of sexuality predicated on deviance and otherness, as well as categories of sexual difference.<sup>5</sup> Citing Deleuze and Guattari’s “repudiations of both psychoanalysis and identity politics,” the film theorist Nick Davis argues that, “Queer theory’s concerns, born from combustive encounters among intimate experience and historical circumstance” might also be thought of “Deleuzo-Guattarian concerns as well: the unpredictable changes and paradoxes of desire, its range of affects and embodiments, and its uneasy but insoluble connections to capitalist apparatuses of social control” (2013, 4–9).<sup>6</sup> In his pathbreaking work on the “movement-image” and the “time-image” in classical and European art cinemas, Deleuze also accounts for animation, which, as Sean Macdonald (2015, 38) and Eli Boonin-Vail (2019) have noted, proves difficult to assimilate into his cinematic taxonomy, as it exists at the threshold between “privileged instants” (images like drawings and paintings that appear as selections from a privileged movement in time) and “any-instant-whatevers,” defined as images that can be reduced to their “discernible parts” but are revealed through movement and qualitative change (1986, 1–5). Deleuze argues that if the “cartoon film...belongs fully to the cinema, this is because the drawing no longer constitutes a pose or a completed figure, but the description of a figure which is always in the process of being formed or dissolving through the movement of lines and points taken at any-instant-whatevers of their course” (ibid, 5).<sup>7</sup>

Following Boonin-Vail (2019), Deleuze’s theory of the metamorphic animated figure overlaps with queer theories of animation. As the queer cinema scholar Sean Griffin has argued, the “animated cartoon” offers “a perfect instance of multiple discourses swirling within one text, exposing the constructedness of gender and sexuality through parodic redeployment,” as well as “metamorphosis and transmogrification” (2004, 107). Citing the feminist philosopher Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, Griffin astutely remarks that animation subverts the “material discourses of power that define identity,” particularly when such discourses are remediated to the point that they “reach absurd and parodic extremes, exposing the constructedness of gender, sexuality, and sex itself” (ibid). Cartoon character Bugs Bunny, for instance, “is always in drag as a human being” (whether he has on “feminine garb” or not), while other animated “animals,” like Felix the Cat or Mickey Mouse, seldom reference “the characteristics of their supposed species” (ibid, 107). Similarly, queer theorist J. Jack Halberstam suggests that “animated cinema, far from being a pure form of ideology,” is “a rich technological field for rethinking collectivities, transformation, identification, animality, and posthumanity” (2011, 174). Quoting Deleuze and Griffin, Boonin-Vail argues:

animation itself can be considered a form of drag in which lines and colors enact a performance of human (or non-human) forms...lines and colors that make up the embodied performances of animation exist because of the discontinuous parsing of time that allow for bodies to be stretched, flattened, or otherwise transformed in astonishing and identity-bending ways. (2019)

Applying this claim to *Family Guy*, consider Stewie's relationship to drag. In the episode "Go, Stewie! Go!" (2010), Stewie performs as a female alter-ego, Karina Smirnoff, so that he can star in his favourite show, *Jolly Farm Revue*. For most of the episode, Stewie fools his co-stars and producers, demonstrating the ease with which he can change into (and pass as) a different gender. However, following from the adult animated sitcom's refusal of realism, there is no overarching concern for naturalness in *Family Guy* and no hegemonic concept of gender to (re)produce or undermine. In the case of *Jolly Farm*, Stewie pulls his wig off and says on live television that he is a "perfectly normal little boy who also happens to be a transvestite." Even in instances where Stewie is marginalized for his gender expression, the reveal of his "true" sex is meant to parody heteronormative society's obsession with strict gender codes. In the episode "Boys Do Cry" (2007), Stewie participates in an all-female Texas beauty pageant by dressing up in drag. When he wins and goes to take a bow, his wig falls off. An audience member stands up and yells "it's one of them queer-o-sexuals!" While this scene could be interpreted as Stewie being disciplined for his gender expression, it might also be understood in Butlerian terms as Stewie exposing drag as "not unproblematically subversive" but counterhegemonic "to the extent that it reflects the mundane impersonations by which heterosexually ideal genders are performed and naturalized" (Butler 2011, 85). Ultimately, it is gender essentialism and social conservatism that are being ridiculed here.

Recalling Boonin-Vail's argument that animation can "enact a performance of human (or non-human) forms" (2019), certain entities in *Family Guy* literally change genders, sexualities, and/or corporealities as the show imposes no clear boundary between human and animal, male or female. For instance, recurring character Bruce, a gay man, regularly appears as a bee, shark, or the alien from the *Alien* franchise, while Stewie's teddy bear Rupert is anthropomorphized into a muscular, human-bear hybrid, functioning as a site of homoerotic desire ("Stewie Loves Lois," 2006). Following Donna Haraway, we might consider these bodies to be "cyborgs" insofar as they are hybrids of "machines" and "organisms" that challenge the distinctions between human, animal, and machine (2006, 104). They could also be "animacies," to borrow Mel Y. Chen's term, meaning figures with varying degrees of liveness that challenge not only the human/animal binary but the "hierarchy of animacy" that factors in all lifeforms both "animate" and ostensibly "inanimate" (2012, 26). In their analysis of Hayao Miyazaki's animated film *Ponyo* (2008), Chen describes the "fish/chicken/little girl" as a "blending that is partial and contingent and enacted across time, yet the blending is simultaneously robust and profound, effective and affective" (ibid, 230). As their corporealities are always shifting across time and space, never subject to any stability, we might describe Bruce and Rupert in exactly these terms, or perhaps as instantiations of "queer inhumanism"—figures that, in their perpetual "becoming," reimagine "what 'sex' and 'gender' might look like apart from the anthropocentric forms with which we have become perhaps too familiar" (Luciano and Chen 2015, 188–89). In Deleuzian terms, *Family Guy*'s bodies are always "becoming-molecular" and/or "becoming-minor."<sup>8</sup>

The spatio-temporality of *Family Guy*—in which flashbacks and cutaways can be said to evince modes of queerness—operates on a "plane of immanence" constituted by "actuality" and "virtuality." Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe the plane of immanence as that which "secures conceptual linkages with ever increasing connections" just as concepts "secure the populating of the plane on an always renewed and variable curve" (1994, 37). Davis explains this more clearly: immanence is the "principle by which certain productive forces and capacities for change are presumed as both internal to and constitutive of the *assemblages* they produce" (2013, 253). For example, "movement and time constitute cinema's 'plane of immanence,' because motion pictures operate as such via these terms, and because it is through them that images and their relations can change" (ibid). In other words, cinema is immanent to both time and movement in that its function as a series of moving images depends on both. On *Family Guy*'s plane of immanence, actuality

and virtuality are immanent to one another just as both concepts are inherent to the ontology of the show. Deleuze and Claire Parnet define the “actual” as that which is grounded in the passage of linear time and the “virtual” as that which “preserves the passage of time” but exists *alongside* the actual (2007, 150–1). After Henri Bergson, Deleuze and Parnet explain that “memory is not an actual image formed after the object has been perceived, but a virtual image coexisting with the actual perception of the object” (ibid, 150). It is a “virtual image contemporary with the actual object, its double, its mirror image” (ibid). For Deleuze, several images realize the actual/virtual continuum, including the “dream-image” and the “recollection-image.” On the flashback sequences of various classical cinemas, Deleuze writes:

we can say that the actual image itself has a virtual image which corresponds to it like a double or a reflection. In Bergsonian terms, the real object is reflected in a mirror-image as in the virtual object which, from its side and simultaneously, envelops or reflects the real: there is ‘coalescence’ between the two. There is a formation of an image with two sides, actual and virtual. (1989, 68)

In other words, the flashback scene demonstrates the duality of the filmic image, what passes in and through actual, linear time (or in duration) and that which exists virtually (alongside duration). In *Family Guy*, the flashback is synonymous with the cutaway gag. As Alison Crawford remarks, cutaways are jokes set up by a main character (usually as a reference to a past event) where the main plot, or the duration of *actual* time and space, “is interrupted and segues into unrelated, self-contained sketches of variable length” (2009, 59). Cutaway gags illustrate the dialogical nature of actuality and virtuality. While they are introduced in the main, actual time-space of the show, they take place in nebulous, virtual milieus that the Griffins may or may not be privy to. They also produce “impossibilities,” or coexistences of “not-necessarily true pasts” (Deleuze 1989, 131). For example, in the 2015 episode “Once Bitten,” Peter announces to his wife and kids that if they need to pass gas in the Griffin family home, they are to use the “fart hole” he has just made in the side of a wall. Lois refuses and asks Peter if he thinks actress Morgan Fairchild has a fart hole in her home. We quickly move to Fairchild’s home where she excuses herself from her dinner party and proceeds to use her fart hole, which filters into actor Tom Sizemore’s house. Like all cutaways, this scene has no bearing on the actual plot of the episode. Yet, the question remains: did the Fairchild of this universe have and use a fart hole or is this something that Peter merely imagined? Both scenarios could be true or false as the ostensible past and possible myth coexist.

Cutaways also help to produce the ambiguity (or perhaps impossibility) of Stewie’s gender and sexual identity. In the episode “Fifteen Minutes of Shame” (2000), the Griffins star in a reality show. When Meg is unceremoniously written off the show, the Griffins need to come up with a way of explaining her absence. The subsequent cutaway parodies the popular television show *M\*A\*S\*H* (1972–83) in which Brian (as Radar) relays to the rest of the family that Meg’s warplane was “shot down over the Sea of Japan,” satirizing the death of another character from *M\*A\*S\*H*. Stewie quickly enters the frame in full drag and asks who he must see “about a Section 8,” referencing the dishonorable military discharge for mental infirmity often used against gay and transgender soldiers. Because instances like these happen in a virtual time-space, or an iteration of what Deleuze terms an “any-space-whatever”—a space “extracted from a given state of things [or] from a determinate space” (1986, 111)—we are left with no recourse for interpreting their continuity or what they might tell us about a character’s gender, sexuality, or identity. Impossibility also features in the show’s actual time-space. No matter how outlandish a character’s behaviour might be, their actions do not elicit any long-term consequences. This is most evident where Peter evades sanctions for his destructive behaviour. In the episode “Family Gay” (2009), Peter purchases an intellectually challenged horse. After it dies, he launches its body into the window of Goldman’s Pharmacy (owned by Mort and the late Muriel Goldman), an action that goes completely unpunished despite putatively functional law enforcement and judicial systems. While Mort throws the body back through the Griffins’ window at the end of the episode, the incident is not brought up again. It may well have been imagined (or in Deleuzian terms, “fabulated”) as an event somewhere between the actual and virtual.<sup>9</sup>

As a vastly intertextual series, *Family Guy* continuously references and satirizes other media texts and

familiar American tropes, variously remediating and destabilizing them to queer effect. One popular ideology from which the show divests, even recoils, is reproductive futurism (or reproductive futurity), a common trope of American sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-63) and *All in the Family* (1971-79), wherein the figure of the white, heteronormative child—and the promise of white, hetero-futurity he or she comes to symbolize—is valorized, preserved, and invested in by adult characters. The queer television scholar Lynne Joyrich argues that the “odd operations of televisual logic” permit unique and surprising ways for reproductive futurism to be contested (2014, 135–7). She proclaims, “television operates via restarts and reversals, iterations and involutions, branchings and braidings,” and thus propagates an “imaginary” that is “one of futurity without direct forward thinking, involving propagation without necessarily measurable progress and generation without necessarily clear continuity” (ibid, 136). While *Family Guy* is an excellent example as each episode begins anew (with little to no continuity from the previous season or episode) and characters do not age (meaning there is literally no future to fight for), the show refutes reproductive futurism in a very literal sense as adult characters do not accede to any political discourse that privileges figural children whose “innocence” disciplines them into culturally acceptable behaviours that align with the “protection” of this innocence, and by extension, the consecration of a phantasmal, collective, heteronormative future.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the series goes a step further than refusing reproductive futurism by resisting the protection of actual children and by queering Stewie, rendering him precisely that which our society defines children against in order to propagate the fantasy of unilateral innocence and justify a collective fight “for the future.” As Edelman argues, the figure of the child “remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics” and “the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention” (2004, 3). When we fight *for the children*, we implicitly fight for the (straight) future and acquiesce to the fiction of a collective political horizon that is a smokescreen for social control. It is the domain of “queerness” to both resist and dismantle this structuration of the political sphere, as Edelman argues that “the only queerness that queer sexualities could ever hope to signify would spring from their determined opposition...to the governing fantasy of achieving Symbolic closure through the marriage of identity to futurity in order to realize the social subject” (ibid, 13–14). For Edelman, embracing queerness is a political act that invokes the “death drive,” a psychoanalytic term that “refuses identity or the absolute privilege of any goal” and names a self-destructive “force of mechanistic compulsion whose formal excess supersedes any end toward which it might seem to be aimed” (ibid, 22). To (re)claim queerness is thus to refuse the Symbolic order (the realm of intersubjective communication, signs, language, laws, and rituals) by way of acceding to it, producing “a jouissance,” or a sense of enjoyment, “that social reality and the futurism on which it relies have already foreclosed” (ibid, 24–5). That is to say, the political valence of queerness inheres in the perversely pleasurable reclamation of the Symbolic, abject queerness against which childhood “innocence” is constructed. In Edelman’s own words, “we [queers] can... make the choice to accede to our cultural production as figures—*within* the dominant logic of narrative, *within* Symbolic reality—for the dismantling of such a logic and thus for the death drive it harbors within” (ibid, 22). This is where Edelman coins the term “*sinthomosexual*,” or “*sinthomosexuality*.” *Sinthomosexuals* are those misanthropic queer figures of twentieth-century film and literature (i.e. Ebenezer Scrooge) who deny “the appeal of fantasy” and “the promise of futurity” and thus have “the force of [queerness and] the death drive” projected onto them, never to be acknowledged as the “engine[s] driving the reproduction of the social itself” (ibid, 35–45). Edelman derives the *sinthomosexual* from Jacques Lacan’s “*sinthome*,” which “speaks to the singularity of the subject’s existence” and “refuses the Symbolic logic that determines the exchange of signifiers,” permitting “no translation of its singularity” and thus holding “nothing of meaning” (ibid, 35). Commenting on Lacan’s influence on Slavoj Žižek’s film philosophy, the film scholar Laurence Simmons writes that the *sinthome*, derived from symptom, “causes discomfort and displeasure” but we “embrace its interpretation with pleasure” (2009, 312). In other words, we “enjoy our suffering and suffer our enjoyments” (ibid).

To be clear, however, *Family Guy* alters the Symbolic realm such that a reclamation of queerness through the refusal of reproductive futurism is not possible. In *Family Guy*, Peter is busy “terroriz[ing] the

community with [his] impulsive escapades,” as Meg puts it (“Seashell Seahorse Party,” 2011), while mother Lois drinks wine at all hours, goes on shoplifting sprees, and generally acts out of self-interest. Therefore, Stewie does not have a parental figure to preserve his innocence or guide him in the direction of hetero-futurity—other than Brian, who has his own ethical shortcomings and acts more like a partner-in-crime. In fact, because there is no clear heteronormative societal structure to uphold or oppose, Stewie can do drag, hit on both men and women, and host tea parties while delighting in the torture of neighbourhood bullies and taking advantage of a full nuclear arsenal. Therefore, the *Family Guy* universe forecloses on the jouissance of the death drive (as Edelman understands it) by rendering the social and Symbolic order always already queer. *Family Guy* queers the plane of immanence of reproductive futurism wherein innocence and queerness (as figural although politically expedient qualities) are dialogically constructed. Stewie is an amalgam of both the child and the *sinthomosexual*, although one that lacks the political power of *sinthomosexuality* because his context is always already divested from reproductive futurism and social consequence. In this sense, Stewie might be said to embody one of the versions of queer childhood (or versions of “growing sideways”) that Stockton calls “[Sigmund] Freud’s queer children” (2009, 27). This child is “the not-yet-straight-child who is...sexual...with aggressive wishes. From wanting the mother to have its child, to wanting to have its father’s baby, to wanting to kill its rival lover, the Freudian child (the child penned by Freud) looks remarkably, threateningly precocious: sexual and aggressive” (ibid). Incorporating “infantilized postures with strangely knowing (and aggressive) gestures,” the child queered by Freud disrupts the social order with their malevolence (ibid, 28). For example, without any clear motivation, the little girl from *The Children’s Hour* (1961) “wrongly and willfully accuses her school’s co-headmistresses...of being lovers,” completely upending their lives and driving one to suicide (ibid). Likewise, Stewie is characterized by an inexplicable malice and takes pleasure in violence and destruction. However, there is little hope that he will turn out totally straight and no heteronormative or moral code to which he can be held. Reciprocally, then, and as I have already written, there is no jouissance to be procured by renouncing heteronormativity. Rather, Stewie’s jouissance derives solely from the *sinthome* (or the symptom) that is his pronounced inimicalness—his imposition on the futurities and bodily autonomy of others and the negative affects he invokes. It derives from a much more powerful death drive that is “opposed to every form of social viability” (Edelman 2004, 9) but has nothing to do with the destruction of societal fantasies or of the self but the destruction of others. For example, when he and his short-lived girlfriend Penelope (whom he meets on the playground after she watches him let another kid choke to death) start a nuclear war or hurt other kids, Stewie’s (and Penelope’s) enjoyment stems not solely from the violence inflicted on others but on their vital affects and futural possibilities (“Mr. and Mrs. Stewie,” 2012). Even when Stewie’s victims survive, they are *pulled* “sideways,” outside of normative time-spaces and trajectories and into a malevolent queer temporality controlled by Stewie. Stewie is therefore different from the animated child figures of *Steven Universe* (2013–present) analyzed by Boonin-Vail, who are, after Stockton, “queered by innocence” but also fundamentally queer “by the performance of animation itself” (2019). While Stewie’s queerness partially manifests through his animated-ness, he is also queer by way of a *lack* of innocence and through his inconsequential universe that allows for ambiguous, fluid constructions of gender and sexuality and iterations of malignant *sinthomosexuality*. He is queer because of what an animated world allows him to do.

### Queer Ethology in *Family Guy*

Stewie is placed in scenarios that would not occur (or would not occur inconsequentially) in an anthropocentric, heteronormative world where the laws of time and physics are observed. Yet, it is precisely these bizarre encounters and negotiations (and the bodies with which Stewie comes into contact, affects, and is affected by) that establish and shape his queerness. This is to suggest that Stewie’s gender and sexuality are produced in and through his environment. Following Butler’s theory of performativity, we could say that Stewie internalizes his surroundings and performatively constitutes an ambiguous gender in and through his culture, in that his actions represent a “stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a [not so]

regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a [pseudo-]natural state of being” (2007, 45). While I am satisfied with the idea that Stewie performatively constructs (or is always in the process of “becoming”) a non-normative gender in an environment where “normative,” “natural,” and “queer” are relative terms, I want to emphasize that Stewie’s queerness takes shape through his mutually transformative relationship to other bodies. More specifically, I want to suggest that many instances in which Stewie’s queerness is at issue are also situations where he must, in ethological terms, negotiate relations between his body and the bodies of others in the absence of a code by which to gauge his morality.

To frame my discussion of ethology, I naturally defer to Deleuze, although del Río’s ethological framework for thinking violence in “extreme cinemas” is equally applicable. As del Río maintains, ethology “may be thought of as the examination of the affects and capacities that bind us to our habitat through a multiplicity of relations with the affects and capacities of other bodies” (2016, 21). The creation of “new connections, whether in art or cinema more specifically,” comprises an “*ethological experimentation*, insofar as these connections give rise to a new habitat, with its own spatiotemporal dynamic and its own ways of affecting, and being affected by, the bodies in it” (ibid, 22, emphasis mine). I stress that an ethological framework has nothing to do with morality. Ethology is not concerned with what *should* be done in the face of moral dilemmas but how interrelated bodies affect and are affected by one another. To be clear, affect in this case does not connote emotion. Rather, it inheres in the “body’s capacities to affect and be affected by other bodies, thereby implying an augmentation or diminution in the body’s capacity to act” (del Río 2008, 10). Affect “precedes, sets the conditions for, and outlasts a human expression of emotion” (ibid). As del Río has written, it is “Spinoza’s emphasis on the univocity of Being—the idea that all Being is, at one level, a composite body, a single infinite animal—that allows us to extend ethology...to the study of humans” (2016, 21). Put differently, “insofar as Nature, the plane of immanence common to all, distributes affects/capacities to each being,...no relevant difference exists between animal and human bodies” (ibid). Recalling that it does not enforce a strict human/animal binary and that the slippages between adult and child (Stewie) and human and animal (Brian) are inherent to its structure, *Family Guy* takes this framework to the extreme, as all figures are always already on a level playing field.

For del Río, ethology is particularly useful for understanding the “negative affects” and depictions of violence produced in a corpus of films she calls “extreme cinemas,” including films like Michael Haneke’s *Code Unknown* (2000) and Lars von Trier’s *Dogville* (2003) and *Melancholia* (2011), wherein bodies are placed “in such [extreme] situations as moral/religious oppression, biopolitical violence,...gender relations, the event of death, and...planetary extinction,” and in which violence manifests as a “sustained practice of intensity that already pervades the everyday body and its inherently aberrant movements and affects” (ibid, 1–29). This notion of extremity greatly resonates with *Family Guy*. As I have already discussed, the show’s spatio-temporality is continuously disrupted, characters metamorphize into inhuman figures, and there are few if any consequences for destructiveness. *Family Guy* is also rather violent. Peter recurrently battles a giant anthropomorphic chicken named Ernie in elaborate fight scenes, while Stewie attempts to kill Lois on numerous occasions. This violence, however, cannot be described as any “anomalous outgrowth” or merely perpetuated by “exceptionally aggressive or deranged individuals,” as del Río would put it (ibid, 7), but as an axiom of quotidian life. *Family Guy* thus lends itself to being analyzed from an ethological perspective because its spatio-temporality, narrativity, and inconsequentiality place characters in extreme scenarios that test their consciences and affective capacities. Nothing governs its relations apart from the vital affects of its characters. My task is therefore to analyze the ethical and affective relations that take place within and as a result of these extremities, particularly situations in which Stewie affects and is affected by other bodies but also queers and is queered by them. In what follows, I analyze a handful of scenarios in which Stewie encounters something of an ethical challenge, or rather, an instance in which he must choose a positive-affective or a negative-affective outcome that impacts another individual’s future and/or their vital affects. These situations, which I will call “queer ethological experimentations,” stage a dialectics of normativity and queerness, forcing Stewie to walk a fine line between conformity and deviance, social order, and the pleasure

he takes in destruction.

Stockton calls instances in literature and cultural production in which a family pet aids in a child's sideways growth the "interval of animal" (2009, 89–91). This pet, usually a dog, serves as "a vehicle for the child's strangeness" and its "companion in queerness" (ibid, 90). It is a "recipient of the child's attentions—its often bent devotions—and a living screen for the child's self-projections—its mysterious bad-dog postures of sexual expression" (ibid). The dog serves as a "figure for the child beside itself, engaged in a growing quite aside from growing up" (ibid). Stewie and Brian have a tempestuous, although close and loving, relationship. Peter and Lois are not privy to their itinerant adult lives, while Chris and Meg take care of Stewie only occasionally and usually with little narrative consequence. Therefore, Brian is the closest thing Stewie has to a parent. In fact, Brian and Stewie cannot live without one another, or more nearly, Stewie cannot part with Brian. When Penelope insists that Stewie kill Brian, Stewie refuses, and goes to great lengths to shield him from her wrath. In the episode "Christmas Guy" (2013), Stewie goes back in time to save Brian from being hit by a car. However, Brian and Stewie often bully one another and argue only to later make up. They also travel the world (and through time) together, which is often a source of conflict. In some sense, they behave in accordance with the stereotype of an old married couple. As there is no hardline distinction between humans and animals in *Family Guy*, it is implausible to look upon their relationship as queer by virtue of species differentiation, although it is queer in its transgression of the parent-child boundary, especially in instances where it becomes more intimate. In the episode "Stewie is Enceinte" (2015), Stewie feels like Brian has not been spending enough time with him. Feeling hurt and rejected, he sees neighbours Joe and Bonnie Swanson playing with their baby Susie. Stewie gets the idea that if he and Brian have a baby, they will have to spend more time together and their relationship will be saved. While this plan is a clear parody of the misguided romantic myth that babies save relationships, Stewie nonetheless inseminates himself with Brian's DNA (without Brian knowing) and carries their slightly deranged humanoid puppies to term. Finding the care of their litter too cumbersome, Brian and Stewie eventually abandon their surviving babies at an animal shelter. The fact that Stewie decides on Brian's behalf to have his puppies is significant. By impregnating himself with Brian's DNA, Stewie intends to have (and raise) a baby with Brian and marry their futures to the figure of the child. He thus invests in a kind of reproductive futurism. By doing this without Brian's consent, Stewie makes a conscious decision to interrupt Brian's futurity and temporality and tie them to his own. However, when Brian and Stewie abandon their babies, they not only retreat from reproductive futurism but decide to relegate their offspring to another trajectory, with, arguably, not much of a future. They demonstrate no concern for their babies' lives or the multitude of ways in which abandonment is likely to affect them. While this dynamic is a clear example of the "interval of animal," it is one with profound ethological consequences. Indeed, Brian and Stewie are imbricated, mutually corrupting and corruptible forces that facilitate each other's sideways growth and unethical behaviour which, in turn, negatively affects other members of their community.

While Stewie queers reproductive futurism and the figure of the child by being a child *sinthomosexual*, he also does so by engaging in transgressive sexual practices, weaponizing and remaining in total control of his ambiguous and indiscriminate sexuality and the conditions under which he is sexualized. Following Davis, it would suffice to characterize Stewie as yielding an "any-desire-whatever," or "refusing to organize [him]self within an untenable hetero/homo binary or at equidistant Kinseyan intervals between those poles" (2013, 20). Following Deleuze, Davis writes, "Even when they appear recognizable as straight or gay or lesbian, desires bear entropic dimensions bound up with temporality, since those operating in the present moment presuppose untapped potentials for past and present variations, and for future transformations" (ibid). In certain episodes, it is implied that Stewie dates adult men while dressed as a drag alter-ego named Desirée. In the episode "We Love You, Conrad" (2009), Desirée runs into someone named Lee, a middle-aged man with a mustache, at a restaurant. Presumably, Lee recognizes Desirée from a previous date. Another man cries out, "Hey! Is that Desirée?" Stewie also has sex with Rupert (whom he refers to as a "power bottom") by humping him from behind while asphyxiating him with a plastic bag ("Chris Has Got

a Date, Date, Date, Date, Date,” 2016). Stewie’s romantic and sexual life tends to cause chaos around him. In the episode “Quagmire’s Quagmire” (2013), Lois and the kids search through the family attic, where they find Oscar, Stewie’s first teddy bear. While Stewie is initially apprehensive about reconnecting with Oscar because of his longstanding “relationship” with Rupert, Brian later finds them having tea. Stewie asks Brian not to tell Rupert of his presumable cheating. Later, however, Stewie comes downstairs after he claims to have fought with Rupert and hands him over to Brian. While enjoying time with Oscar, Stewie finds Brian humping Rupert and tries to rekindle their relationship. Forced to choose between Stewie and Brian, Rupert picks Stewie. While happy to be back with Rupert, Stewie worries about Oscar, who is later seen in a cutaway having ostensibly (although perhaps only virtually) hanged himself. In this example, Stewie makes a conscious decision to leave Rupert for Oscar and give the former to Brian with no regard for anyone’s feelings or affective capacities. As soon as Oscar re-emerges, Rupert becomes expendable. And yet, when Brian humps Rupert, Stewie wants to take him back without regard for Oscar’s feelings. In the end, Oscar loses out, sacrificing his life and the possibility of a future with another bear or baby.

In other instances, Stewie’s sexuality (or his ability to pass in drag) is turned on Brian. In the *Jolly Farm* episode, Stewie, as Karina, enters a restaurant in which Brian is sitting alone. They strike up a conversation and end up sitting together, at which point Brian hits on who he thinks is Karina. Brian tells Karina that her accent is “sexy,” while Karina confesses that she has missed a man’s touch “lo these many months.” Brian takes Karina’s hand and places it in his crotch under the table, before Stewie snaps out of it and confesses that he is, in fact, Stewie. Brian is angry at Stewie, who just wanted to see how far he could get Brian to go. Stewie tells Brian that he will be playing a girl’s role on *Jolly Farm* and that he needs Brian to be an on-set guardian. Brian storms out of the restaurant before Stewie essentially blackmails him into this new role, reminding him that he did just technically molest a child.

In the episode “Lethal Weapons” (2001), Stewie hits Peter over the head with a baseball bat and is taken to a child psychologist, who concludes, in part, that Stewie suffers from “gender confusion,” to which Stewie responds by tackling him and biting his ear. This would not be the last time that Stewie would resist Oedipalization, in the Deleuzian sense, and confession, in the Foucauldian sense, or that a psychological evaluation of Stewie would end violently. Indeed, it happens again in “Send in Stewie, Please” (2018), a unique episode because it takes the form of a simple dialogue between two characters with perhaps the fewest spatio-temporal interruptions and cutaways in the show’s history. The episode is also anomalous in that it deals directly with Stewie and no other characters and because Stewie talks openly (although ambiguously) about his identity. This episode is also a fruitful site of analysis in terms of affect because the intimate, complex relationality between Stewie and Dr. Pritchfield develops with no interference from other characters and evolves gradually from subtle powerplays into outright antagonism. At first, Pritchfield has the upper hand. He coaxes Stewie into divulging his “true” (American, as opposed to British) accent and gets him to speak openly about his sexuality (“not gay,” but maybe “fluid”). Eventually, however, Stewie turns the lens on Pritchfield. Glancing at a desk picture of the openly gay psychologist and his much younger husband, Michael, Stewie deduces that Michael does not work but merely plans trips that Pritchfield must pay for on a salary that is much smaller than his husband imagines. Stewie also discerns from the photograph that Michael, while getting older, is, unlike Pritchfield, “not yet invisible” to young, attractive gay men like the one who took the picture during their offseason trip to Brazil. Dark and funny, this cutting character assassination eventually causes Pritchfield to have a traumatic childhood flashback, and later, a heart attack. Pritchfield clutches his chest and begs Stewie to give him his medication which is on the counter behind him. Stewie goes to get the medication but hesitates, recalling that Pritchfield is now the only person in the world who has heard him speak with an American accent. Because he knows this, Pritchfield must die. As Pritchfield becomes increasingly desperate for Stewie to help him, Stewie ends up in a similar situation as Leonard, Martin Landau’s character in Alfred Hitchcock’s classic *North by Northwest* (1959), where he is faced with the choice of saving Roger (Cary Grant) and Eve (Eva Marie Saint) or letting them fall off Mount Rushmore. Leonard steps on Roger’s fingers but is unsuccessful in sealing his and Eve’s fate as he is promptly

shot off the cliff. As Edelman explains, “Leonard refuses compassion, or refuses at any rate its fantasy, insofar as he incarnates the radical force of *sinthomosexuality*” (2004, 72). With the example of Leonard, “the figure of the *sinthomosexual* is writ large-screen, never more so than during what constitutes his anti-Sermon on the Mount, when by lowering the sole of his shoe he manages to show that he has no soul, thus showing us as well that the shoe of *sinthomosexuality* fits him” (ibid, 76). In *Family Guy*, a parallel can be drawn between Stewie and Leonard in that Stewie also “scorns the injunction to put himself in the *other’s* shoes,” or rather, to think about the future, life and well-being of another person (ibid). Just before Pritchfield dies, he warns Stewie that if he does not help him, he will forever live with regret. Stewie retorts that, to him, letting people die is “no big deal.” Seconds after Pritchfield’s death, Michael leaves a phone message saying that he wants a divorce, to which Stewie says (to Pritchfield’s corpse), “this is not your day.”

### Conclusions

The canon of queer animations studies has focused almost entirely on corporeal transmogrifications and metamorphoses related to gender, sexuality, and animality. From Bugs Bunny to Mickey Mouse to the entities of *Steven Universe*, it is the queer animated *body*, as opposed to the queer temporalities and futurities of animation (and the possibilities that lie therein) that have been analyzed. In his analysis of *Steven Universe*, Boonin-Vail concludes that the show “suggests that animation’s legacy of plasmatic bodies can be put to work in service of a toontological queer theory of childhood,” or rather, “that there is something queer about the very act of animating a child whether they are gay or straight” (2019). Much like *Steven Universe*, *Family Guy’s* Stewie “forces us to consider the animated child as a fundamentally queer form performed by lines and colors, to accept the very building blocks of animation as [a] participant in a queering of the child’s body and the child’s experience of time” (ibid). However, as I have demonstrated, Stewie’s experiences as a queer child cannot be reduced to the many morphologies that animation permits. Stewie is “queer” because he defies everything that a Western liberal society deems “normal” and “healthy” for a child. In fact, his queerness is perhaps most evident in his lack of innocence and through the queer animated world that allows for his malignant *sinthomosexuality*. In some sense, then, my argument has been that in order to grasp the totality of Stewie’s queerness, we need to look beyond his animated-ness and toward the conditions of queer possibility that an animated world affords.

In an interview with the Research Centre for Cultures, Politics, and Identities (IPAK Centre) and the Faculty of Media and Communications at Singidunum University, part of the “Summer School for Sexualities, Culture, and Politics,” Edelman states that his book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*—where he coins and develops the terms reproductive futurism and *sinthomosexuality*—“did not” and “could not answer the question [of] what a world might be in the absence of reproductive futurism” (2015). Relatedly, the queer literary scholar Natasha Hurley contends that Edelman’s argument “proceeds with no such nuance in diagnosing the starkly divided sides of the political debate: there is the side of the child—the very embodiment of reproductive futurism—and there is the side of queerness, the site of resistance to that logic of reproduction” (2015, 150). Hurley asks, “Might seeming opposites (the child and the queer, reproduction and non-reproduction) not be entangled or positioned alongside each other more complexly than they seem at first?” (ibid). Both Hurley and Edelman question what it might mean to think outside the logic of reproductive futurism, and in Hurley’s case, what it could mean to think of childhood and childhood studies outside of a conception of queerness that outright refuses reproduction and the figure of the child. While I do not have definitive answers to these questions, I would argue that Stewie is perhaps one possible avenue by which this discussion might be continued. A queer child who is never truly queer because his environment always already is, Stewie is the only amalgam I can think of in contemporary popular culture between the *sinthomosexual*, the queer, and the figure of the child. *Family Guy’s* ultimate ethological experiment, he is the queer child who is free to “grow sideways”—and pull others sideways—in a world where “sideways” (and the sociocultural imperatives of reproductive futurism) are all but renounced. *Family Guy* does not present any overarching message about queer children or queerness. Rather, it experiments with

queerness, challenging the paradigms and premises on which the concept rests, reproducing normativity while also subverting it at numerous junctures. It shows us a world in which “normal” and “queer” are always relative but not necessarily immanent to one another. In Stewie’s case, normativity, difference, and queerness are produced, encountered, and negotiated in perpetuity. He is a *liminally* queer child who is always growing sideways, never totally abjuring heteronormativity but always stepping to the side of whatever ideals, morals, or ethics are presented to him.

We must not forget the role that Deleuze (and Guattari) play here. The non-reproductive framework, described by Joyrich as operating “via restarts and reversals, iterations and involutions, branchings and braidings” (2014, 136) is buttressed in *Family Guy* by the continuous unpredictability and discontinuity of bodies and spatio-temporalities; the continued “becoming” of corporealities; and entangling of actuality and virtuality. Perhaps, then, the answer to the question of thinking outside the bounds of reproductive futurism, or reproduction more broadly, is to think with Deleuze—radically outside the normative understanding of corporeality and temporality itself.

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### Notes

1. I operationalize a general definition of reparative reading here as “meeting halfway.” For a more nuanced discussion, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s works cited here. Taking lead from Sedgwick, Heather K. Love defines reparative reading as a “kind of reading [that] contrasts with familiar academic protocols like maintaining critical distance, outsmarting (and other forms of one-upmanship), refusing to be surprised (or if you are, then not letting on), believing the hierarchy, becoming boss” (2010, 236).
2. The full quote reads: “...a study on the adult animated sitcom’s articulations of queer resistance needs to be discussed from a perspective that incorporates the genre’s postmodern textual strategies” (2011, 126). Dhaenens and Van Bauwel offer many examples of queer resistance in *Family Guy* from a queer Derridean perspective, arguing that the show makes use of “pastiche,” “parody,” “intertextuality,” “exaggeration,” “literalizing” and “hyperstereotyping” (ibid, 126–32). Examples include Stewie’s relationship to Brian’s cousin Jasper and the queer relationship between Chris and friend Sam.
3. Elizabeth Freeman defines “chrononormativity” as the means by which cultural constructions of temporality around capitalism and production “come to seem like somatic facts” (2010, 3). J. Jack Halberstam writes: “Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction...If we try to think about queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices, we detach queerness from sexual identity and come to a closer understanding of Foucault’s ‘Friendship as a Way of Life’” (2005, 1).
4. As I understand it, film philosophy differs from film theory in that it does not necessarily understand films as making philosophical arguments but as always already philosophical and as opening the philosophical realm up to us. While ambivalent about the distinction between film philosophy and film theory, the Deleuzian William Brown observes: “if I can dare to be a film-philosopher, perhaps I can also dare to be a philosopher when I argue that one of the things cinema can do is to bring about new thoughts, to help us, indeed, to *think*” (2013, 6).
5. Although, as the philosopher Wendy Grace has astutely observed, there exists “a general radical diver-

gence that separates Foucault and Deleuze when it comes to analyzing sexuality independent of psychoanalysis” (2009, 54). Noting “a preliminary difference,” for instance, “one could say that Foucault concentrates more on challenging the psychoanalytic account of sexuality—leaving the unconscious more or less untreated...while the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* reserve their harshest criticisms for the gaps in Freud’s account of the unconscious, sidelining sexuality somewhat” (ibid, 60).

6. It is not entirely impossible to think queer theory and Deleuze and Guattari alongside psychoanalysis, despite their repudiations thereof. See Chrysanthi Nigianni’s edited volume *Deleuze and Queer Theory* for essays on thinking Deleuze and psychoanalysis together. See also Nick Davis’s discussion of Deleuze and Edelman (2013, 58).
7. While I cite Deleuze directly here, I was first alerted to the “problem of animation” for Deleuze in Sean Macdonald’s monograph *Animation in China: History, Aesthetics, Media* (2015, 38) and in Boonin-Vail’s article cited here.
8. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize “becoming” as opposed to “being” because being is characterized by multiplicity. Deleuze writes: “For there is not being beyond becoming, nothing beyond multiplicity... Multiplicity is the inseparable manifestation, essential transformation and constant symptom of unity. Multiplicity is the affirmation of being; becoming is the affirmation of being” (1983, 23–4). Kenneth Surin writes that “becoming-molecular” and “becoming-minor” form part of a “constellation of terms” coined by Deleuze to “designate the situation of being analytically, as opposed to numerically, in the minority” (2020, 139). An entity that is “becoming-molecular” is essentially becoming non-“molar” or non-normative, while a “becoming-minor” abjures “all the majoritarian orders” (ibid).
9. “Fabulation” follows from the larger Deleuzian notion of the “powers of the false,” or the power to tell stories and make myths without concern for a one and only truth. “Fabulation” typically refers to world-making and truth-making in a cinematic context, like documentary film and *cinéma vérité* (1989, 126–47). In the context of ethnofiction, Ronald Bogue describes fabulation as “‘legendizing’ caught *in flagrante delicto* as...performers construct selves while contributing to the ongoing construction of [a] film” (2003, 152).
10. Gary Needham writes that “the narrative closure of each episode of *Family Guy*...is frequently mapped on to a neat, upbeat family togetherness, as the sitcom’s generic pleasures work in the service of an ideology of the family” (2008, 148). While *Family Guy* does frequently end an episode with a sense of “narrative closure,” I disagree with Needham on the point of “upbeat family togetherness.” I read *Family Guy*’s endings as mocking the saccharinity of live-action family sitcom endings in which conflicts are nicely wrapped up. Moreover, because of *Family Guy*’s lack of consequence, we often know that characters have gotten away with unsavory actions (like when Peter or Stewie harm or kill someone) at the end of an episode. This sense of “upbeat family togetherness” arguably contrasts with the show’s inconsequentiality, reminding us of the inimical non-family the Griffins truly are.

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