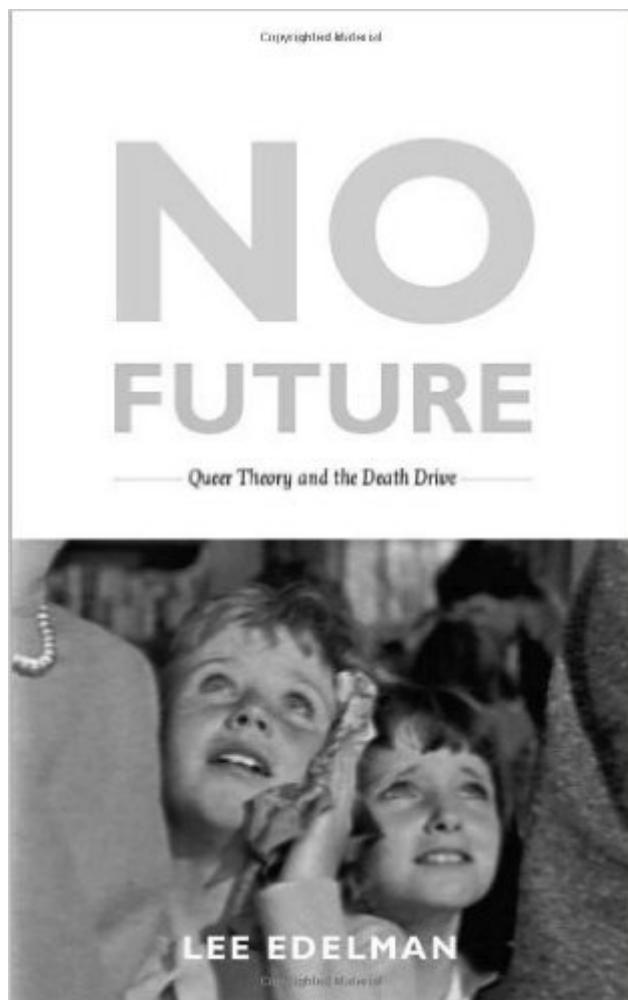


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No Future: Queer Theory And The Death Drive (Series Q)



Synopsis

In this searing polemic, Lee Edelman outlines a radically uncompromising new ethics of queer theory. His main target is the all-pervasive figure of the child, which he reads as the linchpin of our universal politics of a œreproductive futurism. • Edelman argues that the child, understood as innocence in need of protection, represents the possibility of the future against which the queer is positioned as the embodiment of a relentlessly narcissistic, antisocial, and future-negating drive. He boldly insists that the efficacy of queerness lies in its very willingness to embrace this refusal of the social and political order. In *No Future*, Edelman urges queers to abandon the stance of accommodation and accede to their status as figures for the force of a negativity that he links with irony, jouissance, and, ultimately, the death drive itself. Closely engaging with literary texts, Edelman makes a compelling case for imagining Scrooge without Tiny Tim and Silas Marner without little Eppie. Looking to Alfred Hitchcock's films, he embraces two of the director's most notorious creations: the sadistic Leonard of *North by Northwest*, who steps on the hand that holds the couple precariously above the abyss, and the terrifying title figures of *The Birds*, with their predilection for children. Edelman enlarges the reach of contemporary psychoanalytic theory as he brings it to bear not only on works of literature and film but also on such current political flashpoints as gay marriage and gay parenting. Throwing down the theoretical gauntlet, *No Future* reimagines queerness with a passion certain to spark an equally impassioned debate among its readers.

Book Information

Series: Series Q

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (December 6, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822333694

ISBN-13: 978-0822333692

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 0.5 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.2 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #270,933 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in Books > Gay & Lesbian > Literature & Fiction > Literary Criticism #66 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Gay & Lesbian Studies #66 in Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Philosophy

Customer Reviews

This is a smart, funny, and challenging book. (It does require fluency in theory-speak, largely of the Lacan dialect. So Edelman is writing largely for academics of a certain ilk. Fair enough, but I wonder what these ideas would look like if they were written with a larger public in mind--it seems to me Edelman's challenge to the child-driven purity politics of the US will never reach those who operate most within its languages and symbols.) Edelman makes a compelling case for refusing the "futurity" built into the rhetoric not just of conservative politics but also much of liberal or progressive politics. He acknowledges that in calling for this refusal, he is proposing an "impossible politics," a politics that will sidestep the trap by which one or another group (queers or an equivalent population deemed deviant) has to be sold down the river in order to rally everyone else around future improvement and greater inclusion. This is also an "impossible politics" because it won't suppress the death drive that structures every identity or political vision (this is the Lacanian part of the argument). But once you stipulate that any and every kind of politics (except Edelman's impossible politics) is built on suppressing the death drive, you have painted yourself into a corner--an impossible politics, indeed. Once Edelman has shifted the site of politics to the deep structure of the human psyche in this way, it's hard to see how one could think or act in any purposeful way that might count as political. There is only the act of refusing, but no hope or even historical possibility for imagining social and power arrangements that operate otherwise.

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