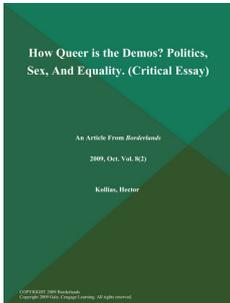


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## HOW QUEER IS THE DEMOS POLITICS SEX AND EQUALITY CRITICAL ESSAY EBOOKS 2019



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In his introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet* Michael Warner asked: 'what do queers want?' The answer was 'not just sex' (Warner, 1993: vii). Ever since then, if not before, queer theory has sought to branch out from the narrowing confines of sexuality studies and identity politics to embrace the big bad world of minoritarian solidarities, interdisciplinarity, and collective struggles, all of which should also by rights be seen as the fruitful continuation of a much longer tradition of queer activism and politics. It is with this expansive, inclusive thrust that queer theorists have now been called upon, if only by the editors of this volume, to meet the political thought of Jacques Ranciere, whose radical articulation of politics, equality, subjectivation, and emancipation speaks loudly to queer ears attuned to the noises of strife and recognition. But the degree to which this meeting will prove to be felicitous, the extent to which Ranciere's carefully developed political philosophy is a match for the multifarious desiderata of queers, will ultimately depend on what it is that one means by queer, what kind of political, social, sexual or other subjects queers make, or indeed, what it is that queers want. And inversely, Rancierian eyes will only see in the various provocations of queer theory a glimpse of the elusive political subject at certain moments with certain preconditions, failing which there is nothing to stop queers being, like the rest, like the others, like everyone, subjects of the police order, content capitalist citizens and consumers, or even wilful members of the multitude obsessed with its own unification. In what follows I shall try to trace such moments within the queer past and the queer present, allowing for a Rancierian interpretation of queer political events and achievements, in order to see how we square up with Ranciere's trenchant and indefatigable egalitarianism. I shall also, however, argue that given a certain denomination of the meaning of queer, Ranciere's notions of politics and emancipation become rather more problematic. I am here referring to queer as reconceptualized in Lee Edelman's *No Future* as the figure of the sinthomosexual, who programmatically resides 'outside the framework within which politics as we know it appears' (Edelman, 2004: 3). Is this the space outside the police order that would be confluent with Ranciere's politics proper? Or is it a space outside even Ranciere's universal presupposition of equality as the condition of all politics, thus effectively giving the lie even to this most elegant and most credible conception in Ranciere's work? It should be evident as well that in this particular encounter between Ranciere and Edelman, there are intermediaries whose voices are crucial in the understanding of any disagreement here presented, and there are clashes of vocabulary which could end up being far more than merely terminological inconsistencies. The elephant in the room here is psychoanalysis: Lacan as understood by Edelman on the one hand, and Freud (and to a lesser degree Lacan) as understood by Ranciere on the other, as well as the ramifications of what Ranciere intends by what he calls the 'ethical turn' in contemporary politics. I shall not try to present a concise and coherent account of the complex relationship Ranciere has with psychoanalysis, other than a few words on his engagement with it in his book *L'inconscient esthetique* (Ranciere, 2001). Instead I shall begin by looking at queer politics with Rancierian eyes and gradually allow psychoanalytic conceptions and interjections to creep in, aiming to reach a potential 'impossible identification' between what lies at the core of Ranciere's concept of equality, and the Lacanian Real necessitated by Edelman's provocations of the sinthomosexual. Clearly this is not the easiest path to take in organizing a meeting between Ranciere's political thought and queer theory, precisely since it encourages the negotiati

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