

“Life, alas, has an extremely strict return policy”: Reimagining Queer Futurity in
Terms of Childhood

In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman examines the possibilities of queer futurity, by skillfully positioning the queer and queerness in direct opposition to the Child. In doing so, he calls for the queer to figure the death drive of culture— “the negativity opposed to every form of social viability” (9). Consequently, *No Future* leaves readers with the conception of queerness always contesting the Child. However, Edelman misses the queerness of the figure of the Child and childhood. In this paper, I argue that the figure of the Child and childhood embody the death drive of culture just as much as the queer. Examining Sam J. Miller’s *The Art of Starving*, I will show how children can be aligned with the death drive in the same way that queerness is in Edelman’s work, particularly in the ways queer futurity denies certain possibilities. In *The Art of Starving*, Matt struggles with his own eating disorder while also planning to disrupt other people’s lives by revealing their darkest secrets. Throughout the book, Matt embodies the death drive in his attempts to learn the truth about his sister and ruin his bully’s lives in whatever way possible. Using this analysis, the Child and childhood become linked to the death drive, thus the dichotomy between queerness and the Child collapses. With this collapse, the use of childhood as the political opposite of queerness must be rethought with new possibilities for understanding the future.