

Introduction

Feeling Utopia

A map of the world that does not include utopia is not worth glancing at.

—Oscar Wilde

QUEERNESS IS NOT yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing. Often we can glimpse the worlds proposed and promised by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic. The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity. Both the ornamental and the quotidian can contain a map of the utopia that is queerness. Turning to the aesthetic in the case of queerness is nothing like an escape from the social realm, insofar as queer aesthetics map future social relations. Queerness is also a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.

to feel utopian in the here and now has been nourished through my fortunate association with this collegial cohort.

Ultimately, this book offers a theory of queer futurity that is attentive to the past for the purposes of critiquing a present. This mode of queer critique depends on critical practices that stave off the failures of imagination that I understand as antirelationality and antiutopianism in queer critique. The mode of “cruising” for which this book calls is not only or even primarily “cruising for sex.” I do see an unlimited potentiality in actual queer sex, but books of criticism that simply glamorize the ontology of gay male cruising are more often than not simply boring. In this book I do nonetheless distill some real theoretical energy from historical accounts of fucking and utopia, such as John Giorno’s journals (chapter 2) and Samuel Delany’s memoir, *The Motion of Light and Water* (chapter 3). That may have something to do with the historical texture those texts provide. Indeed this book asks one to cruise the fields of the visual and not so visual in an effort to see in the anticipatory illumination of the utopian. If, as indicated by the famous quotation from Oscar Wilde that appears in the epigraph, “a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth glancing at,” then affective and cognitive maps⁴⁵ of the world that a critically queer utopianism can create, maps that *do* include utopia, need to be attended to in a fashion that indeed resembles a kind of politicized cruising. In the place of various exhausted theoretical stances *Cruising Utopia* not only asks readers to reconsider ideas such as hope and utopia but also challenges them to feel hope and to feel utopia, which is to say challenges them to approach the queer critique from a renewed and newly animated sense of the social, carefully cruising for the varied potentialities that may abound within that field.

1

Queerness as Horizon

Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of Gay Pragmatism

for John

I BEGIN THIS chapter on futurity and a desire that is utopian by turning to a text from the past—more specifically, to those words that emanate from the spatiotemporal coordinate Bloch referred to as the no-longer-conscious, a term that attempts to enact a more precise understanding of the work that the past does, what can be understood as the performative force of the past. A 1971 issue of the gay liberation journal *Gay Flames* included a manifesto by a group calling itself Third World Gay Revolution. The text, titled “What We Want, What We Believe,” offered a detailed list of demands that included the abolition of capital punishment, the abolishment of institutional religion, and the end of the bourgeois family. The entire list of sixteen demands culminated with a request that was especially radical and poignant when compared to the anemic political agenda that dominates contemporary LGBT politics in North America today.

16.) We want a new society—a revolutionary socialist society. We want liberation of humanity, free food, free shelter, free clothing, free transportation, free health care, free utilities, free education, free art for all. We want a society where the needs of the people come first.

We believe that all people should share the labor and products of society, according to each one’s needs and abilities, regardless of race, sex, age or sexual preferences. We believe the land, technology and the means of production belong to the people, and must be shared by the people collectively for the liberation of all.¹

When we consider the extremely pragmatic agenda that organizes LGBT activism in North America today, the demand “we want a new society”

may seem naive by the present's standards. Many people would dismiss these demands as impractical or merely utopian. Yet I contend that there is great value in pulling these words from the no-longer-conscious to arm a critique of the present. The use of "we" in this manifesto can be mistakenly read as the "we" implicit in the identity politics that emerged after the Third World Gay Revolution group. Such a reading would miss the point. This "we" does not speak to a merely identitarian logic but instead to a logic of futurity. The "we" speaks to a "we" that is "not yet conscious," the future society that is being invoked and addressed at the same moment. The "we" is not content to describe who the collective is but more nearly describes what the collective and the larger social order could be, what it should be. The particularities that are listed—"race, sex, age or sexual preferences"—are not things in and of themselves that format this "we"; indeed the statement's "we" is "regardless" of these markers, which is not to say that it is beyond such distinctions or due to these differences but, instead, that it is *beside* them. This is to say that the field of utopian possibility is one in which multiple forms of belonging in difference adhere to a belonging in collectivity.

Such multiple forms of belonging-in-difference and expansive critiques of social asymmetries are absent in the dominant LGBT leadership community and in many aspects of queer critique. One manifesto from today's movement that seems especially representative of the anemic, shortsighted, and retrograde politics of the present is "All Together Now (A Blueprint for the Movement),"² a text written by pro-gay-marriage lawyer Evan Wolfson that appeared on his website, freedomtomarry.org. Wolfson's single-minded text identifies the social recognition and financial advantages offered by traditional marriage pacts as the key to what he calls "freedom." Freedom for Wolfson is mere inclusion in a corrupt and bankrupt social order. Wolfson cannot critique the larger ideological regime that represents marriage as something desirable, natural, and good. His assimilationist gay politics posits an "all" that is in fact a few: queers with enough access to capital to imagine a life integrated within North American capitalist culture. It goes almost without saying that the "all" invoked by the gay lawyer and his followers are normative citizen-subjects with a host of rights only afforded to some (and not all) queer people. Arguments against gay marriage have been articulated with great acumen by Lisa Duggan and Richard Kim.³ But it is Wolfson's invocation of the term *freedom* that is most unsettling.

Wolfson and his website's rhetoric degrade the concept of freedom. Homonormative cultural and political lobbyists such as Wolfson have

degraded the political and conceptual force of concepts such as freedom in the same way that the current political regime of the United States has degraded the term *liberation* in the case of recent Middle Eastern foreign policy. I invoke Wolfson here not so much as this chapter's problem or foil but merely as a recent symptom of the erosion of the gay and lesbian political imagination. Wolfson represents many homonormative interests leading the contemporary LGBT movement toward the goal of "naturalizing" the flawed and toxic ideological formation known as marriage. The aping of traditional straight relationality, especially marriage, for gays and lesbians announces itself as a pragmatic strategy when it is in fact a deeply ideological project that is hardly practical. In this way gay marriage's detractors are absolutely right: gay marriage is not natural—but then again, neither is marriage for any individual.

A similar but more nuanced form of what I am referring to as gay pragmatic thought can be seen in Biddy Martin's work, especially her psychoanalytically inspired diagnosis that queer critique suffers from an androcentric bias in which queerness presents itself as the "extraordinary" while at the same time fleeing the charge of being "ordinary." Being ordinary and being married are both antiutopian wishes, desires that automatically rein themselves in, never daring to see or imagine the not-yet-conscious. This line of thought that I am identifying as pragmatic is taken from its vernacular register. I am not referring to the actual philosophical tradition of American pragmatism of Charles Peirce, William James, or John Dewey. But the current gay political strategy I am describing does share an interest in empiricism with that school. Gay pragmatic organizing is in direct opposition to the idealist thought that I associate as endemic to a forward-dawning queerness that calls on a no-longer-conscious in the service of imagining a futurity.

The not-quite-conscious is the realm of potentiality that must be called on, and insisted on, if we are ever to look beyond the pragmatic sphere of the here and now, the hollow nature of the present. Thus, I wish to argue that queerness is not quite here; it is, in the language of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, a potentiality.⁴ Alain Badiou refers to that which follows the event as the thing-that-is-not-yet-imagined,⁵ and in my estimation queerness too should be understood to have a similar valence. But my turn to this notion of the not-quite-conscious is again indebted to Bloch and his massive three-volume text *The Principle of Hope*.⁶ That treatise, both a continuation and an amplification of German idealist practices of thought, is a critical discourse—which is to say that it does not

avert or turn away from the present. Rather, it critiques an autonaturalizing temporality that we might call *straight time*. Straight time tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life.⁷ The only futurity promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction. In *No Future*, Lee Edelman advises queers that the future is “kid stuff.”⁸ Although I believe that there is a lot to like about Edelman’s polemic—mostly its disdain for the culture of the child—I ultimately want to speak for a notion of queer futurity by turning to Bloch’s critical notion of utopia.

It is equally polemical to argue that we are not quite queer yet, that queerness, what we will really know as queerness, does not yet exist. I suggest that holding queerness in a sort of ontologically humble state, under a conceptual grid in which we do not claim to always already know queerness in the world, potentially staves off the ossifying effects of neoliberal ideology and the degradation of politics brought about by representations of queerness in contemporary popular culture.

A posterior glance at different moments, objects, and spaces might offer us an anticipatory illumination of queerness. We cannot trust in the manifestations of what some people would call queerness in the present, especially as embodied in the pragmatic debates that dominate contemporary gay and lesbian politics. (Here, again, I most pointedly mean U.S. queers clamoring for their right to participate in the suspect institution of marriage and, maybe worse, to serve in the military.) None of this is to say that there are not avatars of a queer futurity, both in the past and the present, especially in sites of cultural production. What I am suggesting is that we gain a greater conceptual and theoretical leverage if we see queerness as something that is not yet here. In this sense it is useful to consider Edmund Husserl, phenomenology’s founder, and his invitation to look to horizons of being.⁹ Indeed to access queer visuality we may need to squint, to strain our vision and force it to see otherwise, beyond the limited vista of the here and now.

To critique an overarching “here and now” is not to turn one’s face away from the everyday. Roland Barthes wrote that the mark of the utopian is the quotidian.¹⁰ Such an argument would stress that the utopian is an impulse that we see in everyday life. This impulse is to be glimpsed as something that is extra to the everyday transaction of heteronormative capitalism. This quotidian example of the utopian can be glimpsed in utopian bonds, affiliations, designs, and gestures that exist within the present

moment. Turning to the New York School of poetry, a moment that is one of the cultural touchstones for my research, we can consider a poem by James Schuyler that speaks of a hope and desire that is clearly utopian. The poem, like most of Schuyler’s body of work, is clearly rooted in an observation of the affective realm of the present. Yet there is an excess that the poet also conveys, a type of affective excess that presents the enabling force of a forward-dawning futurity that is queerness. In the poem “A photograph,” published in 1974 in the collection *Hymn to Life*, a picture that resides on the speaker’s desk sparks a recollection of domestic bliss.

A photograph
 Shows you in a London
 room; books, a painting,
 your smile, a silky
 tie, a suit. And more.
 It looks so like you
 and I see it every day
 (here, on my desk)
 which I don’t you. Last
 Friday was grand.
 We went out, we came
 back, we went wild. You
 slept. Me too. The pup
 woke you and you dressed
 and walked him. When
 you left, I was sleeping.
 When I woke there was
 just time to make the
 train to a country dinner
 and talk about ecstasy.
 Which I think comes in
 two sorts: that which you
 Know “Now I am ecstatic”
 Like my strange scream
 last Friday night. And
 another kind, that you
 know only in retrospect:
 “Why, that joy I felt
 and didn’t think about

when his feet were in my lap, or when I looked down and saw his slanty eyes shut, that too was ecstasy. Nor is there necessarily a downer from it." Do I believe in the perfectibility of man? Strangely enough, (I've known unhappiness enough) I do. I mean it.

I really do believe future generations can live without the intervals of anxious fear we know between our bouts and strolls of ecstasy. The struck ball finds the pocket. You smile some years back in London, I have known ecstasy and calm: haven't you too? Let's try to understand, my handsome friend who wears his nose awry.¹¹

The speaker remembers the grandness of an unspectacular Friday in which he and his addressee slept in and then scrambled to catch a train to a dinner out in the country. He attempts to explain the ecstasy he felt that night, indicating that one moment of ecstasy, a moment he identifies as being marked both by self-consciousness and obliviousness, possesses a potentially transformative charge. He then considers another moment of ecstasy in retrospect, a looking back at a no-longer-conscious that provides an affective enclave in the present that staves off the sense of "bad feelings" that mark the affective disjunction of being queer in straight time.

The moment in the poem of deeper introspection—beginning "Do I believe in / the perfectibility of / man?"—is an example of a utopian desire

inspired by queer relationality. Moments of queer relational bliss, what the poet names as ecstasies, are viewed as having the ability to rewrite a larger map of everyday life. When "future generations" are invoked, the poet is signaling a queerness to come, a way of being in the world that is glimpsed through reveries in a quotidian life that challenges the dominance of an affective world, a present, full of anxiousness and fear. These future generations are, like the "we" invoked in the manifesto by the Third World Gay Revolution group, not an identitarian formulation but, instead, the invocation of a future collectivity, a queerness that registers as the illumination of a horizon of existence.

The poem speaks of multiple temporalities and the affective mode known as ecstasy, which resonates alongside the work of Martin Heidegger. In *Being and Time* Heidegger reflects on the activity of timeliness and its relation to *ekstatisch* (ecstasy), signaling for Heidegger the ecstatic unity of temporality—Past, Present, and Future.¹² The ecstasy the speaker feels and remembers in "A photograph" is not consigned to one moment. It steps out from the past and remarks on the unity of an expansive version of temporality; hence, future generations are invoked. To know ecstasy in the way in which the poem's speaker does is to have a sense of timeliness's motion, to understand a temporal unity that is important to what I attempt to describe as the time of queerness. Queerness's time is a stepping out of the linearity of straight time. Straight time is a self-naturalizing temporality. Straight time's "presentness" needs to be phenomenologically questioned, and this is the fundamental value of a queer utopian hermeneutics. Queerness's ecstatic and horizontal temporality is a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world.

It would be difficult to mistake Schuyler's poem for one of Frank O'Hara's upbeat reveries. O'Hara's optimism is a contagious happiness within the quotidian that I would also describe as having a utopian quality. Schuyler's poetry is not so much about optimism but instead about a hope that is distinctly utopian and distinctly queer. The poem imagines another collective belonging, an enclave in the future where readers will not be beset with feelings of nervousness and fear. These feelings are the affective results of being outside of straight time. He writes from a depressive position, "(I've known un- / happiness enough)," but reaches beyond the affective force-field of the present.

Hope for Bloch is an essential characteristic of not only the utopian but also the human condition. Thus, I talk about the human as a relatively stable category. But queerness in its utopian connotations promises a human

that is not yet here, thus disrupting any ossified understanding of the human. The point is to stave off a gay and lesbian antiutopianism that is very much tainted with a polemics of the pragmatic rights discourse that in and of itself hamstrings not only politics but also desire. Queerness as utopian formation is a formation based on an economy of desire and desiring. This desire is always directed at that thing that is not yet here, objects and moments that burn with anticipation and promise. The desire that propels Schuyler's "A photograph" is born of the no-longer-conscious, the rich resonance of remembrance, distinct pleasures felt in the past. And thus past pleasures stave off the affective perils of the present while they enable a desire that is queer futurity's core.

Queerness is utopian, and there is something queer about the utopian. Fredric Jameson described the utopian as the oddball or the maniac.¹³ Indeed, to live inside straight time and ask for, desire, and imagine another time and place is to represent and perform a desire that is both utopian and queer. To participate in such an endeavor is not to imagine an isolated future for the individual but instead to participate in a hermeneutic that wishes to describe a collective futurity, a notion of futurity that functions as a historical materialist critique. In the two textual examples I have employed we see an overt utopianism that is explicit in the Third World Gay Revolution manifesto, and what I am identifying as a *utopian impulse* is perceivable in Schuyler's poetry. One requires a utopian hermeneutic to see an already operative principle of hope that hums in the poet's work. The other text, the manifesto, does another type of performative work; it *does utopia*.

To "read" the performative, along the lines of thought first inaugurated by J. L. Austin, is implicitly to critique the epistemological.¹⁴ Performativity and utopia both call into question what is epistemologically there and signal a highly ephemeral ontological field that can be characterized as a *doing in futurity*. Thus, a manifesto is a call to a doing in and for the future. The utopian impulse to be gleaned from the poem is a call for "doing" that is a becoming: the becoming of and for "future generations." This rejection of the here and now, the ontologically static, is indeed, by the measure of homonormative codes, a maniacal and oddball endeavor. The queer utopian project addressed here turns to the fringe of political and cultural production to offset the tyranny of the homonormative. It is drawn to tastes, ideologies, and aesthetics that can only seem odd, strange, or indeed queer next to the muted striving of the practical and normalcy-desiring homosexual.

The turn to the call of the no-longer-conscious is not a turn to normative historical analysis. Indeed it is important to complicate queer history and understand it as doing more than the flawed process of merely evidencing. Evidencing protocols often fail to enact real hermeneutical inquiry and instead opt to reinstate that which is known in advance. Thus, practices of knowledge production that are content merely to cull selectively from the past, while striking a pose of positivist undertaking or empirical knowledge retrieval, often nullify the political imagination. Jameson's Marxian dictate "always historicize"¹⁵ is not a methodological call for empirical data collection. Instead, it is a dialectical injunction, suggesting we animate our critical faculties by bringing the past to bear on the present and the future. Utopian hermeneutics offer us a refined lens to view queerness, insofar as queerness, if it is indeed not quite here, is nonetheless intensely relational with the past.

The present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and "rational" expectations. (I address the question of rationalism shortly). Let me be clear that the idea is not simply to turn away from the present. One cannot afford such a maneuver, and if one thinks one can, one has resisted the present in favor of folly. The present must be known in relation to the alternative temporal and spatial maps provided by a perception of past and future affective worlds.

Utopian thinking gets maligned for being naively romantic. Of course, much of it has been naive. We know that any history of actualized utopian communities would be replete with failures. No one, other than perhaps Marx himself, has been more cognizant about this fact than Bloch. But it is through this Marxian tradition, not beside or against it, that the problem of the present is addressed. In the following quotation we begin to glimpse the importance of the Marxian tradition for the here and now.

Marxism, above all, was first to bring a concept of knowledge into the world that essentially refers to Becomeness, but to the tendency of what is coming up; thus for the first time it brings future into our conceptual and theoretical grasp. Such recognition of tendency is necessary to remember, and to open up the No-Longer-Conscious.¹⁶

Thus we see Bloch's model for approaching the past. The idea is not to attempt merely to represent it with simplistic strokes. More nearly, it is important to call on the past, to animate it, understanding that the past has a

performative nature, which is to say that rather than being static and fixed, the past does things. It is in this very way that the past is performative. Following a Blochian thread, it seems important to put the past into play with the present, calling into view the tautological nature of the present. The present, which is almost exclusively conceived through the parameters of straight time, is a self-naturalizing endeavor. Opening up a queer past is enabled by Marxian ideological tactics. Bloch explains that

Marxism thus rescued the rational core of utopia and made it concrete as well as the core of the still idealistic tendency of dialectics. Romanticism does not understand utopia, not even its own, but utopia that has become concrete understands Romanticism and makes inroads into it, in so far as archaic material in its archetypes and work, contain a not yet voiced, undischarged element.¹⁷

Bloch invites us to look to this no-longer-conscious, a past that is akin to what Derrida described as the trace. These ephemeral traces, flickering illuminations from other times and places, are sites that may indeed appear merely romantic, even to themselves. Nonetheless they assist those of us who wish to follow queerness's promise, its still unrealized potential, to see something else, a component that the German aesthetician would call *cultural surplus*. I build on this idea to suggest that the surplus is both cultural and *affective*. More distinctly, I point to a queer feeling of hope in the face of hopeless heteronormative maps of the present where futurity is indeed the province of normative reproduction. This hope takes on the philosophical contours of idealism.

A queer utopian hermeneutic would thus be queer in its aim to look for queer relational formations within the social. It is also about this temporal project that I align with queerness, a work shaped by its idealist trajectory; indeed it is the work of not settling for the present, of asking and looking beyond the here and now. Such a hermeneutic would then be *epistemologically and ontologically humble* in that it would not claim the epistemological certitude of a queerness that we simply "know" but, instead, strain to activate the no-longer-conscious and to extend a glance toward that which is forward-dawning, anticipatory illuminations of the not-yet-conscious. The purpose of such temporal maneuvers is to wrest ourselves from the present's stultifying hold, to know our queerness as a belonging in particularity that is not dictated or organized around the spirit of political impasse that characterizes the present.

Jameson has suggested that for Bloch the present is provincial.¹⁸ This spatialization of time makes sense in relation to the history of utopian thought, most famously described as an island by Thomas More. To mark the present as provincial is not to ridicule or demean the spots on queerness's map that do not signify as metropolitan. The here and now has an opposite number, and that would be the then and there. I have argued that the *then* that disrupts the tyranny of the *now* is both past and future. Along those lines, the here that is unnamed yet always implicit in the metropolitan hub requires the challenge of a there that can be regional or global. The transregional or the global as modes of spatial organization potentially displace the hegemony of an unnamed here that is always dominated by the shadow of the nation-state and its mutable and multiple corporate interests. While *globalization* is a term that mostly defines a worldwide system of manufactured asymmetry and ravenous exploitation, it also signals the encroaching of the there on the here in ways that are worth considering.

The Third World Gay Revolution group was an organization that grew out of the larger Gay Liberation Front at roughly the same time that the Radicalesbians also spun off from the larger group in the spring/summer of 1970. Although they took the name Third World Gay Revolution, the group's members have been described by a recent historian as people of color.¹⁹ Their own usage of the term "Third World" clearly connotes their deep identification with the global phenomenon that was decolonization. It is therefore imperative to remember this moment from the no-longer-conscious that transcended a gay and lesbian activist nationalist imaginary. For Heidegger "time and space are not co-ordinate. Time is prior to space."²⁰ If time is prior to space, then we can view both the force of the no-longer-conscious and the not-yet-here as potentially bearing on the *here* of naturalized space and time. Thus, at the center of cultural texts such as the manifesto "All Together Now (A Blueprint for the Movement)" we find an ideological document, and its claim to the pragmatic is the product of a short-sighted here that fails to include anything but an entitled and privileged world. The there of queer utopia cannot simply be that of the faltering yet still influential nation-state.

This is then to say that the distinctions between here and there, and the world that the here and now organizes, are not fixed—they are already becoming undone in relation to a forward-dawning futurity. It is important to understand that a critique of our homosexual present is not an attack on what many people routinely name as lesbian or gay but, instead, an appraisal of how queerness is still forming, or in many crucial ways formless.

Queerness's form is utopian. Ultimately, we must insist on a queer futurity because the present is so poisonous and insolvent. A resource that cannot be discounted to know the future is indeed the no-longer-conscious, that thing or place that may be extinguished but not yet discharged in its utopian potentiality.

Bloch explains the Kantian nature of his project as the "saving" of a "rationalist core." It is worth remarking that Kant's rationalism is not merely held up in this instance; indeed *rationalism itself is refunctioned*. No longer is rationalism the ruler used by universalism to measure time and space. In Bloch's work rationalism is transformed via a political urgency. Rationalism is not dismissed but is instead unyoked from a politics of the pragmatic. Herbert Marcuse discussed the "irrational element in rationality" as an important component of industrial society's nature. Irrationality flourishes in "established institutions"—marriage is perhaps one of the very best examples of an institution that hampers rational advancement and the not-yet-imagined versions of freedom that heteronormative and homonormative culture proscribe.²¹ In Marcuse's analysis the advancements in rationality made by technological innovations were counteracted by gay pragmatic political strategies that tell us not to dream of other spatial/temporal coordinates but instead to dwell in a broken-down present. This homosexual pragmatism takes on the practical contours of the homonormativity so powerfully described by Lisa Duggan in her treatise on neoliberalism, *The Twilight of Equality*:²² Within the hermeneutical scope of a queer utopian inquiry rationalism is reignited with an affective spark of idealist thought.

Abstract utopias are indeed dead ends, too often vectoring into the escapist disavowal of our current moment. But a turn to what Bloch calls the no-longer-conscious is an essential route for the purpose of arriving at the not-yet-here. This maneuver, a turn to the past for the purpose of critiquing the present, is propelled by a desire for futurity. Queer futurity does not underplay desire. In fact it is all about desire, desire for both larger semiabstractions such as a better world or freedom but also, more immediately, better relations within the social that include better sex and more pleasure. Some theorists of postmodernity, such as David Harvey, have narrated sex radicalism as a turning away from a politics of the collectivity toward the individualistic and the petty.²³ In his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* Harvey plots what he views as the condition of neoliberalism. In his account, "The narcissistic exploration of self, sexuality and identity became the leitmotif of bourgeois urban culture." In this

account, the hard-fought struggles for sexual liberation are reduced to a "demand for lifestyle diversification." Harvey's critique pits the "working-class and ethnic immigrant New York" against elites who pursue "lifestyle diversification."²⁴ The experiences of working-class or ethnic-racial queers are beyond his notice or interest. Harvey's failing is a too-common error for some, but not all, members of a recalcitrant, unreconstructed North American left. The rejection of queer and feminist politics represented by Harvey and other reductive left thinkers is a deviation away from the Frankfurt School's interest in the transformative force of *eros* and its implicit relationship to political desire. The failings and limits of commentators such as Harvey have certainly made queer and utopian thinkers alike wary of left thought. Thus, I suggest a turn to previous modes of Marxian philosophy, such as the work of Marcuse or Bloch. The point is not to succumb to the phobic panic that muddles left thinking or to unimaginative invocations of the rationalism cited by neoliberal gays and lesbians. The point is once again to pull from the past, the no-longer-conscious, described and represented by Bloch today, to push beyond the impasse of the present.

I swerve away from my critique of the failures of imagination in the LGBT activist enterprises to Harvey for a very specific purpose. Harvey represented a fairly more expansive and nuanced critique in his previous work on postmodernity, writing that was thoughtfully critiqued by queer theorists such as Judith Halberstam.²⁵ But Harvey's work has become, like that of many Marxist scholars, all too ready to dismiss or sacrifice questions of sexuality and gender. Furthermore, these mostly white writers have, as in the example I cited in the preceding paragraph, been quick to posit race and class as real antagonisms within a larger socioeconomic struggle and sexuality and gender as merely "lifestyle diversification." In many ways they are performing a function that is the direct opposite of white neoliberal queers who studiously avoid the question of ethnic, racial, class, ability, or gender difference. This correspondence is representative of a larger political impasse that I understand as being the toll of pragmatic politics and antiutopian thought.

Concrete utopias remake rationalism, unlinking it from the provincial and pragmatic politics of the present. Taking back a rationalist core, in the way in which Bloch suggests we do in relation to romanticism, is to insist on an ordering of life that is not dictated by the spatial/temporal coordinates of straight time, a time and space matrix in which, unfortunately, far too many gays, lesbians, and other purportedly "queer" people reside.

To see queerness as horizon is to perceive it as a modality of ecstatic time in which the temporal stranglehold that I describe as straight time is interrupted or stepped out of. Ecstatic time is signaled at the moment one feels ecstasy, announced perhaps in a scream or grunt of pleasure, and more importantly during moments of contemplation when one looks back at a scene from one's past, present, or future. Opening oneself up to such a perception of queerness as manifestation in and of ecstatic time offers queers much more than the meager offerings of pragmatic gay and lesbian politics. Seeing queerness as horizon rescues and emboldens concepts such as freedom that have been withered by the touch of neoliberal thought and gay assimilationist politics. Pragmatic gay politics present themselves as rational and ultimately more doable. Such politics and their proponents often attempt to describe themselves as not being ideological, yet they are extremely ideological and, more precisely, are representative of a decayed ideological institution known as marriage. Rationalism need not be given over to gay neoliberals who attempt to sell a cheapened and degraded version of freedom. The freedom that is offered by an LGBT position that does not bend to straight time's gravitational pull is akin to one of Heidegger's descriptions of freedom as unboundness. And more often than not the "rhetorical" deployment of the pragmatic leads to a *not-doing*, an antiperformativity. Doing, performing, engaging the performative as force of and for futurity is queerness's bent and ideally the way to queerness.²⁶

2

Ghosts of Public Sex

Utopian Longings, Queer Memories

Witnessing Queer Sex Utopia

In 1989 I saw Douglas Crimp give a rousing and moving talk titled "Mourning and Militancy" at the second national Lesbian and Gay Studies conference, held at Yale University.¹ Crimp explained the workings of mourning in queer culture as he cataloged a vast, lost gay male lifeworld that was seemingly devastated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I want to call attention here to a specific moment in Crimp's talk in which an idea of Freud's is put in conversation with queer spaces and practices from a historically specific gay male lifeworld:

Freud tells us that mourning is the reaction not only to the death of a loved person, but also "to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as a fatherland, liberty, and ideal . . ." Can we be allowed to include, in this "civilized" list, the ideal of perverse sexual pleasure itself rather than one stemming from its sublimation? Alongside the dismal toll of death, what many of us have lost is a culture of sexual possibility: back rooms, tea rooms, movie houses, and baths; the trucks, the piers, the ramble, the dunes. Sex was everywhere for us, and everything we wanted to venture: Golden showers and water sports, cocksucking and rimming, fucking and fist fucking. Now our untamed impulses are either proscribed once again or shielded from us by latex. Even Crisco, the lube we used because it was edible, is now forbidden because it breaks down rubber. Sex toys are no longer added enhancements; they're safer substitutes.²

It has been seven years since the zenith of AIDS cultural criticism when Crimp wrote these words. One thing that has become clear at this moment in the epidemic is that the ideal spaces and practices that Crimp described never completely ceased to be. During the age of AIDS gay men have managed to maintain our queer sex, our spaces, and, to some lesser