

Cruising Utopia

The Then and There of Queer Futurity

José Esteban Muñoz



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

New York and London

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

New York and London

www.nyupress.org

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Muñoz, José Esteban

Cruising utopia : the then and there of queer futurity / José Esteban Muñoz.

p. cm. — (Sexual cultures)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8147-5727-7 (cl : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8147-5727-8 (cl : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-8147-5728-4 (pb : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8147-5728-6 (pb : alk. paper)

1. Queer theory. 2. Utopias. 3. Homosexuality and art. 4. Performance art. I. Title.

HQ76.25.M86 2009

306.7601—dc22 2009021714

New York University Press books are printed on acid-free paper,
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Manufactured in the United States of America

c 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

p 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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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.

That is the argument I make in *Cruising Utopia*, significantly influenced by the thinking and language of the German idealist tradition emanating from the work of Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. An aspect of that line of thought is concretized in the critical philosophy associated with the Frankfurt School, most notably in the work of Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse. Those three thinkers within the Marxist tradition have all grappled with the complexities of the utopian. Yet the voice and logic that most touches me, most animates my thinking, is that of the philosopher Ernst Bloch.

More loosely associated with the Frankfurt School than the aforementioned philosophers, Bloch's work was taken up by both liberation theology and the Parisian student movements of 1968. He was born in 1885 to an assimilated Jewish railway employee in Ludwigshafen, Germany. During World War II, Bloch fled Nazi Germany, eventually settling for a time in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After the war Bloch returned to East Germany, where his Marxian philosophy was seen as too revisionary. At the same time he was derided for his various defenses of Stalinism by left commentators throughout Europe and the United States. He participated in the intellectual circles of Georg Simmel and, later, Max Weber. His friendship and sometime rivalries with Adorno, Benjamin, and Georg Lukács are noted in European left intellectual history.¹ Bloch's political inconsistencies and style, which has been described as both elliptical and lyrical, have led Bloch to an odd and uneven reception. Using Bloch for a project that understands itself as part of queer critique is also a risky move because it has been rumored that Bloch did not hold very progressive opinions on issues of gender and sexuality.² These biographical facts are beside the point because I am using Bloch's theory not as orthodoxy but instead to create an opening in queer thought. I am using the occasion and example of Bloch's thought, along with that of Adorno, Marcuse, and other philosophers, as a portal to another mode of queer critique that deviates from dominant practices of thought existing within queer critique today. In my estimation a turn to a certain critical idealism can be an especially useful hermeneutic.

For some time now I have been working with Bloch's three-volume philosophical treatise *The Principle of Hope*.³ In his exhaustive book Bloch considers an expanded idea of the utopian that surpasses Thomas More's formulation of utopias based in fantasy. *The Principle of Hope* offers an encyclopedic approach to the phenomenon of utopia. In that text he discusses all manner of utopia including, but not limited to, social, literary,

technological, medical, and geographic utopias. Bloch has had a shakier reception in the U.S. academy than have some of his friends and acquaintances—such as Benjamin. For me, Bloch's utility has much to do with the way he theorizes utopia. He makes a critical distinction between abstract utopias and concrete utopias, valuing abstract utopias only insofar as they pose a critique function that fuels a critical and potentially transformative political imagination.⁴ Abstract utopias falter for Bloch because they are untethered from any historical consciousness. Concrete utopias are relational to historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized or potential. In our everyday life abstract utopias are akin to banal optimism. (Recent calls for gay or queer optimism seem too close to elite homosexual evasion of politics.) Concrete utopias can also be daydream-like, but they are the hopes of a collective, an emergent group, or even the solitary oddball who is the one who dreams for many. Concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope. In a 1961 lecture titled "Can Hope Be Disappointed?" Bloch describes different aspects of educated hope: "Not only hope's affect (with its pendant, fear) but even more so, hope's methodology (with its pendant, memory) dwells in the region of the not-yet, a place where entrance and, above all, final content are marked by an enduring indeterminacy."⁵ This idea of indeterminacy in both affect and methodology speaks to a critical process that is attuned to what Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben describes as potentiality.⁶ Hope along with its other, fear, are affective structures that can be described as anticipatory.

Cruising Utopia's first move is to describe a modality of queer utopianism that I locate within a historically specific nexus of cultural production before, around, and slightly after the Stonewall rebellion of 1969. A Blochian approach to aesthetic theory is invested in describing the anticipatory illumination of art, which can be characterized as the process of identifying certain properties that can be detected in representational practices helping us to see the not-yet-conscious.⁷ This not-yet-conscious is knowable, to some extent, as a utopian feeling. When Bloch describes the anticipatory illumination of art, one can understand this illumination as a surplus of both affect and meaning within the aesthetic. I track utopian feelings throughout the work of that Stonewall period. I attempt to counteract the logic of the historical case study by following an associative mode of analysis that leaps between one historical site and the present. To that end my writing brings in my own personal experience as another way to ground historical queer sites with lived queer experience. My intention in this aspect of the writing is not simply to wax anecdotally but, instead,

to reach for other modes of associative argumentation and evidencing. Thus, when considering the work of a contemporary club performer such as Kevin Aviance, I engage a poem by Elizabeth Bishop and a personal recollection about movement and gender identity. When looking at Kevin McCarty's photographs of contemporary queer and punk bars, I consider accounts about pre-Stonewall gay bars in Ohio and my personal story about growing up queer and punk in suburban Miami. Most of this book is fixated on a cluster of sites in the New York City of the fifties and sixties that include the New York School of poetry, the Judson Memorial Church's dance theater, and Andy Warhol's Factory. *Cruising Utopia* looks to figures from those temporal maps that have been less attended to than O'Hara and Warhol have been. Yet it seems useful to open this book by briefly discussing moments in the work of both the poet and the pop artist for the purposes of illustrating the project's primary approach to the cultural and theoretical material it traverses. At the center of *Cruising Utopia* there is the idea of hope, which is both a critical affect and a methodology.

Bloch offers us hope as a hermeneutic, and from the point of view of political struggles today, such a critical optic is nothing short of necessary in order to combat the force of political pessimism. It is certainly difficult to argue for hope or critical utopianism at a moment when cultural analysis is dominated by an antiutopianism often functioning as a poor substitute for actual critical intervention. But before addressing the question of antiutopianism, it is worthwhile to sketch a portrait of a critical mode of hope that represents the concrete utopianism discussed here.

Jill Dolan offers her own partially Blochian-derived mode of performance studies critique in *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*.⁸ Dolan's admirable book focuses on live theater as a site for "finding hope." My approach to hope as a critical methodology can be best described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision. I see my project as resonating alongside a group of recent texts that have strategically displaced the live object of performance. Some texts that represent this aspect of the performance studies project include Gavin Butt's excellent analysis of the queer performative force of gossip in the prewar New York art world,⁹ Jennifer Doyle's powerful treatise on the formative and deforming force of "sex objects" in performance and visual studies,¹⁰ and Fred Moten's beautiful *In the Break*, with its emphasis on providing a soaring description of the resistance of the object.¹¹ I invoke those three texts in an effort to locate my own analysis in relation to the larger interdisciplinary project of performance studies.

The modern world is a thing of wonder for Bloch, who considers astonishment to be an important philosophical mode of contemplation.¹² In a way, we can see this sense of astonishment in the work of both Warhol and O'Hara. Warhol was fond of making speech acts such as "wow" and "gee." Although this aspect of Warhol's performance of self is often described as an insincere performance of naiveté, I instead argue that it is a manifestation of the utopian feeling that is integral to much of Warhol's art, speech, and writing. O'Hara, as even his casual readers know, was irrepressibly upbeat. What if we think of these modes of being in the world—Warhol's liking of things, his "wows" and "gees," and O'Hara's poetry being saturated with feelings of fun and appreciation—as a mode of utopian feeling but also as hope's methodology? This methodology is manifest in what Bloch described as a form of "astonished contemplation."¹³ Perhaps we can understand the campy fascination that both men had with celebrity as being akin to this sense of astonishment. Warhol's blue Liz Taylors or O'Hara's perfect tribute to another starlet, in the poem "Lana Turner Has Collapsed," offer, through glamour and astonishment, a kind of transport or a reprieve from what Bloch called the "darkness of the lived instant."¹⁴ Astonishment helps one surpass the limitations of an alienating presentness and allows one to see a different time and place. Much of each artist's work performs this astonishment in the world. O'Hara is constantly astonished by the city. He celebrates the city's beauty and vastness, and in his work one often finds this sense of astonishment in quotidian things. O'Hara's poems display urban landscapes of astonishment. The quotidian object has this same affective charge in Warhol's visual work. Bloch theorized that one could detect wish-landscapes in painting and poetry.¹⁵ Such landscapes extend into the territory of futurity.

Let us begin by considering Warhol's *Coke Bottle* alongside O'Hara's poem "Having a Coke with You":

Having a Coke with You

is even more fun than going to San Sebastian, Irún, Hendaye, Biarritz,

Bayonne

or being sick to my stomach on the Travesera de Gracia in Barcelona

partly because in your orange shirt you look like a better happier St.

Sebastian

partly because of my love for you, partly because of your love for

yoghurt

partly because of the fluorescent orange tulips around the birches

partly because of the secrecy our smiles take on before people and
 statuary
 it is hard to believe when I'm with you that there can be anything as
 still
 as solemn as unpleasantly definitive as statuary when right in front of it
 in the warm New York 4 o'clock light we are drifting back and forth
 between each other like a tree breathing through its spectacles

and the portrait show seems to have no faces in it at all, just paint
 you suddenly wonder why in the world anyone ever did them
 I look
 at you and I would rather look at you than all the portraits in the
 world
 except possibly for the *Polish Rider* occasionally and anyway it's in the
 Frick
 which thank heavens you haven't gone to yet so we can go together
 the first time
 and the fact that you move so beautifully more or less takes care of
 Futurism
 just as at home I never think of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* or
 at a rehearsal a single drawing of Leonardo or Michelangelo that used
 to wow me
 and what good does all the research of the Impressionists do them
 when they never got the right person to stand near the tree when the
 sun sank
 or for that matter Marino Marini when he didn't pick the rider as
 carefully
 as the horse
 it seems they were all cheated of some marvellous experience
 which is not going to go wasted on me which is why I'm telling you
 about it¹⁶

This poem tells us of a quotidian act, having a Coke with somebody, that signifies a vast lifeworld of queer relationality, an encrypted sociality, and a utopian potentiality. The quotidian act of sharing a Coke, consuming a common commodity with a beloved with whom one shares secret smiles, trumps fantastic moments in the history of art. Though the poem is clearly about the present, it is a present that is now squarely the past and in its queer relationality promises a future. The fun of having a Coke is a mode

of exhilaration in which one views a restructured sociality. The poem tells us that mere beauty is insufficient for the aesthete speaker, which echoes Bloch's own aesthetic theories concerning the utopian function of art. If art's limit were beauty—according to Bloch—it is simply not enough.¹⁷ The utopian function is enacted by a certain surplus in the work that promises a futurity, something that is not quite here. O'Hara first mentions being wowed by a high-art object before he describes being wowed by the lover with whom he shares a Coke. Here, through queer-aesthete art consumption and queer relationality the writer describes moments imbued with a feeling of forward-dawning futurity.

The anticipatory illumination of certain objects is a kind of potentiality that is open, indeterminate, like the affective contours of hope itself. This illumination seems to radiate from Warhol's own depiction of Coke bottles. Those silk screens, which I discuss in chapter 7, emphasize the product's stylish design line. Potentiality for Bloch is often located in the ornamental. The ornament can be seen as a proto-pop phenomenon. Bloch warns us that mechanical reproduction, at first glance, voids the ornamental. But he then suggests that the ornamental and the potentiality he associates with it cannot be seen as directly oppositional to technology or mass production.¹⁸ The philosopher proposes the example of a modern bathroom as this age's exemplary site to see a utopian potentiality, the site where nonfunctionality and total functionality merge.¹⁹ Part of what Warhol's study of the Coke bottle and other mass-produced objects helps one to see is this particular tension between functionality and nonfunctionality, the promise and potentiality of the ornament. In the *Philosophy of Andy Warhol* the artist muses on the radically democratic potentiality he detects in Coca-Cola.

What's great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good. Liz Taylor knows it, the President knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it.²⁰

This is the point where Warhol's particular version of the queer utopian impulse crosses over with O'Hara's. The Coke bottle is the everyday



Drawings, 1950s, *Still-Life (Flowers)*, ballpoint ink on Manila paper, 16 3/4 x 13 7/8 in. (42.5 x 35.2 cm), Andy Warhol (artist), The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Founding Collection, Contribution, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., © 2008 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts/ARS, New York.

material that is represented in a different frame, laying bare its aesthetic dimension and the potentiality that it represents. In its everyday manifestation such an object would represent alienated production and consumption. But Warhol and O'Hara both detect something else in the object of a Coke bottle and in the act of drinking a Coke with someone. What we glean from Warhol's philosophy is the understanding that utopia exists in the quotidian. Both queer cultural workers are able to detect an opening and indeterminacy in what for many people is a locked-down dead commodity.

Agamben's reading of Aristotle's *De Anima* makes the crucial point that the opposition between potentiality and actuality is a structuring binarism in Western metaphysics.²¹ Unlike a possibility, a thing that simply might happen, a potentiality is a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense. Looking at a poem written in the 1960s, I see a certain potentiality, which at that point had not been fully manifested, a relational field where men could love each other outside the institutions of heterosexuality and share a world through the act of drinking a beverage with each other. Using Warhol's musing on Coca-Cola in tandem with O'Hara's words, I see the past and the potentiality imbued within an object, the ways it might represent a mode of being and feeling that was then not quite there but nonetheless an opening. Bloch would posit that such utopian feelings can and regularly will be disappointed.²² They are nonetheless indispensable to the act of imaging transformation.

This fear of both hope and utopia, as affective structures and approaches to challenges within the social, has been prone to disappointment, making this critical approach difficult. As Bloch would insist, hope can be disappointed. But such disappointment needs to be risked if certain impassés are to be resisted. A certain affective reanimation needs to transpire if a disabling political pessimism is to be displaced. Another way of understanding Bloch's notion of hope is briefly to invoke the work of J. L. Austin. In *How to Do Things with Words* Austin displaces the true/false dichotomy that structures Western metaphysics with the much more conceptually supple distinction between the felicitous and infelicitous.²³ Austin's terms are derived from understanding the everyday speech act. Felicitous speech acts are linguistic articulations that *do* something as well as say something. But as Austin maps out the life of the felicitous speech act we see all the things that eventually go wrong and the failure or infelicity that is built into the speech act. Bloch's hope resonates with Austin's

notion of the felicitous insofar as it is always eventually disappointed. The eventual disappointment of hope is not a reason to forsake it as a critical thought process, in the same way that even though we can know in advance that felicity of language ultimately falters, it is nonetheless essential.

The moment in which I write this book the critical imagination is in peril. The dominant academic climate into which this book is attempting to intervene is dominated by a dismissal of political idealism. Shutting down utopia is an easy move. It is perhaps even easier than smearing psychoanalytic or deconstructive reading practices with the charge of nihilism. The antiutopian critic of today has a well-worn war chest of post-structuralist pieties at her or his disposal to shut down lines of thought that delineate the concept of critical utopianism. Social theory that invokes the concept of utopia has always been vulnerable to charges of naïveté, impracticality, or lack of rigor. While participating on the Modern Language Association panel titled “The Anti-Social Thesis in Queer Theory,” I argued for replacing a faltering antirelational mode of queer theory with a queer utopianism that highlights a renewed investment in social theory (one that calls on not only relationality but also futurity). One of my co-panelists responded to my argument by exclaiming that there was nothing new or radical about utopia. To some degree that is true, insofar as I am calling on a well-established tradition of critical idealism. I am also not interested in a notion of the radical that merely connotes some notion of extremity, righteousness, or affirmation of newness. My investment in utopia and hope is my response to queer thinking that embraces a politics of the here and now that is underlined by what I consider to be today’s hamstrung pragmatic gay agenda. Some critics would call this cryptopragmatic approach tarrying with the negative. I would not. To some degree this book’s argument is a response to the polemic of the “antirelation.” Although the antirelational approach assisted in dismantling an anticritical understanding of queer community, it nonetheless quickly replaced the romance of community with the romance of singularity and negativity. The version of queer social relations that this book attempts to envision is critical of the communitarian as an absolute value and of its negation as an alternative all-encompassing value. In this sense the work of contemporary French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy and his notion of “being singular plural”²⁴ seems especially important. For Nancy the post-phenomenological category of being singular plural addresses the way in which the singularity that marks a singular existence is always coterminously plural—which is to say that an entity registers as both particular

in its difference but at the same time always relational to other singularities. Thus, if one attempts to render the ontological signature of queerness through Nancy's critical apparatus, it needs to be grasped as both antirelational and relational.

Antisocial queer theories are inspired by Leo Bersani's book *Homos*, in which he first theorized the so-called thesis of antirelationality.²⁵ I have long believed that the antirelational turn in queer studies was a partial response to critical approaches to a mode of queer studies that argued for the relational and contingent value of sexuality as a category. Many critics have followed Bersani's antirelational turn, but arguably none as successfully as Lee Edelman in his book *No Future*.²⁶ I have great respect for *No Future*, and Edelman's earlier book offers an adroit reading of James Baldwin's *Just Above My Head*.²⁷ *No Future* is a brilliant and nothing short of inspiring polemic. Edelman clearly announces his mode of argumentation as being in the realm of the ethical, and this introduction is an anticipation of a reanimated political critique and should be read as an idiosyncratic allegiance to the polemical force of his argument and nothing like an easy dismissal. His argument and the seductive sway of the antirelational thesis energizes my argument in key ways.

Yet I nonetheless contend that most of the work with which I disagree under the provisional title of "antirelational thesis" moves to imagine an escape or denouncement of relationality as first and foremost a distancing of queerness from what some theorists seem to think of as the contamination of race, gender, or other particularities that taint the purity of sexuality as a singular trope of difference. In other words, antirelational approaches to queer theory are romances of the negative, wishful thinking, and investments in deferring various dreams of difference.

To some extent *Cruising Utopia* is a polemic that argues against antirelationality by insisting on the essential need for an understanding of queerness as collectivity. I respond to Edelman's assertion that the future is the province of the child and therefore not for the queers by arguing that queerness is primarily about futurity and hope. That is to say that queerness is always in the horizon. I contend that if queerness is to have any value whatsoever, it must be viewed as being visible only in the horizon. My argument is therefore interested in critiquing the ontological certitude that I understand to be partnered with the politics of presentist and pragmatic contemporary gay identity. This mode of ontological certitude is often represented through a narration of disappearance and negativity that boils down to another game of fort-da.

What then does a Blochian approach offer instead of a powerful critical impulse toward negation? Bloch found solid grounds for a critique of a totalizing and naturalizing idea of the present in his concept of the no-longer-conscious.²⁸ A turn to the no-longer-conscious enabled a critical hermeneutics attuned to comprehending the not-yet-here. This temporal calculus performed and utilized the past and the future as armaments to combat the devastating logic of the world of the here and now, a notion of nothing existing outside the sphere of the current moment, a version of reality that naturalizes cultural logics such as capitalism and heteronormativity. Concomitantly, Bloch also sharpens our critical imagination with his emphasis on hope. An antiutopian might understand himself as being critical in rejecting hope, but in the rush to denounce it, he would be missing the point that hope is spawned of a critical investment in utopia, which is nothing like naive but, instead, profoundly resistant to the stultifying temporal logic of a broken-down present. My turn to Bloch, hope, and utopia is a challenge to theoretical insights that have been stunted by the lull of presentness and various romances of negativity and have thus become routine and resoundingly anticritical. This antiutopian theoretical faltering is often nothing more than rote invocation of poststructuralist pieties. The critical practices often summarized as poststructuralism inform my analysis as much as any other source from which I draw. The corrective I wish to make by turning to utopia is attuned to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's critique of the way in which paranoid reading practices have become so nearly automatic in queer studies that they have, in many ways, ceased to be critical.²⁹ Antiutopianism in queer studies, which is more often than not intertwined with antirelationality, has led many scholars to an impasse wherein they cannot see futurity for the life of them.³⁰ Utopian readings are aligned with what Sedgwick would call reparative hermeneutics.³¹

Although *Cruising Utopia* routinely rejects what I describe as a "certain romance of negativity," I do not want to dismiss the negative *tout court*. Indeed I find some theories of the negative to be important resources for the thinking of a critical utopianism. For example, Paolo Virno elegantly describes the negation of the negation in *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negation*. Virno resists an oppositional logic that clouds certain deployments of negativity³² and instead speaks to what he calls a negation that functions as a "modality of the possible," "a regression to the infinite."³³ Virno sees a potentiality in negative affects that can be reshaped by negation and made to work in the service of enacting a mode of critical possibility. Virno's theory of the negation of negation productively lines up

with Shoshana Felman's theory of radical negativity: "Radical negativity (or saying 'no') belongs neither to negation, nor to opposition nor to correction ('normalization'), nor to contradiction (of positive and negative, normal and abnormal, 'serious' and 'unserious,' 'clarity' and 'obscurity')—it belongs precisely to scandal: to the scandal of their nonopposition."³⁴ Again, my argument with the celebration of negation in antirelational queer critique is its participation in what can only be seen as a binary logic of opposition. Radical negativity, like the negation of negation, offers us a mode of understanding negativity that is starkly different from the version of the negative proposed by the queer antirelationist. Here the negative becomes the resource for a certain mode of queer utopianism.

Once again I turn to a literary example with the hope of describing the performative force of that particular queer utopian writing project. A paragraph from Eileen Myles's extraordinary memoir of coming into queer consciousness in the 1960s and '70s is especially salient for my purposes. *Chelsea Girls* is a ribald text full of fucking, drinking, and other modes of potentially lyrical self-destruction. Near the end of this testament to the aching madness of lesbian desire, a powerful yet diminished figure briefly enters the frame. At this point the young poet has become the part-time caretaker for the great queer voice of the New York School of poetry—James Schuyler. Myles attended to the old and infirmed Schuyler in his residential room at the legendary Chelsea Hotel.

From his bed he ran the show. It's a talent a few people I know have, mostly Scorpios which he was. You'd be hesitatingly starting your story, or like a cartoon character running right in when you realized the long wharf you were taking a short run on, his attention was not there. It was hopeless. The yellow in his room became brighter, the air became crinkly your throat became parched—you felt you had simply become a jerk. The presence of his attention was so strong, so deeply passive—such a thing to bathe your tiny desperate words in that when it was gone you had to stop and hover in silence again. Then he might begin, or perhaps you could come up with something else once the brittleness, the void passed. You had to stay silent for a very long time someday. He was like music, Jimmy was, and you had to be like music too to be with him, but understand in his room he was conductor. He directed the yellow air in room 625. It was marvelous to be around. It was huge and impassive. What emerged in the silence was a strong picture, more akin to a child or a beautiful animal.³⁵

In the spirit of the counterpolemical swerve that this introduction has been taking I want to suggest that this passage could be seen as representing an anti-antirelationality that is both weirdly reparative and a prime example of the queer utopianism for which I am arguing. Anti-antiutopianism is a phrase that I borrow from Fredric Jameson and index when marking this passage in Myles as anti-antirelational.³⁶ Anti-antiutopianism is not about a merely affirmative or positive investment in utopia. Gay and lesbian studies can too easily snap into the basically reactionary posture of denouncing a critical imagination that is not locked down by a shortsighted denial of anything but the here and now of this moment. This is the antiutopian stance that characterizes the antirelational turn. The prime examples of queer antirelationality in Bersani's *Homos*, Edelman's *No Future*, and all the other proponents of this turn in queer criticism are scenes of jouissance, which are always described as shattering orgasmic ruptures often associated with gay male sexual abandon or self-styled risky behavior. Maybe the best example of an anti-antirelational scene that I could invoke would be another spectacular instance of sexual transgression. The moments of pornographic communal rapture in Samuel Delany's work come most immediately to mind.³⁷ But instead I choose to focus on this relational line between a young white lesbian and an older gay white man because it does the kind of crossing that antirelational theorists are so keen on eschewing or ignoring.

Myles is paid to take care of Schuyler. On the level of political economy this relationship is easy to account for. But if we think of Delany's championing of interclass contact within a service economy and the affective surplus it offers, the passage opens up quite beautifully.³⁸ The younger poet notes a sense of "hopelessness" and feeling like a jerk as she works to take care of the older man, whose attention waxes and wanes. The relationality is not about simple positivity or affirmation. It is filled with all sorts of bad feelings, moments of silence and brittleness. But beyond the void that stands between the two poets, there is something else, a surplus that is manifest in the complexity of their moments of contact. Through quotidian service-economy interactions of care and simple conversation the solitary scene of an old man and his young assistant is transformed. A rhythm that is not simple relationality or routine antirelationality is established. This is the music that is Jimmy, this is the music of Eileen, this is the hum of their contact. This is Jimmy directing "the yellow air in room 625." It is Eileen watching, listening. It is the sense of contemplative awe that I have identified in Warhol's "wows" and O'Hara manic upbeat poetic cadence.

It is the mood of reception in which Bloch asks us to participate. It is the being singular plural of queerness. It is like the radical negativity that Shoshana Felman invokes when trying to describe the failure that is intrinsic in J. L. Austin's mapping of the performative. There is a becoming both animal and child that Myles ultimately glimpses in an infirmed Schuyler. In this passage we see the anticipatory illumination of the utopian canceling the relentless shadow play of absence and presence on which the antirelational thesis rests. The affective tone of this passage lights the way to the reparative.

This book has been written in nothing like a vacuum. I have written beside many beloved collaborators, interlocutors, and comrades. And while these friends have been a source of propulsion for me, they have expressed qualms about some of the theoretical moves I make in *Cruising Utopia*. For example, some friends have asked me why I have chosen to work with the more eccentric corpus of Bloch and not Benjamin's more familiar takes on time, history, or loss. I have also been asked how I could turn to a text such as Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* after Michel Foucault famously critiqued that work in *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. One reader of an earlier draft expressed concern that I take time to talk about Bloch in the context of Marxian thought but do not contextualize Heidegger in relation to Nazism. I have not had any simple or direct answers for these thoughtful readers. Their concerns have made me aware of a need to further situate this project. I have resisted Foucault and Benjamin because their thought has been well mined in the field of queer critique, so much so that these two thinkers' paradigms now feel almost tailor-made for queer studies. I have wanted to look to other sites of theoretical traction. Bloch was noted as not being especially progressive about gender and sexuality, Heidegger's eventual political turn was of course horrific, and Marcuse's insistence on avowedly liberationist rhetoric may seem like something of a throwback. A fairly obvious reading of Foucault's writing on the repressive hypothesis³⁹ would perceive it as a direct response to *Eros and Civilization*. Although Marcuse's version of surplus repression may potentially make reprehension the basic constitutive element for thinking about sex, it nonetheless offers a liberationist and critically utopian take on subjugation. Marcuse and Heidegger were not radical homosexuals like Foucault or romantic melancholics like Benjamin, with whom queers today can easily identify, but my turn to a certain modality of Marxian and phenomenological thought is calibrated to offer new thought images for queer critique, different paths to queerness.

Let me momentarily leave Bloch aside and instead look to the problematic figures of Marcuse and his onetime mentor Heidegger. My interest in their work (and Bloch's, for that matter) pivots from their relationship to the tradition of German idealism. Marcuse's Marxism sought out a philosophical concreteness that, in a provisional fashion, resonated with phenomenology and specifically with the interest of the Heidegger of *Being and Time* in pursuing a concrete philosophy. Both strains of thought rejected German idealism's turn to abstraction and inwardness. Both craved a practical philosophy that described the world in historically salient fashion. Marcuse turned to Heidegger as a philosophical influence and a source during what was described as the crisis in Marxism in Germany during the 1920s. At that point a mode of scientism dominated Marxism and led to an antiphilosophical and mechanistic approach to Marx. Marcuse and Heidegger's relationship famously faltered as Marcuse joined the Frankfurt School and Heidegger eventually joined the Nazi Party on May 1, 1933. Although we can now look at 1928's *Being and Time* and locate philosophical models that were perhaps even then politically right-wing, it is precisely this relational and political failure on which I nonetheless want to dwell. Marcuse saw in Heidegger's ontology a new route to better describe human existence. He was taken with his mentor's notion of historicity and what it could potentially do for what was then a Marxism in duress. Much later, Marx's 1844 manuscripts were discovered, and the concrete philosophical approach understood as historical materialism became fully manifest. Marcuse looked back and realized that the phenomenological version of historicity was not necessary. Although I too have a great disdain for what Heidegger's writing became, I nonetheless look on it as failure worth knowing, a potential that faltered but can be nonetheless reworked in the service of a different politics and understanding of the world. The queer utopianism I am espousing would even look back on Heidegger's notion of futurity in *Being and Time* and attach itself to aspects of that theory of temporality. In Heidegger's version of historicity, historical existence in the past allowed for subjects to act with a mind toward "future possibilities." Thus, futurity becomes history's dominant principle. In a similar fashion I think of queerness as a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity. Is my thesis ultimately corrupted because it finds some kind of historical resonance with the now politically reprehensible Heidegger? Readers can clearly glimpse the trace of Marcuse's renounced mentor in his later writing, and indeed that

problematic influence is part of the theoretical force of his left philosophy. To draw from such sources and ultimately make them serve another project, one that the author himself would have quickly denounced, serves as a critical engagement—critique as willful disloyalty to the master. Heidegger is therefore not the theoretical protagonist of my argument; more nearly, he is an opportunity and occasion to think queerness or queerly. Heidegger is then philosophical master and abject political failure. Thus, we see the thematic of virtuosity and failure that I describe in chapter 10 as queerness's way.

Thinking beyond the moment and against static historicisms is a project that is deeply sympathetic to Judith Halberstam's work on queer temporality's relation to spatiality, most immediately the notion of straight time. It also draws on Carla Freccero's notion of fantasmatic historiography, Elizabeth Freeman's theory of temporal drag, Carolyn Dinshaw's approach to "touching the past," Gayatri Gopinath's theorizing of the time and place of queer diaspora as an "impossible desire," and Jill Dolan's work on the utopian in performance.⁴⁰ Along those lines, although this writing project is not always explicitly about race, it does share much political urgency with a vibrant list of scholars working on the particularities of queers of color and their politics.⁴¹ I have spent some time arguing against the antirelational move in queer theory. Queer feminist and queer of color critiques are the powerful counterweight to the antirelational. I situate my work squarely in those quarters.

Certainly Lauren Berlant's work on the politics of affect in public life has had a structuring influence on this project. In a 1994 essay, titled "'68 or Something," Berlant explained the article's project in a way that resonates with much of the powerful writing that has followed it: "This essay is written in favor of refusing to learn the lessons of history, of refusing to relinquish utopian practice, of refusing the apparently inevitable movement from tragedy to farce that has marked so much of the analysis of social movements generated post '68."⁴² The refusal of empiricist historiography and its denouncement of utopian longing has been an important cue for this project. Berlant's insistence on the refusal of normative affect reminds me of the Great Refusal for which Marcuse called years earlier. *Cruising Utopia* is a critical move that has been forged in relation to the work of Berlant and other scholars with whom I have had the luxury to work under the banner of the Public Feelings Group.⁴³ That theoretical project has had an important activist component thanks to the inspired work of the Chicago Feel Tank.⁴⁴ The very idea that we can even venture

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.

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, short-sighted, 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 Bidy 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 visibility 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 un-
 happiness enough) I
 do. I mean it.
 I really do believe
 future generations can
 live without the in-
 tervals 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 disjuncture 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 aesthete 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 queer-ness'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

Notes

Notes to the Introduction

1. This brief biographical sketch of Bloch draws heavily on Vincent Geoghegan's excellent *Ernst Bloch* (New York: Routledge, 1996). Although *Cruising Utopia* employs some of Bloch's critical thinking, it nonetheless does not pretend to anything like a comprehensive introduction to Blochian theory. Indeed that book has already been written, and it is Geoghegan's.

2. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3 vols., trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 1:146.

5. Ernst Bloch, *Literary Essays*, trans. Andrew Joron and others (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 341.

6. Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

7. Ibid., 178–181.

8. Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

9. Gavin Butt, *Just between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

10. Jennifer Doyle, *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

11. Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

12. See Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), esp. 18–70.

13. Ibid.

14. Bloch, *Literary Essays*, 340.

15. Bloch, *Utopian Function of Art*, 71–77.

16. Frank O'Hara, "Having a Coke with You," in *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, ed. Donald Allen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 360.

17. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, 339.

18. Bloch, *Utopian Function of Art*, 78–102.

19. Ibid.

20. Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 100.
21. Agamben, *Potentialities*, 178–181.
22. Bloch, *Literary Essays*, 339–344.
23. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).
24. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
25. Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
26. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
27. Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
28. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, 144–178.
29. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. Paolo Virno, *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negation*, trans. Isabella Bertolotti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (New York: Semiotext(e), 2008), esp. 9–66.
33. *Ibid.*, 18.
34. Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 104.
35. Eileen Myles, *Chelsea Girls* (New York: Black Sparrow, 1994), 274.
36. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2005).
37. Here I am thinking of Delany's novel *The Mad Man* (New York: Kasak Books/Masquerade Books, 1994).
38. Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999). Delany's paradigm is carefully interrogated by Ricardo Montez, in "Trade' Marks: LA2, Keith Haring, and a Queer Economy of Collaboration," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 3 (2006): 425–440.
39. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), 15–50. Although Foucault's innovation is undeniable, the work of many historians of sexuality who have written in his wake has become rote.
40. Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Elizabeth Freeman,

"Packing History, Count(Er)ing Generations," *New Literary History* 31 (2000): 727–744; Elizabeth Freeman, "Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography," *Social Text* 84–85 (2005): 57–68; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and Dolan, *Utopia in Performance*.

41. For an example of this queer-of-color critique, see the special issue of the journal *Social Text* that I edited with David and Judith Halberstam: "What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?" *Social Text* 84–85 (2005).

42. Lauren Berlant, "68 or Something," *Critical Inquiry* 21, no. 1 (1994): 124–155. Notable publications by Berlant that followed this earlier essay include *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); and *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

43. Along with Berlant's work, some other work that exemplifies the Public Feelings project includes Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

44. See the group's website, www.feeltankchicago.net.

45. See Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Third World Gay Revolution, "Manifesto of the Third World Gay Revolution," in *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, ed. Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 367.

2. Evan Wolfson, "All Together Now (A Blueprint for the Movement)," *Advocate*, September 11, 2001; available online at http://www.freedomtomarry.org/evan_wolfson/by/all_together_now.php (accessed February 6, 2009).

3. See Lisa Duggan, "Holy Matrimony!" *Nation*, March 15, 2004, available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040315/duggan>; and Lisa Duggan and Richard Kim, "Beyond Gay Marriage," *Nation*, July 18, 2005, available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20050718/kim>.

4. Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

5. Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2005).

6. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

7. Here I draw from Judith Halberstam's notion of time and normativity that she mines from a critique of David Harvey. I see her alerting us to a normative

straight temporality that underscores heterosexual and heteronormative life and constructs straight space. My notion of time or critique of a certain modality of time is interested in the way in which a queer utopian hermeneutic wishes to interrupt the linear temporal ordering of past, present, and future. See Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

8. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

9. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. R. Rojcewicz (New York: Springer, 1991).

10. Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 23.

11. James Schuyler, *Collected Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993), 186–187.

12. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 329.

13. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2005), 10.

14. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

15. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).

16. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, 1:141.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

19. Terrence Kissack, "Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York's Gay Liberation Front, 1969–1971," *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 104–135.

20. This economical summary is drawn from Michael Inwood's useful book: Michael Inwood, *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121.

21. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 17.

22. Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon, 2003).

23. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

24. *Ibid.*, 46–47.

25. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*.

26. This chapter benefited from Fred Moten's thoughtful suggestions and generous attention. I am also grateful for excellent feedback from Joshua Chambers-Letson, Lisa Duggan, Anna McCarthy, Tavia Nyong'o, Shane Vogel, an audience at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and this volume's editors. John

Andrews offered me the gift of extremely generative conversations during the writing of this essay. I only partially acknowledge my gratitude by dedicating it to him.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. The talk was later published in *October*, a publication then under the editorial influence of Crimp, in which queer theory in its modern incarnations began to flourish. The essay was ultimately published in an anthology of Crimp's writings: Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

2. Douglas Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy," *October* 51 (Winter 1988): 11.

3. Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp and Leo Bersani (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

4. Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

5. The "us" and "we" I use in this chapter are meant, in the first instance, to speak to gay men in the pandemic. But beyond that, they are intended to address people who have also been caught in the HIV/AIDS pandemic—people who have been affected by the pandemic in ways that are both direct and relational, subjects who might be women or men, queer or straight. The unifying thread of this essay's "us" and "we" is a node of commonality within a moment and space of chaos and immeasurable loss.

6. See the recent work of Lauren Berlant for a compelling reading of the political struggle currently being staged in the public sphere between "live sex acts" and "the dead citizenship of heterosexuality." Lauren Berlant, "Live Sex Acts: Parental Advisory: Explicit Material," *Feminist Studies* 21, no. 2 (1995): 379–404.

7. These myths include "Andy was asexual" or "Andy only liked to watch." For more on the degaying of Warhol, see the introduction to my coedited volume Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and José Esteban Muñoz, eds., *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

8. John Giorno, *You Got to Burn to Shine* (New York: High Risk Books/Serpent's Tail, 1994), 68–69.

9. *Ibid.*, 71.

10. Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno, "Something's Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing," in *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

11. *Ibid.*, 12.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Giorno, *You Got to Burn to Shine*, 72–73.

14. *Ibid.*, 73.