Publics and Counterpublics

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Introduction

Publics are queer creatures. You cannot point to them, count them, or look them in the eye. You also cannot easily avoid them. They have become an almost natural feature of the social landscape, like pavement. In the media-saturated forms of life that now dominate the world, how many activities are *not* in some way oriented to publics? Texts cross one's path in their endless search for a public of one kind or another: the morning paper, the radio, the television, movies, billboards, books, official postings. Beyond these obvious forms of address lie others, like fashion trends or brand names, that do not begin "Dear Reader" but are intrinsically oriented to publics nonetheless. (There is no such thing as a pop song, for example, unless you hear it as addressing itself to the audience that can make it "pop.") Your attention is everywhere solicited by artifacts that say, before they say anything else, *Hello, public!*

Much of the texture of modern social life lies in the invisible presence of these publics that flit around us like large, corporate ghosts. Most of the people around us belong to our world not directly, as kin or comrades or in any other relation to which we could give a name, but as strangers. How is it that we nevertheless recognize them as members of our world? We are related to them

(and I am to you) as transient participants in common publics, potentially addressable in impersonal forms. Most of us would find it nearly impossible to imagine what social life without publics would look like. Each time we address a public, as I am doing now with these words, we draw on what seems like simple common sense. If we did not have a practical sense of what publics are, if we could not unself-consciously take them for granted as really existing and addressable social entities, we could not produce most of the books or films or broadcasts or journals that make up so much of our culture; we could not conduct elections or indeed imagine ourselves as members of nations or movements. Yet publics exist only by virtue of their imagining. They are a kind of fiction that has taken on life, and very potent life at that.

Behind the common sense of our everyday life among publics is an astonishingly complex history. The idea of a public is a cultural form, a kind of practical fiction, present in the modern world in a way that is very different from any analogues in other or earlier societies. Like the idea of rights, or nations, or markets, it can now seem universal. But it has not always been so. Its conditions have been long in the making, and its precise meaning varies from case to case – especially now, as it has found such variable extension in the postcolonial world. There are ambiguities, even contradictions in the idea. As it is extended to new contexts and new media, new polities and new rhetorics, its meaning can be seen to change in ways that we have scarcely begun to appreciate.

This book brings together eight essays on the theme "What is a public?" The essays try to show that this deceptively simple question introduces an immense variety of inquiries. Properly understood, it can reframe the way we understand literary texts, contemporary politics, and the modern social world in general. Perhaps because contemporary life without the idea of a public is so unthinkable, the idea itself tends to be taken for granted, and

thus little understood. What discipline or method has a claim to say much about it? How would one go about studying it?

People often speak these days not just of *the public* but of multiple publics. And not without reason, since the publics among which we steer, or surf, are potentially infinite in number. In one way, this makes the analytic question tougher; publics might all be different, making generalization difficult. In another way, to emphasize multiple publics might seem to get rid of the analytic difficulty completely: since publics are all different, why generalize? But to speak in this way only defers the questions of what kind of thing a public is, how publics could be studied, how you know when one begins and another ends, what the different kinds of publics might be, how the differences matter, how the history of the form might be told, and how it might matter differently for different people.

The question "What is a public?" requires, to begin with, an explanation of two apparently contradictory facts. The first is that the category seems to presuppose a contingent history, varying in subtle but significant ways from one context to another, from one set of institutions to another, from one rhetoric to another. The second is that the form seems to have a functional intelligibility across a wide range of contexts. How can both be true at once? How could readers in eighteenth-century London and filmgoers in twenty-first-century Hong Kong belong to publics in the same way? Does it make sense to speak of a form common to both? Can it be described in a way that still does justice to the differences of setting and medium?

A public is inevitably one thing in London, quite another in Hong Kong. This is more than the truism it might appear, since the form must be embedded in the background and self-understanding of its participants in order to work. Only by approaching it historically can one understand these preconditions of its intelligibility.

To address a public or to think of oneself as belonging to a public is to be a certain kind of person, to inhabit a certain kind of social world, to have at one's disposal certain media and genres, to be motivated by a certain normative horizon, and to speak within a certain language ideology. No single history sufficiently explains all the different ways these preconditions come together in practice. Yet despite this complexity, the modern concept of a public seems to have floated free from its original context. Like the market or the nation — two cultural forms with which it shares a great deal — it has entered the repertoire of almost every culture. It has gone traveling.

The scope of this translation to new contexts might tempt us to think of publics only in systemic or acultural terms — much the way markets are usually understood. We could understand the globalization of the concept as a shift in the conditions of communication, taking place in ways that participants cannot notice and beyond the control of any merely local culture. Various models already exist for such an analysis, more or less attached to a wide range of political programs, from deterministic theories of media technology to deterministic theories of capitalism, from celebratory accounts of informational rationality to postcolonial skepticism about globalization as ideology. One might, for example, explain the global extension of publics as a result of the West's power in imposing its forms in every context touched by colonialism.

But this explanation, despite all the truth that might lie behind it, is not much of an explanation. Like all the other varieties of acultural explanation, it defers the question of how this form in particular could adapt itself to, or be imposed in, so many contexts. And to identify the form only with its Western articulation might be to block from view some of the most significant points of difference, both in colonial settings and within Western cul-

tures themselves. Filmgoers in present-day Hong Kong might be both enabled and constrained by a form whose genealogy has much to do with the London book trade after the Restoration; but that does not mean that they have been merely passive recipients of the form (nor that modern Londoners have been). Hong Kong films, moreover, now have publics elsewhere, just as English books did then.

Confronted by the local histories and contexts that make the form work, we might be tempted by the opposite approach, treating the idea of a public with nominalist skepticism: it just is whatever people in a particular context think it is. Its meaning depends on its "appropriation." It is all local culture and contingent history. This rather desperate solution, which too often passes as historicism in literary studies, eschews the problem of translation altogether. Obviously, I think the generality of the form in the contemporary world requires more reflection. I suggest below, in fact, that the idea of a public has a metacultural dimension; it gives form to a tension between general and particular that makes it difficult to analyze from either perspective alone. It might even be said to be a kind of engine of translatability, putting down new roots wherever it goes. I have tried to describe both the historical path by which publics acquired their importance to modernity and the interlocking systematicity of some of the form's key features. Though I concentrate on Anglo-America, my hope is to provoke more comparative discussion of a form that has been one of the defining elements of multiple modernities.

To develop the topic exhaustively is beyond the reach of this collection. Here I try to dig below the intuitive sense we have, as members of modern culture, of what a public is and how it works. The argument, as developed in the title essay, is that the notion of a public enables a reflexivity in the circulation of texts among strangers who become, by virtue of their reflexively circulating

discourse, a social entity. I hope that the explanation below will render this cryptic formula clearer. What I mean to say about it here is simply that this pattern has a kind of systematicity that can be observed in widely differing contexts and from which important consequences follow. The idea of a public does have some consistency, despite the wide variety of its instances. The social worlds constructed by it are by no means uniform or uncontested, but they are nevertheless marked by the form in common ways.

The paradox is that although the idea of a public can only work if it is rooted in the self-understanding of the participants, participants could not possibly understand themselves in the terms I have stated. Among other reasons, it seems that in order to address a public, one must forget or ignore the fictional nature of the entity one addresses. The idea of a public is motivating, not simply instrumental. It is constitutive of a social imaginary. The manner in which it is understood by participants is therefore not merely epiphenomenal, not mere variation on a form whose essence can be grasped independently.

That is not all. One of the central claims of this book is that when people address publics, they engage in struggles — at varying levels of salience to consciousness, from calculated tactic to mute cognitive noise — over the conditions that bring them together as a public. The making of publics is the metapragmatic work newly taken up by every text in every reading. What kind of public is this? How is it being addressed? These questions and their answers are not always explicit — and cannot possibly be fully explicit, ever — but they have fateful consequences for the kind of social world to which we belong and for the kinds of actions and subjects that are possible in it.

One example is shown on the cover of this book. What kind of public do these ladies make up? Posing for each others' cameras at home, they might seem to be not public at all. They might seem

merely to imitate familiar mass media genres: the fashion runway, the Hollywood promotional still, the celebrity profile, advertising. Are their cameras simply signs of media envy, icons for an absent mass public? If so, it is at least interesting that the ambition of publicity matters so much to them. Why should it?

As it happens, the photograph comes from a collection of photo albums compiled by a circle of drag queens who came together, from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties, in a New Jersey house they called Casa Susanna. (Other snapshots from the series can be seen in the magazine *Nest* [Summer 2000].) The suburban, domestic scene in which we find them—panelled and centrally heated—is being put to an unusual use. It is a space of collective improvisation, transformative in a way that depends on its connection to several publics—including a dominant and alien mass public. To most people in that mass public, of course, these queens would be monsters of impudence, engaged in nothing more than *flaunting*. The private setting protects them from an environment of stigma, but clearly their aspiration is to a different kind of publicness.

The ladies of Casa Susanna are doing *glamour*, which for them is both a public idiom and an intimate feeling. Its thrill allows them to experience their bodies in a way that would not have been possible without this mutual witnessing and display. And not theirs alone: they must imagine that each of their cameras allows the witnessing of indefinite numbers of strangers beyond the confines of the room. The more strangers, the greater the glamour. From other photos in the albums we know that they each competed in local drag balls as well; the cameras are more than merely wishful props. The photo itself must have been taken by another drag queen, presumably captured in turn by the camera in the upper right. All these cameras on the one hand indicate the absent attentions of the mass media; but on the other hand they create publicly

circulating images, making possible a different style of embodiment, a new sociability and solidarity, and a scene for further improvisation. Like the She-Romps discussed in chapter 2, the queens of Casa Susanna are revising what it means to be public.

In many ways, the unending process of redefinition — always difficult and always conflicted — can be strategic, conscious, even artful. Much of the art of writing, or of performing in other media, lies in the practical knowledge that there are always many different ways of addressing a public, that each decision of form, style, and procedure carries hazards and costs in the kind of public it can define. The temptation is to think of publics as something we make, through individual heroism and creative inspiration or through common goodwill. Much of the process, however, necessarily remains invisible to consciousness and to reflective agency. The making of a public requires conditions that range from the very general — such as the organization of media, ideologies of reading, institutions of circulation, text genres — to the particular rhetorics of texts. Struggle over the nature of publics cannot even be called strategic except by a questionable fiction, since the nature and relationship of the parties involved in the game are conditions established, metapragmatically, by the very notion of a public or by the medium through which a public comes into being.

As several of the essays try to show, interplay among these different levels can be complex. In some cases, for example, a conscious strategy of style can be seen as struggling to compensate for conditions of circulation, perhaps vainly. "Styles of Intellectual Publics" argues that this often happens when academics try to reach popular audiences through the plain style. In other cases, interactions that seem to have no manifest political content can be seen as attempting to create rival publics, even rival modes of publicness. "Publics and Counterpublics" proposes that queer and other minor publics can be seen in this light, and "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject" suggests that half-articulate struggles over the mediation of publics are general in mass culture. In still other cases, aesthetic effects can be produced by the dialectic between conditions of textuality and the strategies made possible by those conditions, as, for example, by manipulating incommensurable modes of publicness in unfamiliar ways. "Whitman Drunk" reads Whitman's poetry as such an enterprise.

This book proposes, in other words, a flexible methodology for the analysis of publics. It tries to model, through a range of case studies, the sort of multileveled analysis that, I think, is always demanded by public texts. That, at any rate, is the best face that can be put on a collection that is heterogeneous for plenty of other reasons as well. The essays that follow were written for different occasions, over more than a decade. A few of them could be described as queer theory, others as public-sphere theory or simply as literary criticism or cultural history. I do not try to resolve all the generic or methodological unclarity that might result, let alone the conceptual and stylistic shifts from older essays to more recent ones. My consolation for the embarrassment of inconsistency is that the very heterogeneity of the essays might help to suggest the range of projects that can spring from my central theme.

On some points I do think the method is consistent. It is essentially interpretive and form sensitive. I urge an understanding of the phenomenon of publics that is historical in orientation and always alert to the dynamics of textuality. The mode of proceeding in this book will therefore seem strange, possibly silly, to those in the social sciences to whom the public is simply an existing entity to be studied empirically and for whom empirical analysis has to mean something more definite, less interpretive, than attention to the means by which the fiction of the public is made real. This school of thought continues to march along despite all the criticisms that have been leveled against it.[1]

On the other hand, the historical method and literary criticism in their usual modes are in themselves not adequate to the analysis of publics. Analysis can never begin simply with the text as its object, as literary criticism is wont to do. Publics are among the conditions of textuality, specifying that certain stretches of language are understood to be "texts" with certain properties. This metapragmatic background — itself of infinite complexity — must be held up for analysis if we are to understand the mutually defining interplay between texts and publics. Publics are essentially intertextual, frameworks for understanding texts against an organized background of the circulation of other texts, all interwoven not just by citational references but by the incorporation of a reflexive circulatory field in the mode of address and consumption. And that circulation, though made reflexive by means of textuality, is more than textual — especially now, in the twenty-first century, when the texts of public circulation are very often visual or at any rate no longer mediated by the codex format. (One open question of this book is to what degree the text model, though formative for the modern public, might be increasingly archaic.) For all these reasons, the phenomenon of publics requires a disciplinary flexibility. The exigency of such a flexible method might account for the relative invisibility of the form as an object of sustained inquiry in academic thought.

Half of the essays are new; the others I collect here because of their bearing on the theme. One or two have complex histories of their own. "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject" was written for a 1989 conference introducing the English translation of Jürgen Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. It addresses a debate in social theory, trying to introduce concerns that we might now associate with queer theory. In 1989, of course, queer theory was not yet a recognizable enterprise. I could not write that essay now. Its emphases might be very different from

those of the more recent essays. I have not tried to rewrite it for consistency, partly because I do not know if it could even be done and partly because the essay has been cited by many others and it seemed best to leave it in its original shape. "Sex in Public," on the other hand, was written almost a decade after "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject." Coauthored with my friend and collaborator Lauren Berlant, it, too, owes much to the context that gave rise to it, in particular its attempt to redirect the field of queer studies. Many of its arguments I have pursued elsewhere, in a nonacademic work of political polemic titled *The Trouble with Normal*.[2] It serves in the context of this volume as a case study in struggles over the mediation of publics.

The first two essays stand together as a kind of general introduction of the subject. "Public and Private," which was conceived for a planned volume called *Critical Terms for the Study of Gender and Sexuality*, reviews the conceptual complexity of the terms "public" and "private," traces the major debates of public-sphere theory, and introduces the idea of counterpublics in relation to feminist and public-sphere theory. The next essay, "Publics and Counterpublics," treats the complexities of "public" as a noun. This essay more than any other stands at the heart of the present volume, elaborating the idea of a public as I have presented it in this introduction.

Doubtless there are other stories to be told about the coherence or motivated incoherence of the essays. For some readers, perhaps, the central story here will be one of queer theory. Certainly a major motivation of the essays, without exception, has been to bring some clarity to the process by which people have made dissident sexuality articulate; how they have come together around nonnormative sexualities in a framework for collective world making and political action; how in the process people have challenged the heteronormative framework of modern culture

while also availing themselves of its forms; how those forms of collective action and expression mediate the sexualities and identities they represent; and how many of the central aspirations of the resulting queer culture continue to be frustrated by the ideological and material organization of publics, both of dominant culture and of queer culture. The essays are examples of this process, not just analyses of it. They are the means by which I tried to articulate a place in the world. (This is especially true of "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject" and "Sex in Public," both of which were written against what at the time felt like huge blockages in the sayable.)

The way I pursued this project of self-clarification, however, increasingly put me at odds with the identitarian gay rights movement. The period over which these essays were written was one in which the American lesbian and gay movement enjoyed increasing visibility and a considerable measure of success. Yet I became convinced that it had paid a high price in the process. The movement had embraced, as the definition of its own constituency, a privatized notion of identity based in the homo/hetero language of sexual orientation. Along with many other academics who were developing the field of queer theory in the 1990s, I thought this language distorted sexuality and its politics.

Queer theory, meanwhile, got to be very good at redescribing nonnormative sexualities and the flaws of identitarian thinking. But partly because the field relied so heavily on psychoanalytic theory for this purpose, it was somewhat less adept at describing the worldliness of sexuality and the conditions of the social-movement form. As I began speculating on the close relation between sexual cultures and their publics in the modern context, I came to the conclusion that one of the underlying flaws of the gay and lesbian movement was the way it obscured and normalized the most compelling challenges of queer counterpublics.

This is the argument of *The Trouble with Normal*. That book was written in an attempt to reopen some communication between the organized movement and those who were increasingly disaffected from it. It does not use the vocabulary of public-sphere theory explored here. Yet the arguments of that book and this one are, I believe, mutually illustrative. *The Trouble with Normal* is an odd book in many ways, perhaps not least in trying to advance an analysis of publics while also trying to rally a public rhetorically.

The tension between reflective analysis and hortatory position taking will no doubt be seen in a number of these essays as well. It is rather more than the usual theory/practice dilemma, which concerns me very little. The problem in this case is that the preconditions of rhetorical engagement with publics are the object of an analysis that is motivated in large part by a rhetorical engagement with a public. Conceptually, this is like trying to face backward while walking. Preposterousness of this kind is familiar in queer criticism. On the whole, I think the balance in this book tips toward analysis, but I have not tried to eliminate the tension. I do not think that I could do so entirely and am rather persuaded that it is productive on both sides. "Styles of Intellectual Publics" reflects on the two modes and their relation to different publics, making the tension between them itself an object of analysis (and, a bit, of hortatory position taking).

The other motivating subtext of these essays has been the long conversation, now of some fifteen years' duration, with my colleagues in the Center for Transcultural Studies. There, more than anywhere else, I have found not just comprehending readers and tough critics, not just friends whose brilliance was constant inspiration, but a sustained environment for collective thinking. Much of the work in these essays emerged from dialogue, in a way that I cannot do justice to here. More people than I can name took part

in the conversation. Obviously, Lauren Berlant has been a collaborator of a special kind; even where she is not named as coauthor (as in *The Trouble with Normal*) she has been a tacit partner. Ben Lee and Dilip Gaonkar have been the organizers and catalysts for the center's discussions; to them I owe an unpayable debt. It is my hope that this book, insofar as it contributes to anything, will direct attention to the distinctive intellectual project of the center, now finding rich realization in the work of so many of my colleagues there: Arjun Appadurai, Craig Calhoun, Vincent Crapanzano, Dilip Gaonkar, Nilüfer Göle, Ben Lee, Tom McCarthy, Mary Poovey, Beth Povinelli, Charles Taylor, Greg Urban, and many others.

Chapter One

Public and Private

What kind of world would make the values of both publicness and privacy equally accessible to all? This question has often been taken up in modern political philosophy. But that apparently simple question raises, and is made complicated by, another one: How would the experience of gender and sexuality have to be different in such a world?

The link between these two subjects has been noticed for millennia. The story is told of the Greek philosopher Diogenes that whenever he felt sexual need he walked into the central marketplace and masturbated. According to a later Greek commentator, he was in the habit of "doing everything in public, the works of Demeter and Aphrodite alike."[1] This was not usual in Athens in the fourth century B.C.E. Diogenes provoked disgust. His behavior was a kind of "performance criticism," as Foucault has called it, a way of calling attention to the visceral force behind the moral ideas of public and private.[2] Diogenes was attempting, to a degree that has scarcely been rivaled since, to do without the distinction entirely. He evidently regarded it as artificial, contrary to nature, the false morality of a corruption that mistook itself for civilization.

More than two thousand years later, a different challenge to the morality of public and private created an equally queasy sensation.

Notes

Introduction

1. See, for example, Leon Mayhew, *The New Public: Professional Communication and the Means of Social Influence* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

2. Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1999).

Chapter One: Public and Private

1. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, quoted in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1985), p. 54.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Letters on the Difficulty of Religion*, quoted in Larry Ceplair, ed., *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835–1839* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 138. On Beecher, see the classic study by Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973); and Jeanne Boydston, Mary Kelley, and Anne Margolis, eds., *The Limits of Sisterhood: The Beecher Sisters on Women's Rights and Woman's Sphere* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

4. An example of this kind of analysis can be found in Rosalyn Deutsche, "Men in Space," *Artforum* 28 (Feb. 1990), pp. 21–23.

5. Laura Graham, "A Public Sphere in Amazonia?" *American Ethnologist* 40.4 (1993), pp. 717–41.

6. On these rival paradigms for public and private in American Constitutional law, see Kendall Thomas, "Beyond the Privacy Principle," *Columbia Law Review* 92 (1992), pp. 1359–1516, especially pp. 1444–47.

7. This list amplifies remarks by Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to a Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 109–42. The definition from Hannah Arendt appears in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 52.

8. See Thomas, "Beyond the Privacy Principle"; Janet Halley, *Don't: A Reader's Guide to the Military's Anti-Gay Policy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); and Janet Halley, "The Politics of the Closet: Towards Equal Protection for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identity," in Jonathan Goldberg, ed., *Reclaiming Sodom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 145–204. Goldberg also reprints the text of *Bowers*.

9. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 17–42.

10. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

11. Carol Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy," in *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 118.

12. Catharine MacKinnon, "Privacy v. Equality," in *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 100.

13. Pateman, *Disorder of Women*, p. 135.

14. For the context, see Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

15. Eli Zaretsky, "Identity Theory, Identity Politics: Psychoanalysis, Marxism, Post-Structuralism," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994), p. 206.

16. Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 26.

17. A notable irony in claims to break down the "binary" of public and private is that most major theorists of the terms – notably Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, and Richard Sennett – argued that the conditions of mass society were already dissolving the potential for both public action and real privacy. For Arendt and Habermas, see below. For Sennett, see *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

18. Jane Addams's dictum "A city is enlarged housekeeping" represents an early version of this remapping. "From the beginning of tribal life," Addams writes, "women have been held responsible for the health of the community, a function which is not represented by the health department; from the days of the cave dwellers, so far as the home was clean and wholesome, it was due to their efforts, which are now represented by the bureau of tenement-house inspection; from the period of the primitive village, the only public sweeping performed was what they undertook in their own dooryards, that which is now represented by the bureau of street cleaning." Quoted in Eli Zaretsky, "Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of the Public/Private Distinction," in Craig Calhoun and John McGowan, eds., *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 224–25.

19. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," p. 110.

20. See, for example, Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825–1880* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

21. On this history within feminism, see the excellent account by Mary Dietz, "Feminist Receptions of Hannah Arendt," in Bonnie Honig, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 17–50.

22. This history is traced for an American context by Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (New

York: Hill and Wang, 1978); and Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).

23. On this subject, there is a large and growing literature. See especially Mary Kelley, *Public Woman, Private Stage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

24. Classic studies of this history include Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978); and C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1962).

25. Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

26. See the multivolume history of this subject in Europe, Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, eds., *A History of Private Life*, especially vol. 3, *Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. Roger Chartier, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

27. Fraser discusses the concept of bracketing in "Rethinking the Public Sphere"; the "veil of ignorance" version is in John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

28. See Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

29. *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman* (1837), in Ceplair, ed., *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké*, p. 195.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

31. See Katherine Henry, "Angelina Grimké's Rhetoric of Exposure," *American Quarterly* 49.2 (June 1997), pp. 328–55.

32. Zaretsky, "Identity Theory, Identity Politics," p. 201.

33. Andrew Sullivan, *Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality* (New York: Knopf, 1995), p. 171.

34. The vicissitudes of this political tradition, and the ironies by which its central ideas have migrated from right to left and vice versa in twentieth-century politics, are traced in Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

35. The indispensable reference here is J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975). Pocock has been criticized by many historians for overstating the incompatibility of republican and liberal traditions. For recent treatments with somewhat different views, see Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), and Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

36. In addition to *A Theory of Justice*, see John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

37. John Christian Laursen, "The Subversive Kant: The Vocabulary of 'Public' and 'Publicity,'" in James Schmidt, ed., *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 253–69.

38. Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" trans. Schmidt, in Schmidt, ed., *What Is Enlightenment?*, pp. 58–64.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 61. There is a useful discussion of this passage in Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 20–37.

40. See Laursen, "Subversive Kant," pp. 258–61.

41. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). See also his "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," *New German Critique* 1.3 (Fall 1974), pp. 49–55.

42. Habermas, Structural Transformation, p. 4.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

46. Calhoun, introduction to *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p. 7.

47. Quoted in Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, p. 125.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

50. See, for example, Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); and the essays by Mary Ryan, Nancy Fraser, and Geoff Eley in Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. On Landes's claim that the public sphere was "essentially, not just contingently, masculinist," see Keith Michael Baker's astute discussion in "Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France," in Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, pp. 181–211.

51. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, p. 195.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

53. See Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), especially the introduction by Miriam Hansen; and Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Introduction to 'Critical Multiculturalism,'" in David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1994), pp. 107–13.

54. For a critique of this turn, see Benjamin Lee, "Textuality, Mediation, and Public Discourse," in Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, pp. 402–20.

55. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

56. Halley, *Don't*.

57. See Zaretsky, "Identity Theory, Identity Politics"; and John Brenkman, *Straight Male Modern* (New York: Routledge, 1993), especially pp. 109–28.

58. This misreading can be found in the essays by Fraser and Eley in Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. It is an easy reading to make, and appears even in that close and scrupulous reader of Habermas, Craig Calhoun, in his "Nationalism and the Public Sphere," in Jeff Alan Weintraub and Krishnan Kumar, eds., *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 84. What supports it is Habermas's strong emphasis on the way the public is thought to derive an implied unity from its critical opposition to the state and the legislative power.

59. Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 244

60. On this subject, see Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

61. See Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," and Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," below chapters 4 and 5.

62. Anne Phillips, quoted in Dietz, "Feminist Receptions of Hannah Arendt," p. 18.

63. Bonnie Honig, "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," in Honig, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, pp. 135–66.

64. This point has been the subject of some dispute between Honig and Seyla Benhabib. It will be seen that I follow Honig's reading here. For a contrasting reading of Arendt, see Seyla Benhabib, "Feminist Theory and Hannah Arendt's Concept of Public Space," *History of the Human Sciences* 6 (1993), pp. 97–114, and "The Pariah and Her Shadow: Hannah Arendt's Biography of Rahel Varnhagen," in Honig, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, pp. 83–104.

65. See, for example, Arendt, *Human Condition*, pp. 27–28. On the relation between *The Human Condition* and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, see Zaretsky, "Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of the Public/Private Distinction."

66. This point is made by Zaretsky in "Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of the Public/Private Distinction," particularly in reference to *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. A sticking point in many contemporary debates about Arendt is that in the classical conception, as she interprets it, the private is almost entirely without value, even without content. That, she emphasizes, is the point: the private is privative, a negative category, a state in which one is deprived of context for realizing oneself through action and in free interaction with others. The most private person is the slave. The life of the polis is opposed to all that is one's own (*idion*) — hence a merely private or idiosyncratic person would be an idiot. That Arendt was capable of seeing the expression of a strong value in such a vacuous — or rather, evacuating — conception of the private is testament to the imaginative strength of her interpretation; but it is not a site of nostalgia or phallocentric commitment, as some feminist critics contend. Privacy for Arendt does have one valuable dimension, however: the sense of rootedness, of place in the world,

provided by the classical conception of property as a transgenerational estate. But this sense of the private is unrecoverable in a capitalist economy and in an age with no secular orientation to immortality, and Arendt writes that "the intimate is not a very reliable substitute" for it (*Human Condition*, p. 70).

67. Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 57.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

69. An excellent illustration of the latter point is to be found in Lauren Berlant, "Poor Eliza," *American Literature* 70.3 (Sept. 1998), pp. 635–68. Berlant, analyzing the women's culture of sentimentality, shows that it has some counterpublic features but that these are distorted. "When sentimentality meets politics," Berlant writes, "it uses personal stories to tell of structural effects, but in so doing it risks thwarting its very attempt to perform rhetorically a scene of pain that must be soothed politically. Because the ideology of true feeling cannot admit the nonuniversality of pain, its cases become all jumbled together and the ethical imperative toward social transformation is replaced by a civic-minded but passive ideal of empathy. The political as a place of acts oriented toward publicness becomes replaced by a world of private thoughts, leanings, and gestures. Suffering, in this personal-public context, becomes answered by survival, which is then recoded as freedom. Meanwhile, we lose the original impulse behind sentimental politics, which is to see the individual effects of mass social violence as *different from* the causes, which are impersonal and depersonalizing" (p. 641).

Chapter Two: Publics and Counterpublics

1. An instructive review of the methodological problems can be found in Robert O. Carlson, ed., *Communications and Public Opinion: A* "Public Opinion Quarterly" *Reader* (New York: Praeger, 1975); see especially Floyd D. Allport, "Toward a Science of Public Opinion," pp. 11–26, and Harwood Childs, "By Public Opinion I Mean—," pp. 28–37.

2. The critique of polling appears in a number of contexts in Bourdieu's work; see especially "Opinion Polls: A 'Science' Without a Scientist," in *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 168–76.

3. This ancient exotic is the kind of stranger that Georg Simmel has in mind in his much-cited 1908 essay "The Stranger," in *On Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971). Simmel fails to distinguish between the stranger as represented by the trader or the Wandering Jew and the stranger whose presence in modernity is unremarkable, even necessary to the nature of modern polities. One of the defining elements of modernity, in my view, is normative stranger sociability, of a kind that seems to arise only when the social imaginary is defined not by kinship (as in non-state societies) or by place (as in state societies until modernity) but by discourse.

4. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 127–86.

5. For example, Patricia Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf, 1985), especially pp. 121–46; and James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

6. "The right to gossip about certain people," Max Gluckman writes in a classic essay, "is a privilege which is only extended to a person when he or she is accepted as a member of a group or set. It is a hallmark of membership." Moreover, this kind of membership tends to presuppose others, such as kin groups, equally distant from stranger sociability. "To be a Makah [the Northwest Amerindian group discussed by Gluckman] you must be able to join in the gossip, and to be fully a Makah you must be able to scandalize skillfully. This entails that you know the individual family histories of your fellows; for the knowledgeable can hit at you through your ancestry." Max Gluckman, "Gossip and Scandal," *Current Anthropology* 4 (1963), pp. 313 and 311.

7. Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, forthcoming), MS pp. 127–28.

8. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 128.

9. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 129.

10. It would be interesting to pursue the implications of this history for lyric; at the very least, it would be a productive context in which to reread Adorno's classic essay "On Lyric Poetry and Society," in Theodor Adorno, *Notes*

to suppose that identities or mere assertions of status will precipitate from this crisis as its solution, since the public discourse makes identity an ongoing problem. An assertion of the full equality of minoritized statuses would require abandoning the structure of self-abstraction in publicity. That outcome seems unlikely in the near future. In the meantime, the contradictions of status and publicity are played out at both ends of the public discourse. We, as the subjects of mass publicity, ever more find a political stake in the difficult-to-recognize politics of our identity, and the egocrats who fill the screens of national fantasy must summon all their skin and hair to keep that politics from getting personal.

CHAPTER FIVE

Sex in Public*

By Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner

There Is Nothing More Public Than Privacy

An essay titled "Sex in Public" teases with the obscurity of its object and the twisted aim of its narrative. In this essay, we talk not about the sex people already have clarity about, or identities and acts,[1] or a wildness in need of derepression;[2] rather, we talk about sex as it is mediated by publics. Some of these publics have an obvious relation to sex: pornographic cinema, phone sex, "adult" markets for print, lap dancing. Others are organized around sex but not necessarily sex *acts* in the usual sense: queer zones and other worlds estranged from heterosexual culture, but also more tacit scenes of sexuality like official national culture, which depends on a notion of privacy to cloak its sexualization of national membership.

The aim of this essay is to describe what we want to promote as the radical aspirations of queer culture building: not just a safe zone for queer sex, but the changed possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex that appear when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or privileged example of sexual culture. Queer social practices like sex and theory try to

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unsettle the garbled but powerful norms supporting that privilege — including the project of normalization that has made heterosexuality hegemonic — as well as those material practices that, though not explicitly sexual, are implicated in the hierarchies of property and propriety that we will describe as heteronormative.[3] We open with two scenes of sex in public.

Scene One

In 1993, *Time* magazine published a special issue about immigration called "The New Face of America."[4] The cover girl of this issue was morphed via computer from head shots representing a range of U.S. immigrant groups: an amalgam of "Middle Eastern," "Italian," "African," "Vietnamese," "Anglo-Saxon," "Chinese," and "Hispanic" faces. The new face of America is supposed to represent what the modal citizen will look like when, in the year 2004, there will no longer be a white statistical majority in the United States. Naked, smiling, and just off-white, *Time*'s divine Frankenstein aims to organize hegemonic optimism about citizenship and the national future. *Time*'s theory is that by the twenty-first century interracial reproductive sex will have taken place in the United States on such a mass scale that racial difference itself will be finally replaced by a kind of family feeling based on blood relations. In the twenty-first century, *Time* imagines, hundreds of millions of hybrid faces will erase American racism altogether: the nation will become a happy racial monoculture made up of "one mixed blood."[5]

The publication of this special issue caused a brief flurry of interest but had no important effects; its very banality calls us to understand the technologies that produce its ordinariness. The fantasy banalized by the image is one that reverberates in the law and the most intimate crevices of everyday life. Its explicit aim is to help its public process the threat to "normal" or "core"

national culture currently phrased as "the problem of immigration."[6] But this crisis image of immigrants is also a *racial mirage* generated by a white-dominated society, supplying a concrete phobia to organize its public so that a more substantial discussion of exploitation in the United States can be avoided and then remaindered to the part of collective memory sanctified not by nostalgia but by mass aversion. Let's call this the amnesia archive. The motto above the door is: "Memory is the amnesia you like."

But more than exploitation and racism are forgotten in this whirl of projection and suppression. Central to the transfiguration of the immigrant as a nostalgic image to shore up core national culture and allay white fears of minoritization is something that cannot speak its name, though its signature is everywhere: national heterosexuality. National heterosexuality is the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitized space of sentimental feeling and immaculate behavior, a space of pure citizenship. A familial model of society displaces recognition of structural racism and other systemic inequalities. This is not entirely new: the family form has functioned as a mediator and metaphor of national existence in the United States since the eighteenth century.[7] We are arguing that its contemporary deployment increasingly supports the governmentality of the welfare state by separating the aspirations of national belonging from the critical culture of the public sphere and from political citizenship.[8] Immigration crises have also previously produced feminine icons that function as prostheses for the state — most famously, the Statue of Liberty, which symbolized seamless immigrant assimilation to the metaculture of the United States. In *Time*'s face, it is not symbolic femininity but practical heterosexuality that guarantees the monocultural nation.

The nostalgic family-values covenant of contemporary American politics stipulates a privatization of citizenship and sex in a

number of ways. In law and political ideology, for example, the fetus and the child have been spectacularly elevated to the place of sanctified nationality. The state now sponsors stings and laws to purify the Internet on behalf of children. New welfare and tax "reforms" passed under the cooperation between the Contract with America and Clintonian familialism seek to increase the legal and economic privileges of married couples and parents. Vouchers and privatization rezone education as the domain of parents rather than of citizens. Meanwhile, senators such as Ted Kennedy and Jesse Helms support amendments that refuse federal funds to organizations that "promote, disseminate, or produce materials that are obscene or that depict or describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual or excretory activities or organs, including but not limited to obscene depictions of sadomasochism, homo-eroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or any individuals engaged in sexual intercourse."[9] These developments, though distinct, are linked in the way they organize a hegemonic national public around sex. But because this sex public officially claims to act only in order to protect the zone of heterosexual privacy, the institutions of economic privilege and social reproduction informing its practices and organizing its ideal world are protected by the spectacular demonization of any represented sex.

Scene Two

In October 1995, the New York City Council passed a new zoning law by a forty-one-to-nine vote. The Zoning Text Amendment covers adult book and video stores, eating and drinking establishments, theaters, and other businesses. It allows these businesses only in certain nonresidential zoning areas, most of which turn out to be on the waterfront. Within the new reserved districts, adult businesses are disallowed within five hundred feet of another adult establishment or within five hundred feet of a house of worship, school, or day-care center. They are limited to one per lot and limited in size to ten thousand square feet. Signs are limited in size, placement, and illumination. All other adult businesses are required to close within a year. Of the estimated 177 adult businesses in the city, all but 28 may have to close under this law. Enforcement of the bill is entrusted to building inspectors.

The court challenge to the bill was brought by a coalition that also fought it in the political process: anticensorship groups such as the New York Civil Liberties Union, Feminists for Free Expression, People for the American Way, and the National Coalition Against Censorship, as well as gay and lesbian organizations such as the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Empire State Pride Agenda, and the AIDS Prevention Action League. (An appeal was still pending as of July 1997.) These latter groups joined the anticensorship groups for a simple reason: the impact of rezoning on businesses catering to queers, especially to gay men, will be devastating. All five of the adult businesses on Christopher Street will be shut down, along with the principal venues where men meet men for sex. None of these businesses has been a target of local complaints. Gay men have come to take for granted the availability of explicit sexual materials, theaters, and clubs. That is how they have learned to find each other, to map a commonly accessible world, to construct the architecture of queer space in a homophobic environment, and, for the last fifteen years, to cultivate a collective ethos of safer sex. All of that is about to change. Now gay men who want sexual materials, or who want to meet men for sex, will have two choices: they can cathect the privatized virtual public of phone sex and the Internet; or they can travel to small, inaccessible, little-trafficked, badly lit areas, remote from public transportation and from any residences, mostly on the waterfront, where heterosexual porn users will also be relocated and where risk of violence will consequently be

higher.[10] In either case, the result will be a sense of isolation and diminished expectations for queer life, as well as an attenuated capacity for political community. The nascent lesbian sexual culture, including the Clit Club and the only video-rental club catering to lesbians, will also disappear. The impact of the sexual purification of New York will fall unequally on those who already have the fewest publicly accessible resources.

Normativity and Sexual Culture

Heterosexuality is not a thing. We speak of heterosexual culture rather than heterosexuality because that culture never has more than a provisional unity.[11] It is neither a single Symbolic nor a single ideology nor a unified set of shared beliefs.[12] The conflicts between these strands are seldom more than dimly perceived in practice, where the givenness of male-female sexual relations is part of the ordinary rightness of the world, its fragility masked in shows of solemn rectitude. Such conflicts have also gone unrecognized in theory, partly because of the metacultural work of the very category of heterosexuality, which consolidates as *a sexuality* widely differing practices, norms, and institutions, and partly because the sciences of social knowledge are themselves so deeply anchored in the process of normalization to which Foucault attributes so much of modern sexuality.[13] Thus when we say that the contemporary United States is saturated by the project of constructing national heterosexuality, we do not mean that national heterosexuality is anything like a simple monoculture. Hegemonies are nothing if not elastic alliances, involving dispersed and contradictory strategies for self-maintenance and reproduction.

Heterosexual culture achieves much of its metacultural intelligibility through the ideologies and institutions of intimacy. We want to argue here that although the intimate relations of private personhood appear to be the realm of sexuality itself, allowing

"sex in public" to appear like matter out of place, intimacy is itself publicly mediated, in several senses. First, its conventional spaces presuppose a structural differentiation of "personal life" from work, politics, and the public sphere.[14] Second, the normativity of heterosexual culture links intimacy only to the institutions of personal life, making them the privileged institutions of social reproduction, the accumulation and transfer of capital, and self-development. Third, by making sex seem irrelevant or merely personal, heteronormative conventions of intimacy block the building of nonnormative or explicit public sexual cultures. Finally, those conventions conjure a mirage: a home base of pre-political humanity from which citizens are thought to come into political discourse and to which they are expected to return in the (always imaginary) future after political conflict. Intimate life is the endlessly cited *elsewhere* of political public discourse, a promised haven that distracts citizens from the unequal conditions of their political and economic lives, consoles them for the damaged humanity of mass society, and shames them for any divergence between their lives and the intimate sphere that is alleged to be simple personhood.

Ideologies and institutions of intimacy are increasingly offered as a vision of the good life for the destabilized and struggling citizenry of the United States, the only (fantasy) zone in which a future might be thought and willed, the only (imaginary) place where good citizens might be produced away from the confusing and unsettling distractions and contradictions of capitalism and politics. Indeed, one of the unforeseen paradoxes of national-capitalist privatization has been that citizens have been led through heterosexual culture to identify both themselves *and their politics* with privacy. In the official public, this involves making sex private; reintensifying *blood* as a psychic base for identification; replacing state mandates for social justice with a privatized ethics

of responsibility, charity, atonement, and "values"; and enforcing boundaries between moral persons and economic ones.[15]

A complex cluster of sexual practices gets confused, in heterosexual culture, with the love plot of intimacy and familialism that signifies belonging to society in a deep and normal way. Community is imagined through scenes of intimacy, coupling, and kinship.[16] And a historical relation to futurity is restricted to generational narrative and reproduction. A whole field of social relations becomes intelligible as heterosexuality, and this privatized sexual culture bestows on its sexual practices a tacit sense of rightness and normalcy. This sense of rightness — embedded in things and not just in sex — is what we call heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is more than ideology, or prejudice, or phobia against gays and lesbians; it is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; education; plus the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture. It is hard to see these fields as heteronormative because the sexual culture straight people inhabit is so diffuse, a mix of languages they are just developing with notions of sexuality so ancient that their material conditions feel hardwired into personhood.

But intimacy has not always had the meaning it has for contemporary heteronormative culture. Along with Foucault and other historians, the classicist David Halperin, for example, has shown that in ancient Athens, sex was a transitive act rather than a fundamental dimension of personhood or an expression of intimacy. The verb for having sex appears on a late antique list of things that are not done in regard to or through others: "namely, speaking, singing, dancing, fist-fighting, competing, hanging oneself, dying, being crucified, diving, finding a treasure, having sex, vomiting, moving one's bowels, sleeping, laughing, crying, talking to the gods, and the like."[17] Halperin points out that the inclu-

sion of fucking on this list shows that sex is not here "knit up in a web of mutuality." In contrast, modern heterosexuality is supposed to refer to relations of intimacy and identification with other persons, and sex acts are supposed to be the most intimate communication of them all.[18] The sex act protected in the zone of privacy is the affectional nimbus that heterosexual culture protects and from which it abstracts its model of ethics; but this utopia of social belonging is also supported and extended by acts less commonly recognized as part of sexual culture: paying taxes, being disgusted, philandering, bequeathing, celebrating a holiday, investing for the future, teaching, disposing a corpse, carrying wallet photos, buying economy size, being nepotistic, running for president, divorcing, or owning anything "His" and "Hers."

The elaboration of this list is a project for further study. Meanwhile, to make it, and to laugh at it, is not immediately to label any practice as oppressive, uncool, or definitive. We are describing a constellation of practices that everywhere disperses heterosexual privilege as a tacit but central organizing index of social membership. Exposing it inevitably produces what we have elsewhere called a wrenching sense of recontextualization as its subjects, even its gay and lesbian subjects, begin to piece together how it is that social and economic discourses, institutions, and practices that don't feel especially sexual or familial collaborate to produce as a social norm and ideal an extremely narrow context for living.[19] Heterosexual culture cannot recognize, validate, sustain, incorporate, or remember much of what people know and experience about the cruelty of normal culture even to the people who identify with it.

But that cruelty does not go unregistered. Intimacy, for example, has a whole public environment of therapeutic genres dedicated to witnessing the constant failure of heterosexual ideologies and institutions. Every day in many countries now, people's

failure to sustain or be sustained by institutions of privacy is testified to on talk shows, in scandal journalism, even in the ordinary course of mainstream journalism addressed to middlebrow culture. We can learn a lot from these stories of love plots that have gone astray: about the ways quotidian violence is linked to complex pressures from money, racism, histories of sexual violence, cross-generational tensions. We can learn a lot from listening to the increasing demands on love to deliver the good life it promises. And we can learn a lot from the extremely punitive responses that tend to emerge when people seem not to suffer enough for their transgressions and failures.

Maybe we would learn too much. Recently the proliferation of evidence for heterosexuality's failings has produced a backlash against talk-show therapy. It has even brought William Bennett to the podium; but rather than confessing his transgressions or making a complaint about someone else's, he calls for boycotts and suppression of heterosexual therapy culture altogether. Recognition of heterosexuality's daily failures agitates him as much as queerness. "We've forgotten that civilization depends on keeping some of this stuff under wraps," he said. "This is a tropism toward the toilet."[20]

But does civilization need to cover its ass? Or does heterosexual culture actually secure itself through banalizing intimacy? Does belief that normal life is actually possible *require* amnesia and the ludicrous stereotyping of a bottom-feeding culture apparently inadequate to intimacy? On these shows, no one ever blames the ideology and institutions of heterosexuality. Every day, even the talk-show hosts are newly astonished to find that people who are committed to hetero intimacy are nevertheless unhappy. After all is said and done, the prospects and promises of heterosexual culture still represent the optimism for optimism, a hope to which people apparently have already pledged their consent — at least in public.

Biddy Martin has written that some queer social theorists have produced a reductive and pseudo-radical antinormativity by actively repudiating the institutions of heterosexuality that have come to oversaturate the social imaginary. She shows that the kinds of arguments that crop up in the writings of people like Andrew Sullivan are not just right-wing fantasies. "In some queer work," she writes, "the very fact of attachment has been cast as only punitive and constraining because already socially constructed.... Radical anti-normativity throws out a lot of babies with a lot of bathwater.... An enormous fear of ordinariness or normalcy results in superficial accounts of the complex imbrication of sexuality with other aspects of social and psychic life, and in far too little attention to the dilemmas of the average people that we also are."[21]

We think our friend Biddy might be referring to us, although in this segment she cites no one in particular. We would like to clarify the argument. To be against heteronormativity is not to be against norms. To be against the processes of normalization is not to be afraid of ordinariness. Nor is it to advocate the "life without limit" she sees as produced by bad Foucauldians. Nor is it to decide that sentimental identifications with family and children are waste or garbage, or make people into waste or garbage. Nor is it to say that any sex called "lovemaking" isn't lovemaking; whatever the ideological or historical burdens of sexuality have been, they have not excluded, and indeed may have entailed, the ability of sex to count as intimacy and care. What we have been arguing here is that the space of sexual culture has become obnoxiously cramped from doing the work of maintaining a normal metaculture. When Martin calls us to recognize ourselves as "average people," to relax from an artificially stimulated "fear of... normalcy," the image of average personhood appears to be simply descriptive. But its averageness is also normative, in exactly the sense that Foucault meant by "normalization": not the imposition

of an alien will, but a distribution around a statistically imagined norm. This deceptive appeal of the average remains heteronormative, measuring deviance from the mass. It can also be consoling, an expression of a utopian desire for unconflicted personhood. But this desire cannot be satisfied in the current conditions of privacy. People feel that the price they must pay for social membership and a relation to the future is identification with the heterosexual life narrative; that they are individually responsible for the rages, instabilities, ambivalences, and failures they experience in their intimate lives, while the fractures of the contemporary United States shame and sabotage them everywhere. Heterosexuality involves so many practices that are not sex that a world in which this hegemonic cluster would not be dominant is, at this point, unimaginable. We are trying to bring that world into being.

Queer Counterpublics

By queer culture we mean a world-making project, where world, like public, differs from community or group because it necessarily includes more people than can be identified, more spaces than can be mapped beyond a few reference points, modes of feeling that can be learned rather than experienced as birthright. The queer world is a space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies.[22] World making, as much in the mode of dirty talk as of print-mediated representation, is dispersed through incommensurate registers, by definition *unrealizable* as community or identity. Every cultural form, be it a novel or an after-hours club or an academic lecture, indexes a virtual social world in ways that range from a repertoire of styles and speech genres to referential metaculture. A novel like *Dancer from the Dance* relies much more heavily on referential metaculture than does an after-hours club that survives on word of mouth and

may be a major scene because it is only barely coherent *as* a scene. Yet for all their differences, both allow for the concretization of a queer counterpublic. We are trying to promote this world-making project, and a first step in doing so is to recognize that queer culture constitutes itself in many ways other than through the official publics of opinion culture and the state or through the privatized forms normally associated with sexuality.

Queer and other insurgents have long striven, often dangerously or scandalously, to cultivate what good folks used to call criminal intimacies. We have developed relations and narratives that are only recognized as intimate in queer culture: girlfriends, gal pals, fuckbuddies, tricks. Queer culture has learned not only how to sexualize these and other relations but also how to use them as a context for witnessing intense and personal affect while elaborating a public world of belonging and transformation. Making a queer world has required the development of kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation. These intimacies *do* bear a necessary relation to a counterpublic — an indefinitely accessible world conscious of its subordinate relation. They are typical both of the inventiveness of queer world making and of the queer world's fragility.

Nonstandard intimacies would seem less criminal and less fleeting if, as used to be the case, normal intimacies included everything from consorts to courtiers, friends, amours, associates, and co-conspirators.[23] Along with the sex it legitimates, intimacy has been privatized; the discourse contexts that narrate true personhood have been segregated from those that represent citizens, workers, or professionals.

This transformation in the cultural forms of intimacy is related both to the history of the modern public sphere and to the modern discourse of sexuality as a fundamental human capacity. In *The*

Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Habermas shows that the institutions and forms of domestic intimacy made private people private, members of the public sphere of private society rather than the market or the state. Intimacy grounded abstract, disembodied citizens in a sense of universal humanity. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes the personalization of sex from the other direction: confessional and expert discourses of civil society continually posit an inner personal essence, equating this true personhood with sex, and surrounding that sex with dramas of secrecy and disclosure. There is an instructive convergence here in two thinkers who otherwise seem to be describing different planets.[24] Habermas overlooks the administrative and normalizing dimensions of privatized sex in sciences of social knowledge because he is interested in the norm of a critical relation between state and civil society. Foucault overlooks the critical culture that might enable transformation of sex and other private relations because he wants to show that modern epistemologies of sexual personhood, far from bringing sexual publics into being, are techniques of isolation; they identify persons as normal or perverse for the purpose of medicalizing or otherwise administering them as individuals. Yet both Habermas and Foucault point to the way a hegemonic public has founded itself by a privatization of sex and the sexualization of private personhood. Both identify the conditions in which sexuality seems a property of subjectivity rather than a publicly or counterpublicly accessible culture.

Like most ideologies, normal intimacy may never have been an accurate description of how people actually live. It was from the beginning mediated not only by a structural separation of economic and domestic space but also by opinion culture, correspondence, novels, and romances; Rousseau's *Confessions* is typical both of the ideology and of its reliance on mediation by print and by new, hybrid forms of life narrative. Habermas notes, "Subjectivity, as the innermost core of the private, was always oriented to an audience," adding that the structure of this intimacy includes a fundamentally contradictory relation to the economy:

> To the autonomy of property owners in the market corresponded a self-presentation of human beings in the family. The latter's intimacy, apparently set free from the constraint of society, was the seal on the truth of a private autonomy exercised in competition. Thus it was a private autonomy denying its economic origins . . . that provided the bourgeois family with its consciousness of itself.[25]

This structural relation is no less normative for being imperfect in practice. Its force is to prevent the recognition, memory, elaboration, or institutionalization of all the nonstandard intimacies that people have in everyday life. Affective life slops over onto work and political life; people have key self-constitutive relations with strangers and acquaintances; and they have eroticism, if not sex, outside the couple form. These border intimacies give people tremendous pleasure. But when that pleasure is called sexuality, the spillage of eroticism into everyday social life seems transgressive in a way that provokes normal aversion, a hygienic recoil even as contemporary consumer and media cultures increasingly trope toiletward, splattering the matter of intimate life at the highest levels of national culture.

In gay male culture, the principal scenes of criminal intimacy have been tearooms, streets, sex clubs, and parks—a tropism toward the public toilet.[26] Promiscuity is so heavily stigmatized as nonintimate that it is often called anonymous, whether names are used or not. One of the most commonly forgotten lessons of AIDS is that this promiscuous intimacy turned out to be a lifesaving public resource. Unbidden by experts, gay people invented safer sex; and as Douglas Crimp wrote in 1987:

We were able to invent safe sex because we have always known that sex is not, in an epidemic or not, limited to penetrative sex. Our promiscuity taught us many things, not only about the pleasures of sex, but about the great multiplicity of those pleasures. It is that psychic preparation, that experimentation, that conscious work on our own sexualities that has allowed many of us to change our sexual behaviors — something that brutal "behavioral therapies" tried unsuccessfully for over a century to force us to do — very quickly and very dramatically.... All those who contend that gay male promiscuity is merely sexual *compulsion* resulting from fear of intimacy are now faced with very strong evidence against their prejudices.... Gay male promiscuity should be seen instead as a positive model of how sexual pleasures might be pursued by and granted to everyone if those pleasures were not confined within the narrow limits of institutionalized sexuality.[27]

AIDS is a special case, and this model of sexual culture has been typically male. But sexual practice is only one kind of counterintimacy. More important is the critical practical knowledge that allows such relations to count as intimate, to be not empty release or transgression but a common language of self-cultivation, shared knowledge, and the exchange of inwardness.

Queer culture has found it necessary to develop this knowledge in mobile sites of drag, youth culture, music, dance, parades, flaunting, and cruising — sites whose mobility makes them possible but also renders them hard to recognize as world making because they are so fragile and ephemeral. They are paradigmatically trivialized as "lifestyle." But to understand them only as self-expression or as a demand for recognition would be to misrecognize the fundamentally unequal material conditions whereby the institutions of social reproduction are coupled to the forms of hetero culture.[28] Contexts of queer world making depend on parasitic

and fugitive elaboration through gossip, dance clubs, softball leagues, and the phone-sex ads that increasingly are the commercial support for print-mediated left culture in general.[29] Queer is difficult to entextualize *as* culture.

This is particularly true of intimate culture. Heteronormative forms of intimacy are supported, as we have argued, not only referentially, in overt discourse such as love plots and sentimentality, but materially, in marriage and family law, in the architecture of the domestic, in the zoning of work and politics. Queer culture, by contrast, has almost no institutional matrix for its counterintimacies. In the absence of marriage and the rituals that organize life around matrimony, improvisation is always necessary for the speech act of pledging, or the narrative practice of dating, or for such apparently noneconomic economies as joint checking. The heteronormativity in such practices may seem weak and indirect. After all, same-sex couples have sometimes been able to invent versions of such practices. But they have done so only by betrothing the couple form and its language of personal significance, leaving untransformed the material and ideological conditions that divide intimacy from history, politics, and publics. The queer project we imagine is not just to destigmatize those average intimacies, not just to give access to the sentimentality of the couple for persons of the same sex, and definitely not to certify as properly private the personal lives of gays and lesbians.[30] Rather, it is to support forms of affective, erotic, and personal living that are public in the sense of accessible, available to memory, and sustained through collective activity.

Because the heteronormative culture of intimacy leaves queer culture especially dependent on ephemeral elaborations in urban space and print culture, queer publics are also peculiarly vulnerable to initiatives such as Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's zoning law. The law aims to restrict any counterpublic sexual culture by regulating its

economic conditions; its effects will reach far beyond the adult businesses it explicitly controls. The gay bars on Christopher Street draw customers from people who come there because of its sex trade. The street is cruisier because of the sex shops. The boutiques that sell freedom rings and Don't Panic T-shirts do more business for the same reasons. Not all of the thousands who migrate or make pilgrimages to Christopher Street use the porn shops, but all benefit from the fact that some do. After a certain point, a quantitative change is a qualitative change. A critical mass develops. The street becomes queer. It develops a dense, publicly accessible sexual culture. It therefore becomes a base for nonporn businesses, like the Oscar Wilde Bookshop. And it becomes a political base from which to pressure politicians with a gay voting bloc.

No group is more dependent on this kind of pattern in urban space than queers. If we could not concentrate a publicly accessible culture somewhere, we would always be outnumbered and overwhelmed. And because what brings us together is sexual culture, there are very few places in the world that have assembled much of a queer population without a base in sex commerce; and even those that do exist, such as the lesbian culture in Northampton, Massachusetts, are stronger because of their ties to places like the West Village, Dupont Circle, West Hollywood, and the Castro. Respectable gays like to think that they owe nothing to the sexual subculture they think of as sleazy. But their success, their way of living, their political rights, and their very identities would never have been possible but for the existence of the public sexual culture they now despise. Extinguish it, and almost all *out* gay or queer culture will wither on the vine. No one knows this connection better than the right. Conservatives would not so flagrantly contradict their stated belief in a market free from government interference if they did not see this kind of hyperregulation as an important victory.

The point here is not that queer politics needs more free-market ideology but that heteronormative forms, so central to the accumulation and reproduction of capital, also depend on heavy interventions in the regulation of capital. One of the most disturbing fantasies in the zoning scheme, for example, is the idea that an urban locale is a community of shared interest based on residence and property. The ideology of the neighborhood is politically unchallengeable in the current debate, which is dominated by a fantasy that sexual subjects only reside, that the space relevant to sexual politics is the neighborhood. But a district like Christopher Street is not just a neighborhood affair. The local character of the neighborhood depends on the daily presence of thousands of nonresidents. Those who actually live in the West Village should not forget their debt to these mostly queer pilgrims. And we should not make the mistake of confusing the class of citizens with the class of property owners. Many of those who hang out on Christopher Street – typically young, queer, and African-American – couldn't possibly afford to live there. Urban space is always a host space. The right to the city extends to those who use the city.[31] It is not limited to property owners. It is not because of a fluke in the politics of zoning that urban space is so deeply misrecognized; normal sexuality requires such misrecognitions, including their economic and legal enforcement, in order to sustain its illusion of humanity.

Tweaking and Thwacking

Queer social theory is committed to sexuality as an inescapable category of analysis, agitation, and refunctioning: like class relations, which in this moment are mainly visible in the polarized embodiments of identity forms, heteronormativity is a fundamental motor of social organization in the United States, a founding condition of unequal and exploitative relations throughout

even straight society. Any social theory that miscomprehends this participates in their reproduction.

The project of thinking about sex in public does not only engage sex when it is disavowed or suppressed. Even if sex practice is not the object domain of queer studies, sex is everywhere present. But where is the tweaking, thwacking, thumping, sliming, and rubbing you might have expected — or dreaded — in an essay on sex? We close with two scenes that might have happened on the same day in our wanderings around the city. One afternoon, we were riding with a young straight couple we know in their station wagon. Gingerly, after much circumlocution, they brought the conversation around to vibrators. These are people whose reproductivity governs their lives, their aspirations, their relations to money and entailment, mediating their relations to everyone and everything else. But the woman in this couple had recently read an article in a women's magazine about sex toys and other forms of nonreproductive eroticism. She and her husband did some mail-order shopping and became increasingly involved in what from most points of view would count as queer sex practices: their bodies have become disorganized and exciting to them. They said to us: you're the only people we can talk to about this; to all of our straight friends, this would make us perverts. In order not to feel like perverts, they had to make *us* into a kind of sex public.

Later, the question of aversion and perversion came up again. This time, we were in a bar that on most nights is a garden-variety leather bar but that on Wednesday nights hosts a sex-performance event called "Pork." Shows typically include spanking, flagellation, shaving, branding, laceration, bondage, humiliation, wrestling — you know, the usual: amateur, everyday practitioners strutting for everyone else's gratification, not unlike an academic conference. This night, word was circulating that the performance was to be erotic vomiting. This sounded like an appetite spoiler, and

the thought of leaving early occurred to us but was overcome by a simple curiosity: What would the foreplay be like? Let's stay until it gets messy. Then we can leave.

A boy, twentyish, very skateboard, comes on the low stage at one end of the bar, wearing Lycra shorts and a dog collar. He sits loosely in a restraining chair. His partner, the vomiting top, comes out and tilts the bottom's head up to the ceiling, stretching out his throat. Behind them is an array of foods. The top begins pouring milk down the boy's throat, then food, then more milk. It spills over, down his chest and onto the floor. A dynamic is established between them in which they carefully keep at the threshold of gagging. The bottom struggles to keep taking in more than he really can. The top is careful to give him just enough to stretch his capacities. From time to time, a baby bottle is offered as a respite, but soon the rhythm intensifies. The boy's stomach is beginning to rise and pulse, almost convulsively.

It is at this point that we realize we cannot leave, cannot even look away. No one can. The crowd is transfixed by the scene of intimacy and display, control and abandon, ferocity and abjection. People are moaning softly with admiration, then whistling, stomping, screaming encouragements. They have pressed forward in a compact and intimate group. Finally, as the top inserts two, then three fingers in the bottom's throat, insistently offering his own stomach for the repeated climaxes, we realize that we have never seen such a display of trust and violation. We are breathless. But, good academics that we are, we also have some questions to ask. Word has gone around that the boy is straight. We want to know: What does that mean in this context? How did you discover that this is what you want to do? How did you find a male top to do it with? How did you come to do it in a leather bar? Where else do you do this? How do you feel about your new partners, this audience?

We did not get to ask these questions, but we have others that we can pose now about these scenes where sex appears more sublime than narration itself, neither redemptive nor transgressive, moral nor immoral, hetero nor homo, or sutured to any axis of social legitimation. We have been arguing that sex opens a wedge to the transformation of those social norms that require only its static intelligibility or its *deadness* as a source of meaning.[32] In these cases, though, paths through publicity led to the production of nonheteronormative bodily contexts. They intended nonheteronormative worlds because they refused to pretend that privacy was their ground; because they were forms of sociability that delinked money and family from the scene of the good life; because they made sex the consequence of public mediations and collective self-activity in a way that made for unpredicted pleasures; because, in turn, they attempted to make a context of support for their practices; because their pleasures were not purchased by a redemptive pastoralism of sex or by mandatory amnesia about failure, shame, and aversion.[33]

We are used to thinking about sexuality as a form of intimacy and subjectivity, and we have just demonstrated how limited that representation is. But the heteronormativity of U.S. culture is not something that can easily be rezoned or disavowed by individual acts of will, by a subversiveness imagined only as personal rather than as the basis of public formation, or even by the lyric moments that interrupt the hostile cultural narrative that we have been staging here. Remembering the utopian wish behind normal intimate life, we also want to remember that we aren't married to it.

Chapter Six

Something Queer About the Nation-State*

Because the term has been understood to promise so much, it's embarrassing that both the word "queer" and the concept of queerness turn out to be thoroughly embedded in modern Anglo-American culture. Having energized a subcultural style, a political movement, and a wave of rethinking among intellectuals, queerness has come to stand for a far-reaching change in sexual politics. Under its banner, some have gone so far as to herald a general subversion of identity. Others have linked queer politics to a globalizing culture of postmodernism. In my view, these readings of queerness have vaulted over the conditions in which queer politics has made sense. The term does not translate very far with any ease, and its potential for transformation seems mostly specific to a cultural context that has not been brought into focus in the theory of queerness. Even in cultures with well-organized gay movements and a taste for Americanisms, there has been little attempt to import the politics with which the label has been associated here. In the New World Order, we should be more than usually cautious about global utopianisms that require American slang.

*Originally published in *After Political Correctness*, ed. Christopher Newfield (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

14. "F.D.R., Anyone?" *Nation*, May 22, 1989, p. 689.

15. For a critique of the still-popular notion of media manipulation, see Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," in *Critical Essays* (New York: Continuum, 1982), pp. 46–76.

16. John Waters, *Shock Value* (New York: Dell, 1981), p. 24.

17. Jacques Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 19.

18. Waters, *Shock Value*, p. 26.

19. Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 83–84 and passim.

20. Jan Zita Grover, "AIDS: Keywords," *October* 43 (1987), p. 23. This issue has since been reprinted as Douglas Crimp, ed., *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

21. Susan Stewart, "Ceci Tuera Cela: Graffiti as Crime and Art," in John Fekete, ed., *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), pp. 175–76.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

Chapter Five: Sex in Public

1. On "public sex" in the standard sense, see Pat Califia, *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex* (Pittsburgh, PA: Cleis Press, 1994). On " identities and acts," see Janet Halley, "The Status/Conduct Distinction in the 1993 Revisions to Military Antigay Policy: A Legal Archaeology," *GLQ* 3 (1996), pp. 159–252.

2. The classic political argument for sexual derepression as a condition of freedom is put forth in Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). In contemporary pro-sex thought inspired by Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1978), the denunciation of "erotic injustice and sexual oppression" is situated less in the freedom of individuals than in analyses of the normative and coercive relations between specific "populations" and the institutions created to manage them (Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* [Boston: Pandora Press, 1984], p. 275).

3. By heteronormativity we mean the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged. Its coherence is always provisional, and its privilege can take several (sometimes contradictory) forms: unmarked as the basic idiom of the personal and the social; or marked as a natural state; or projected as an ideal or moral accomplishment. It consists less of norms that could be summarized as a body of doctrine than of a sense of rightness produced in contradictory manifestations – often unconscious, immanent to practice or to institutions. Contexts that have little visible relation to sex practice, such as life narrative and generational identity, can be heteronormative in this sense, while in other contexts forms of sex between men and women might *not* be heteronormative. Heteronormativity is thus a concept distinct from heterosexuality. One of the most conspicuous differences is that it has no parallel, the way heterosexuality organizes homosexuality as its opposite. Because homosexuality can never have the invisible, tacit, society-founding rightness that heterosexuality has, it would not be possible to speak of "homonormativity" in the same sense. See Michael Warner, "Fear of a Queer Planet," *Social Text* 29 (1991), pp. 3–17.

4. *Time*, special issue, 142.21 (Fall 1993). This analysis reworks materials in Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 200–208.

5. For a treatment of the centrality of "blood" to U.S. nationalist discourse, see Bonnie Honig, *No Place Like Home: Democracy and the Politics of Foreignness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

6. See, for example, William Bennett, *The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster* (New York: Random House, 1995); William A. Henry III, *In Defense of Elitism* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

7. On the family form in national rhetoric, see Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750–1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and Shirley Samuels, *Romances of the Republic: Women, the Family, and Violence in the Literature of the Early*

American Nation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). On fantasies of genetic assimilation, see Robert S. Tilton, *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 9–33; and Elise Lemire, "Making Miscegenation" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1996).

8. The concept of welfare-state governmentality has a growing literature. For a concise statement, see Jürgen Habermas, "The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies," in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, trans. Shierry Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 48–70. Michael Warner has discussed the relation between this analysis and queer culture in "Something Queer About the Nation-State," below chapter 6.

9. *Congressional Record*, 1st sess., 1989, vol. 135, no. 134, S12967.

10. Political geography in this way produces systematic effects of violence. Queers are forced to find each other in untrafficked areas because of the combined pressures of propriety, stigma, the closet, and state regulation such as laws against public lewdness. The same areas are known to gay bashers and other criminals. And they are disregarded by police. The effect is to make both violence and police neglect seem natural hazards, voluntarily courted by queers. As the 1996 documentary film *Licensed to Kill* illustrates, antigay violence has been difficult to combat by legal means; victims are reluctant to come forward in any public and prosecutorial framework, while bashers can appeal to the geographic circumstances to implicate the victims themselves. The legal means has helped to produce the violence it is called on to remedy.

11. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

12. Gay and lesbian theory, especially in the humanities, frequently emphasizes psychoanalytic or psychoanalytic-style models of subject formation, the differences among which are significant and yet all of which tend to block out the difference between the categories male/female and the process and project of heteronormativity. Three propositional paradigms are relevant here: those that propose that human identity itself is fundamentally organized by gender identifications that are hardwired into infants; those that equate the clarities of

gender identity with the domination of a relatively coherent and vertically stable "straight" ideology; and those that focus on a phallocentric Symbolic order that produces gendered subjects who live out the destiny of their positioning in it. The psychoanalytic and philosophical insights and limits of these models (which, we feel, underdescribe the practices, institutions, and incongruities of heteronormativity) require further engagement. For the time being, these works stand in as the most challenging relevant archive: Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) and *The Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margin* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992). Psychoanalytic work on sexuality does not always latch acts and inclinations to natural or constructed "identity"; see, for example, Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) and "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in Douglas Crimp, ed., *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

13. The notion of metaculture we borrow from Greg Urban; see his *Toward a Discourse-Centered Approach to Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991) and *Noumenal Community: Myth and Reality in an Amerindian Brazilian Society* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996). On normalization, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 184–85; and *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), p. 144. Foucault derives his argument here from the revised version of Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, trans. Carolyn Fawcett (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

14. Here we are influenced by Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), and Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600–1900* (London: Verso, 1988), though heteronormativity is a problem not often made visible in Coontz's work.

15. On privatization and intimacy politics, see Berlant, *Queen of America*, pp. 1–24, and "Feminism and the Institutions of Intimacy," in E. Ann Kaplan and George Levine, eds., *The Politics of Research* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Honig, *No Place Like Home*; Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "The Body as Property," in Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, eds., *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). On privatization and national capitalism, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); and Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1992).

16. This language for community is a problem for gay historiography. In otherwise fine and important studies such as Esther Newton's *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), or Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis's *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), or even George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), community is imagined as whole-person, face-to-face relations—local, experiential, proximate, and saturating. But queer worlds seldom manifest themselves in such forms. Cherry Grove—a seasonal resort depending heavily on weekend visits by New Yorkers—may be typical less of a "gay and lesbian town" than of the way queer sites are specialized spaces in which transits can project alternative worlds. John D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) is an especially interesting example of the imaginative power of the idealization of local community for queers. The book charts the separate tracks of political organizing and local scenes such as bar life, showing that when the "movement" and the "subculture" began to converge in San Francisco, the result was a new formation with a new utopian appeal: "A 'community,'" D'Emilio writes, "was in fact forming around a shared sexual orientation" (p. 195). D'Emilio (wisely) keeps quotation marks around "community" in the very sentence declaring it to exist in fact.

17. David M. Halperin, "Sex Before Sexuality: Pederasty, Politics, and Power in Classical Athens," in Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, eds., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: New American Library, 1989), p. 49. The list Halperin cites is from Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.2 (pp. 8.21–9.4 Pack).

18. Studies of intimacy that do not assume this "web of mutuality," either as the self-evident nature of intimacy or as a human value, are rare. Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), and Niklas Luhmann's *Love As Passion*, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), both try, in very different ways, to describe the production of intimacy analytically. More typical is Anthony Giddens's attempt to theorize intimacy as "pure relationship" in *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). There, ironically, it is "the gays who are the pioneers" in separating the "pure relationship" of love from extraneous institutions and contexts such as marriage and reproduction.

19. See our "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About *X*?" *PMLA* 110.3 (May 1995), pp. 343–49.

20. William Bennett, quoted in *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1995, p. A25.

21. Biddy Martin, "Extraordinary Homosexuals and the Fear of Being Ordinary," *Differences* 6.2/3 (1994), pp. 122–23.

22. In some traditions of social theory, the process of world making as we describe it here is seen as common to all social actors. See, for example, Alfred Schutz's emphasis on the practices of typification and projects of action involved in ordinary knowledge of the social, in *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. G. Walsh and F. Lehnert (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967). Yet in most contexts, the social world is understood not as constructed by reference to types or projects but as an instantiated whole in a form capable of reproducing itself. The family, the state, a neighborhood, the human species, or institutions such as schools and churches—such images of social being share an appearance of plenitude seldom approached in contexts of queer world making. However much the latter might resemble the process of world construction

in ordinary contexts, queer worlds do not have the power to represent a taken-for-granted social existence.

23. See, for example, Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1990), pp. 1–19; Laurie J. Shannon, "Emilia's Argument: Friendship and 'Human Title' in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," *ELH* 64.3 (Fall 1997); and Roger Chartier, ed., *Passions of the Renaissance*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, vol. 3 of *A History of Private Life*, eds. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

24. On the relation between Foucault and Habermas, we take inspiration from Tom McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 47–75.

25. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 49 and 46.

26. On the centrality of semipublic spaces like tearooms, bathrooms, and bathhouses to gay male life, see Chauncey, *Gay New York*; Lee Edelman, "Tearooms and Sympathy, or, Epistemology of the Water Closet," in Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, eds., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 263–84. The spaces of both gay and lesbian semipublic sexual practices are investigated in David Bell and Gill Valentine, eds., *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

27. Douglas Crimp, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic," *October* 43 (Winter 1987), p. 253.

28. The notion of a demand for recognition has recently been advanced by a number of thinkers as a way of understanding multicultural politics. See, for example, Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995); and Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). We are suggesting that although queer politics does contest the terrain of recognition, it cannot be conceived as a politics of recognition *as opposed to* an issue of distributive justice; this is the distinction proposed in Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of

Justice in a 'Postsocialist' Age," *New Left Review* 212 (July/Aug. 1995), pp. 68–93, reprinted in her *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

29. See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*; and Yvonne Zipter, *Diamonds Are a Dyke's Best Friend: Reflections, Reminiscences, and Reports from the Field on the Lesbian National Pastime* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1988).

30. Such a politics is increasingly recommended within the gay movement. See, for example, Andrew Sullivan, *Same-Sex Marriage, Pro and Con* (New York: Vintage, 1997); Michelangelo Signorile, *Life Outside* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); Gabriel Rotello, *Sexual Ecology: AIDS and the Destiny of Gay Men* (New York: Dutton, 1997); William N. Eskridge, *The Case for Same-Sex Marriage: From Sexual Liberty to Civilized Commitment* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Robert Baird and Stuart Rosenbaum, eds., *Same-Sex Marriage: The Moral and Legal Debate* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996); and Mark Strasser, *Legally Wed: Same-Sex Marriage and the Constitution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

31. The phrase "the right to the city" is Henri Lefebvre's, from his 1968 *Le Droit à la ville*, trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, in Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996). See also Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

32. On "deadness" as an affect and aspiration of normative social membership, see "Live Sex Acts," in Berlant, *Queen of America*, pp. 59–60 and 79–81.

33. The argument against the redemptive sex pastoralism of normative sexual ideology is classically made in Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?"; on redemptive visions more generally, see his *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

Chapter Six: Something Queer About the Nation-State

1. See Lisa Duggan, "Making It Perfectly Queer," *Socialist Review* 22.1 (1992), pp. 11–32; and Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, "Queer Nationality," in Michael Warner, ed., *Fear of a Queer Planet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 193–229.