The Cultural Politics of Emotion

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Contents

CHAPTER 7

Queer Feelings

> As the immigrant makes visible the processes of production, she also exemplifies the idea that the family is in need of protection because it is losing its viability, increasingly posed in the horrors of the imaginary as needing ever more fierce strategies of security to ensure its ideal of reproducing itself. It is this connection that is hidden – a relation between the production of life (both discursive and reproductive) and global production. (Goodman 2001: 194)

As I argued in the previous two chapters, the reproduction of life itself, where life is conflated with a social ideal ('life as we know it') is often represented as threatened by the existence of others: immigrants, queers, other others. These others become sources of fascination that allow the ideal to be posited as ideal through their embodiment of the failure of the ideal to be translated into being or action. We might note that 'reproduction' itself comes under question. The reproduction of life – in the form of the future generation – becomes bound up with the reproduction of culture, through the stabilisation of specific arrangements for living ('the family'). The family is idealisable through the narrative of threat and insecurity; the family is presented as vulnerable, and as needing to be defended against others who violate the conditions of its reproduction. As Goodman shows us, the moral defence of the family as a way of life becomes a matter of 'global politics'. I have already considered how the defence of the war against terrorism has evoked 'the family' as the origin of love, community and support (see Chapter 3). What needs closer examination is how heterosexuality becomes a script that binds the familial with the global: the coupling of man and woman becomes a kind of 'birthing', a giving birth not only to new life, but to ways of living that are already recognisable as forms of civilisation. It is this narrative of coupling as a condition for the reproduction of life, culture and value that explains the slide in racist narratives between the fear of strangers and

immigrants (xenophobia), the fear of queers (homophobia) and the fear of miscegenation (as well as other illegitimate couplings).

These narratives or scripts do not, of course, simply exist 'out there' to legislate the political actions of states. They also shape bodies and lives, including those that follow and depart from such narratives in the ways in which they love and live, in the decisions that they make and take within the intimate spheres of home and work. It is important to consider how compulsory heterosexuality – defined as the accumulative effect of the repetition of the narrative of heterosexuality as an ideal coupling – shapes what it is possible for bodies to do,[1] even if it does not contain what it is possible to be. Bodies take the shape of norms that are repeated over time and with force. The work of repetition involves the concealment of labour under the sign of nature. In this chapter, I want to argue that norms surface *as* the surfaces of bodies; norms are a matter of impressions, of how bodies are 'impressed upon' by the world, as a world made up of others. In other words, such impressions are effects of labour; how bodies work and are worked upon shapes the surfaces of bodies. Regulative norms function in a way as 'repetitive strain injuries' (RSIs). Through repeating some gestures and not others, or through being orientated in some directions and not others, bodies become contorted; they get twisted into shapes that enable some action only insofar as they restrict capacity for other kinds of action.

I would suggest that heteronormativity also affects the surfaces of bodies, which surface through impressions made by others. Compulsory heterosexuality shapes bodies by the assumption that a body 'must' orient itself towards some objects and not others, objects that are secured as ideal through the fantasy of difference (see Chapter 6). Hence compulsory heterosexuality shapes which bodies one 'can' legitimately approach as would-be lovers and which one cannot. In shaping one's approach to others, compulsory heterosexuality also shapes one's own body, *as a congealed history of past approaches*. Sexual orientation is not then simply about the direction one takes towards an object of desire, as if this direction does not affect other things that we do. Sexual orientation involves bodies that leak into worlds; it involves a way of orientating the body towards and away from others, which affects how one can enter different kinds of social spaces (which presumes certain bodies, certain directions, certain ways of loving and living), even if it does not lead bodies to the same places. To make a simple but important point: orientations affect what it is that bodies can do.[2] Hence, the failure to orient oneself 'towards' the ideal sexual object affects how we live in the world, an affect that is readable as the failure to reproduce, and as a threat to the social ordering of life itself.

Of course, one does not have to do what one is compelled to do: for something to be compulsory shows that it is not necessary. But to refuse to

be compelled by the narratives of ideal heterosexuality in one's orientation to others is still to be affected by those narratives; they work to script one's orientation as a form of disobedience. The affects of 'not following' the scripts can be multiple. We can consider, for example, the psychic as well as social costs of loving a body that is supposed to be unloveable for the subject I am, or loving a body that I was 'supposed to' repudiate, which may include shame and melancholia (Butler 1997b; Braidotti 2002: 53; see Chapter 5). The negative affects of 'not quite' living in the norms show us how loving loves that are not 'normative' involves being subject to such norms precisely in the costs and damage that are incurred when not following them. Do queer moments happen when this failure to reproduce norms as forms of life is embraced or affirmed as a political and ethical alternative? Such affirmation would not be about the conversion of shame into pride, but the enjoyment of the negativity of shame, an enjoyment of that which has been designated shameful by normative culture (see Barber and Clark 2002: 22–9).

In this chapter, I could ask the question: How does it feel to inhabit a body that fails to reproduce an ideal? But this is not my question. Instead, I wish to explore 'queer feelings' without translating such an exploration into a matter of 'feeling queer'. Such a translation would assume 'queerness' involves a particular emotional life, or that there are feelings that bodies 'have' given their failure to inhabit or follow a heterosexual ideal. Of course, one can feel queer. There are feelings involved in the self-perception of 'queerness', a self-perception that is bodily, as well as bound up with 'taking on' a name. But these feelings are mediated and they are attached to the category 'queer' in ways that are complex and contingent, precisely because the category is produced in relation to histories that render it a sign of failed being or 'non-being'.[3] In examining the affective potential of queer, I will firstly consider the relationship between norms and affects in debates on queer families. I will then discuss the role of grief in queer politics with specific reference to queer responses to September 11. And finally, I will reflect on the role of pleasure in queer lifestyles or countercultures, and will ask how the enjoyment of social and sexual relations that are designated as 'non-(re)productive' can function as forms of political disturbance in an affective economy organised around the principle that pleasure is only ethical as an incentive or reward for good conduct.

(DIS)COMFORT AND NORMS

It is important to consider how heterosexuality functions powerfully not only as a series of norms and ideals, but also through emotions that shape bodies as well as worlds: (hetero)norms are investments, which are 'taken on' and

'taken in' by subjects. To practise heterosexuality by following its scripts in one's choice of some love objects – and refusal of others – is also to become invested in the reproduction of heterosexuality. Of course, one does not 'do' heterosexuality simply through who one does and does not have sex with. Heterosexuality as a script for an ideal life makes much stronger claims. It is assumed that all arrangements will follow from the arrangement of the couple: man/woman. It is no accident that compulsory heterosexuality works powerfully in the most casual modes of conversation. One asks: 'Do you have a boyfriend?' (to a girl), or one asks: 'Do you have a girlfriend?' (to a boy). Queer subjects feel the tiredness of making corrections and departures; the pressure of this insistence, this presumption, this demand that asks either for a 'passing over' (a moment of passing, which is not always available) or for direct or indirect forms of self-revelation ('but actually, he's a she' or 'she's a he', or just saying 'she' instead of 'he' or 'he' instead of 'she' at the 'obvious' moment). No matter how 'out' you may be, how (un)comfortably queer you may feel, those moments of interpellation get repeated over time, and can be experienced as a bodily injury; moments which position queer subjects as failed in their failure to live up to the 'hey you too' of heterosexual self-narration. The everydayness of compulsory heterosexuality is also its affectiveness, wrapped up as it is with moments of ceremony (birth, marriage, death), which bind families together, and with the ongoing investment in the sentimentality of friendship and romance. Of course, such sentimentality is deeply embedded with public as well as private culture; stories of heterosexual romance proliferate as a matter of human interest. As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner argue: 'National heterosexuality is the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitised space of sentimental feeling' (Berlant and Warner 2000: 313).

We can consider the sanitised space as a comfort zone. Normativity is comfortable for those who can inhabit it. The word 'comfort' suggests well-being and satisfaction, but it also suggests an ease and easiness. To follow the rules of heterosexuality is to be at ease in a world that reflects back the couple form one inhabits as an ideal.[4] Of course, one can be made to feel uneasy by one's inhabitance of an ideal. One can be made uncomfortable by one's own comforts. To see heterosexuality as an ideal that one might or might not follow – or to be uncomfortable by the privileges one is given by inhabiting a heterosexual world – is a less comforting form of comfort. But comfort it remains and comfort is very hard to notice when one experiences it. Having uncomfortably inhabited the comforts of heterosexuality for many years, I know this too well. Now, living a queer life, I can reflect on many comforts that I did not even begin to notice despite my 'felt' discomforts. We don't tend to notice what is comfortable, even when we think we do.

Thinking about comfort is hence always a useful starting place for

thinking. So let's think about how it feels to be comfortable. Say you are sinking into a comfortable chair. Note I already have transferred the affect to an object ('it is comfortable'). But comfort is about the fit between body and object: my comfortable chair may be awkward for you, with your differently-shaped body. Comfort is about an encounter between more than one body, which is the promise of a 'sinking' feeling. It is, after all, pain or discomfort that return one's attention to the surfaces of the body *as body* (see Chapter 1). To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins. One fits, and by fitting, the surfaces of bodies disappear from view. The disappearance of the surface is instructive: in feelings of comfort, bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies. The sinking feeling involves a seamless space, or a space where you can't see the 'stitches' between bodies.

Heteronormativity functions as a form of public comfort by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape. Those spaces are lived as comfortable as they allow bodies to fit in; the surfaces of social space are already impressed upon by the shape of such bodies (like a chair that acquires its shape by the repetition of some bodies inhabiting it: we can almost see the shape of bodies as 'impressions' on the surface). The impressions acquired by surfaces function as traces of bodies. We can even see this process in social spaces. As Gill Valentine has argued, the 'heterosexualisation' of public spaces such as streets is naturalised by the repetition of different forms of heterosexual conduct (images on billboards, music played, displays of heterosexual intimacy and so on), a process which goes unnoticed by heterosexual subjects (Valentine 1996: 149). The surfaces of social as well as bodily space 'record' the repetition of acts, and the passing by of some bodies and not others.

Heteronormativity also becomes a form of comforting: one feels better by the warmth of being faced by a world one has already taken in. One does not notice this *as a world* when one has been shaped by that world, and even acquired its shape. Norms may not only have a way of disappearing from view, but may also be that which we do not consciously feel.[5] Queer subjects, when faced by the 'comforts' of heterosexuality may feel uncomfortable (the body does not 'sink into' a space that has already taken its shape). Discomfort is a feeling of disorientation: one's body feels out of place, awkward, unsettled. I know that feeling too well, the sense of out-of-place-ness and estrangement involves an acute awareness of the surface of one's body, which appears *as* surface, when one cannot inhabit the social skin, which is shaped by some bodies, and not others. Furthermore, queer subjects may also be 'asked' not to make heterosexuals feel uncomfortable by avoiding the display of signs of queer intimacy, which is itself an uncomfortable feeling, a restriction on what one can do with one's body, and another's body, in social space.[6]

The availability of comfort for some bodies may depend on the labour of others, and the burden of concealment. Comfort may operate as a form of 'feeling fetishism': some bodies can 'have' comfort, only as an effect of the work of others, where the work itself is concealed from view.[7]

It is hence for very good reasons that queer theory has been defined not only as anti-heteronormative, but as anti-normative. As Tim Dean and Christopher Lane argue, queer theory 'advocates a politics based on resistance to all norms' (Dear and Lane 2001: 7). Importantly, heteronormativity refers to more than simply the presumption that it is normal to be heterosexual. The 'norm' is regulative, and is supported by an 'ideal' that associates sexual conduct with other forms of conduct. We can consider, for example, how the restriction of the love object is not simply about the desirability of *any* heterosexual coupling. The couple should be 'a good match' (a judgement that often exercises conventional class and racial assumptions about the importance of 'matching' the backgrounds of partners) and they should exclude others from the realm of sexual intimacy (an idealisation of monogamy, that often equates intimacy with property rights or rights to the intimate other as property). Furthermore, a heterosexual coupling may only approximate an ideal through being sanctioned by marriage, by participating in the ritual of reproduction and good parenting, by being good neighbours as well as lovers and parents, and by being even better citizens. In this way, normative culture involves the differentiation between legitimate and illegitimate ways of living whereby the preservation of what is legitimate ('life as we know it') is assumed to be necessary for the well-being of the next generation. Heteronormativity involves the reproduction or transmission of culture through how one lives one's life in relation to others.

For queer theorists, it is hence important that queer lives do not follow the scripts of heteronormative culture: they do not become, in Judith Halberstam's provocative and compelling term, 'homonormative' lives (Halberstam 2003: 331). Such lives would not desire access to comfort; they would maintain their discomfort with all aspects of normative culture in how they live. Ideally, they would not have families, get married, settle down into unthinking coupledom, give birth to and raise children, join neighbourhood watch, or pray for the nation in times of war. Each of these acts would 'support' the ideals that script such lives as queer, failed and unliveable in the first place. The aspiration to ideals of conduct that is central to the reproduction of heteronormativity has been called, quite understandably, a form of assimilation.

Take, for instance, the work of Andrew Sullivan. In his *Virtually Normal* he argues that most gay people want to be normal; and that being gay does not mean being not normal, even if one is not quite as normal as a straight person (to paraphrase Homi Bhabha, 'almost normal, but not quite'). So he

suggests that one can aspire to *have* a heterosexual life without *being* heterosexual: the only difference would be the choice of one's love object. As he puts it:

> It's perfectly possible to combine a celebration of the traditional family with the celebration of a stable homosexual relationship. The one, after all, is modelled on the other. If constructed carefully as a conservative social ideology, the notion of stable gay relationships might even serve to buttress the ethic of heterosexual marriage, by showing how even those excluded from it can wish to model themselves on its shape and structure. (Sullivan 1996: 112)

Here, gay relationships are valued and celebrated insofar as they are 'modelled' on the traditional model of the heterosexual family. Indeed, Sullivan explicitly defines his project as a way of supporting and extending the ideal of the family by showing how those who are 'not it' seek to 'become it'. Gay relationships, by miming the forms of heterosexual coupling, hence pledge their allegiance to the very forms they cannot inhabit. This mimicry is, as Douglas Crimp (2002) has argued, a way of sustaining the psychic conditions of melancholia insofar as Sullivan identifies with that which he cannot be, and indeed with what has already rejected him. As Crimp remarks, Sullivan is 'incapable of recognising the intractability of homophobia because his melancholia consists precisely in his identification with the homophobe's repudiation of him' (Crimp 2002: 6). Assimilation involves a desire to approximate an ideal that one has already failed; an identification with one's designation as a failed subject. The choice of assimilation – queer skin, straight masks – is clearly about supporting the violence of heteronormative distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate lives.[8]

As Judith Butler has argued, one of the biggest problems in campaigns for gay marriage is precisely the way that they may strengthen the hierarchy between legitimate and illegitimate lives. Rather than the hierarchy resting on a distinction between gay and straight, it becomes displaced onto a new distinction between more and less legitimate queer relationships (Butler 2002a: 18). As she asks, does gay marriage 'only become an "option" by extending itself as a norm (and thus foreclosing options), one which also extends property relations and renders the social forms for sexuality more conservative'? (Butler 2002a: 21). In other words, if some of the rights of heterosexuality are extended to queers, what happens to queers who don't take up those rights; whose life choices and sexual desires cannot be translated into the form of marriage, even when emptied of its predication on heterosexual coupling? Do these (non-married) queers become the illegitimate others against which the ideal of marriage is supported?

Of course, the question of gay marriage remains a political dilemma. For not to support the extension of the right of marriage to gay relationships could give support to the status quo, which maintains the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate lives on the grounds of sexual orientation. As Judith Butler (2002a) argues, the social and psychic costs of not having one's relationship recognised by others (whether or not the recognition is determined by law) are enormous especially in situations of loss and bereavement (see the following section). I want to enter this debate by considering how the political choice of being queer or straight (or an assimilated queer) can be contested. Butler herself contests the choice through adopting a position of ambivalence. Whilst I recognise the value of such ambivalence, I want to suggest that more reflection on queer attachments might allow us to avoid positing assimilation or transgression as choices.

To begin with, we can return to my description of what we might call a queer life. I suggested that 'ideally' such lives will maintain a discomfort with the scripts of heteronormative existence. The reliance on this word is telling. For already in describing what may be queer, I am also defining grounds of an ideality, in which to have an ideal queer life, or even to be legitimately queer, people must act in some ways rather than others. We need to ask: How does defining a queer ideal rely on the existence of others who fail the ideal? Who can and cannot embody the queer ideal? Such an ideal is not equally accessible to all, even all those who identify with the sign 'queer' or other 'signs' of non-normative sexuality. Gayatri Gopinath (2003), for example, reflects on how public and visible forms of 'queerness' may not be available to lesbians from South Asia, where it may be in the private spaces of home that bodies can explore homo-erotic pleasures. Her argument shows how queer bodies have different access to public forms of culture, which affect how they can inhabit those publics. Indeed, whilst being queer may feel uncomfortable within heterosexual space, it does not then follow that queers always feel comfortable in queer spaces. I have felt discomfort in some queer spaces, again, as a feeling of being out of place. This is not to say that I have been *made* to feel uncomfortable; the discomfort is itself a sign that queer spaces may extend some bodies more than others (for example, some queer spaces might extend the mobility of white, middle-class bodies). At times, I feel uncomfortable about inhabiting the word 'queer', worrying that I am not queer enough, or have not been queer for long enough, or am just not the right kind of queer. We can feel uncomfortable in the categories we inhabit, even categories that are shaped by their refusal of public comfort.

Furthermore, the positing of an ideal of being free from scripts that define what counts as a legitimate life seems to presume a negative model of freedom; defined here as *freedom from norms*. Such a negative model of freedom idealises movement and detachment, constructing a mobile form

of subjectivity that could escape from the norms that constrain what it is that bodies can do. Others have criticised queer theory for its idealisation of movement (Epps 2001: 412; Fortier 2003). As Epps puts it: 'Queer theory tends to place great stock in movement, especially when it is movement against, beyond, or away from rules and regulations, norms and conventions, borders and limits . . . it makes fluidity a fetish' (Epps 2001: 413). The idealisation of movement, or transformation of movement into a fetish, depends upon the exclusion of others who are already positioned as *not free in the same way*. Bodies that can move with more ease may also more easily shape and be shaped by the sign 'queer'. It is for this reason that Biddy Martin suggests that we need to 'stop defining queerness as mobile and fluid in relation to what then gets construed as stagnant and ensnaring' (Martin 1996: 46). Indeed, the idealisation of movement depends upon a prior model of what counts as a queer life, which may exclude others, those who have attachments that are not readable as queer, or indeed those who may lack the (cultural as well as economic) capital to support the 'risk' of maintaining anti-normativity as a permanent orientation.

Queer lives do not suspend the attachments that are crucial to the reproduction of heteronormativity, and this does not diminish 'queerness', but intensifies the work that it can do. Queer lives remain shaped by that which they fail to reproduce. To turn this around, queer lives shape what gets reproduced: in the very failure to reproduce the norms through how they inhabit them, queer lives produce different effects. For example, the care work of lesbian parents may involve 'having' to live in close proximity to heterosexual cultures (in the negotiation with schools, other mothers, local communities), whilst not being able to inhabit the heterosexual ideal. The gap between the script and the body, including the bodily form of 'the family', may involve discomfort and hence may 'rework' the script. The reworking is not inevitable, as it is dependent or contingent on other social factors (especially class) and it does not necessarily involve conscious political acts.

We can return to my point about comfort: comfort is the effect of bodies being able to 'sink' into spaces that have already taken their shape. Discomfort is not simply a choice or decision – 'I feel uncomfortable about this or that' – but an effect of bodies inhabiting spaces that do not take or 'extend' their shape. So the closer that queer subjects get to the spaces defined by heteronormativity the more *potential* there is for a reworking of the heteronormative,[9] partly as the proximity 'shows' how the spaces extend some bodies rather than others. Such extensions are usually concealed by what they produce: public comfort. What happens when bodies fail to 'sink into' spaces, a failure that we can describe as a 'queering' of space?[10] When does this potential for 'queering' get translated into a transformation of the scripts of compulsory heterosexuality?

It is important, when considering how this potential is translated into transformation, that we do not create a political imperative; for example, by arguing that all lesbian parents should actively work to interrupt the scripts of compulsory heterosexuality. As Jacqui Gabb shows, some lesbian parents may perceive their families to be 'just like other families' (Gabb 2002: 6; see also Lewin 1993). Now, is this a sign of their assimilation and their political failure? Of course, such data could be read in this way. But it also shows the lack of any direct translation between political struggle and the contours of everyday life given the ways in which queer subjects occupy very different places within the social order. Maintaining an active positive of 'transgression' not only takes time, but may not be psychically, socially or materially possible for some individuals and groups given their ongoing and unfinished commitments and histories. Some working-class lesbian parents, for example, might not be able to afford being placed outside the kinship networks within local neighbourhoods: being recognised as 'like any other family' might not simply be strategic, but necessary for survival. Other working-class lesbian parents might not wish to be 'like other families': what might feel necessary for some, could be impossible for others. Assimilation and transgression are not choices that are available to individuals, but are effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals.[11] Even when queer families may wish to be recognised as 'families like other families', their difference from the ideal script produces disturbances – moments of 'non-sinking' – that will require active forms of negotiation in different times and places.

To define a family as queer is already to interrupt one ideal image of the family, based on the heterosexual union, procreation and the biological tie. Rather than thinking of queer families as an extension of an ideal (and hence as a form of assimilation that supports the ideal), we can begin to reflect on the exposure of the failure of the ideal as part of the work that queer families are doing. As Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan suggest, we can consider families as social practices, and 'more as an adjective or, possibly, a verb' (Week, Heaphy and Donovan 2001: 37). Families are *a doing word and a word for doing*. Indeed, thinking of families as what people do in their intimate lives allows us to avoid positing queer families as an alternative ideal, for example, in the assumption that queer families are necessarily more egalitarian (Carrington 1999: 13). Queer lives involve issues of power, responsibility, work and inequalities and, importantly, do not and cannot transcend the social relations of global capitalism (Carrington 1999: 218). Reflecting on the work that is done in queer families, as well as what queer families do, allow us to disrupt the idealisation of the family form.

This argument seems to suggest that queer families may be just like other families in their shared failure to inhabit an ideal. But of course such an argument would neutralise the differences between queer and non-queer

families, as well as the differences between queer families. Families may not 'be' the ideal, which is itself an impossible fantasy, but they have a different relation of proximity to that ideal. For some families the ideal takes the shape of their form (as being heterosexual, white, middle-class, and so on). The 'failure' to inhabit an ideal may or may not be visible to others, and this visibility has effects on the contours of everyday existence. Learning to live with the effects and affects of heterosexism and homophobia may be crucial to what makes queer families different from non-queer families. Such forms of discrimination can have negative effects, involving pain, anxiety, fear, depression and shame, all of which can restrict bodily and social mobility. However, the effects of this failure to embody an ideal are not simply negative. As Kath Weston has argued, queer families often narrate the excitement of creating intimacies that are not based on biological ties, or on established gender relations: 'Far from viewing families we choose as imitations or derivatives of family ties created elsewhere in their society, many lesbians and gay men alluded to the difficulty and excitement of constructing kinship in the *absence* of what they called "models"' (Weston 1991: 116, see also Weston 1995: 93). The absence of models that are appropriate does not mean an absence of models. In fact, it is in 'not fitting' the model of the nuclear family that queer families can work to transform what it is that families can do. The 'non-fitting' or discomfort opens up possibilities, an opening up which can be difficult and exciting.

There remains a risk that 'queer families' could be posited as an ideal within the queer community. If queer families were idealised within the queer community, then fleeting queer encounters, or more casual forms of friendship and alliance, could become seen as failures, or less significant forms of attachment. Queer politics needs to stay open to different ways of doing queer in order to maintain the possibility that differences are not converted into failure. Queer subjects do use different names for what they find significant in their lives and they find significance in different places, including those that are deemed illegitimate in heteronormative cultures. The word 'families' may allow some queers to differentiate between their more and less significant bonds, where significance is not assumed to follow a form that is already given in advance. For others, the word 'families' may be too saturated with affects to be usable in this way. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's vision of the family, for instance, is 'elastic enough to do justice to the depth and sometimes durability of nonmarital and/or nonprocreative bonds, same-sex bonds, nondyadic bonds, bonds not defined by genitality, "step"-bonds, adult sibling bonds, nonbiological bonds across generations, etc' (Sedgwick 1994: 71). But hope cannot be placed simply in the elasticity of the word 'family': that elasticity should not become a fetish, and held in place as an object in which we must all be invested. The hope of 'the family' for queer subjects

may exist only insofar as it is not the only object of hope (see Chapter 8, for an analysis of hope). If we do not legislate what forms queer bonds take – and presume the ontological difference between legitimate and illegitimate bonds – then it is possible for queer bonds to be named as bonds without the demand that other queers 'return' those bonds in the form of shared investment.

It is, after all, the bonds between queers that 'stop' queer bodies from feeling comfortable in spaces that extend the form of the heterosexual couple. We can posit the effects of 'not fitting' as a form of queer discomfort, but a discomfort which is generative, rather than simply constraining or negative. To feel uncomfortable is precisely to be affected by that which persists in the shaping of bodies and lives. Discomfort is hence not about assimilation or resistance, *but about inhabiting norms differently*. The inhabitance is generative or productive insofar as it does not end with the failure of norms to be secured, but with possibilities of living that do not 'follow' those norms through. Queer is not, then, about transcendence or freedom from the (hetero)normative. Queer feelings are 'affected' by the repetition of the scripts that they fail to reproduce, and this 'affect' is also a sign of what queer can do, of how it can work by *working on* the (hetero)normative. The failure to be non-normative is then not the failure of queer to be queer, but a sign of attachments that are the condition of possibility for queer. Queer feelings may embrace a sense of discomfort, a lack of ease with the available scripts for living and loving, along with an excitement in the face of the uncertainty of where the discomfort may take us.

QUEER GRIEF

The debate about whether queer relationships should be recognised by law acquires a crucial significance at times of loss. Queer histories tell us of inescapable injustices, for example, when gay or lesbian mourners are not recognised as mourners in hospitals, by families, in law courts. In this section, I want to clarify how the recognition of queer lives might work in a way that avoids assimilation by examining the role of grief within queer politics. There has already been a strong case made for how grief supports, or even forms, the heterosexuality of the normative subject. For example, Judith Butler argues that the heterosexual subject must 'give up' the potential of queer love, but this loss cannot be grieved, and is foreclosed or barred permanently from the subject (Butler 1997b: 135). As such, homosexuality becomes an 'ungrievable loss', which returns to haunt the heterosexual subject through its melancholic identification with that which has been permanently cast out. For Butler, this ungrievable loss gets displaced:

heterosexual culture, having given up its capacity to grieve its own lost queerness, cannot grieve the loss of queer lives; it cannot admit that queer lives are lives that could be lost.

Simply put, queer lives have to be recognised as lives in order to be grieved. In a way, it is not that queer lives exist as 'ungrievable loss', but that queer losses cannot 'be admitted' as forms of loss in the first place, as queer lives are not recognised as lives 'to be lost'. One has to recognise oneself as having something before one can recognise oneself as losing something. Of course, loss does not simply imply having something that has been taken away. The meanings of loss slide from 'ceasing to have', to suffering, and being deprived. Loss implies the acknowledgement of the desirability of what was once had: one may have to love in order to lose. As such, the failure to recognise queer loss *as* loss is also a failure to recognise queer relationships as significant bonds, or that queer lives are lives worth living, or that queers are more than failed heterosexuals, heterosexuals who have failed 'to be'. Given that queer becomes read as a form of 'non-life' – with the death implied by being seen as non-reproductive – then queers are perhaps even already dead and cannot die. As Jeff Nunokawa suggests, heteronormative culture implies queer death, 'from the start' (Nunokawa 1991: 319). Queer loss may not count *because it precedes a relation of having.*

Queer activism has consequently been bound up with the politics of grief, with the question of what losses are counted as grievable. This politicisation of grief was crucial to the activism around AIDS and the transformation of mourning into militancy (see Crimp 2002). As Ann Cvetkovich puts it: 'The AIDS crisis, like other traumatic encounters with death, has challenged our strategies for remembering the dead, forcing the invention of new forms of mourning and commemoration' (Cretkovich 2003a: 427). The activism around AIDS produced works of collective mourning, which sought to make present the loss of queer lives within public culture: for example, with the Names Project Quilt, in which each quilt signifies a loss that is joined to others, in a potentially limitless display of collective loss. But what are the political effects of contesting the failure to recognise queer loss by displaying that loss?

In order to address this question, I want to examine public forms of grief displayed in response to September 11 2001. As Marita Stukern has argued, the rush to memorialise in response to the event not only sought to replace an absence with a presence, but also served to represent the absence through some losses and not others. On the one hand, individual losses of loved others were grieved, and surfaced as threads in the fabric of collective grief. The individual portraits of grief in the *New York Times*, and the memorials to individual losses posted around the city, work as a form of testimony; a way of making individual loss present to others. Each life is painted in order to

transform a number into a being, one who has been lost to someone; so the person who is lost *is not only missing, but also missed.* But at the same time, some losses more than others came to embody the collective loss. Sturken suggests that a 'hierarchy of the dead' was constructed: 'The media coverage of September 11 establishes a hierarchy of the dead, with, for instance, the privileging of the stories of public servants, such as firefighters over office workers, of policemen over security guards, and the stories of those with economic capital over those without, of traders over janitors' (Sturken 2002: 383–4). Whilst some losses are privileged over others, some don't appear as losses at all. Some losses get taken in (as 'ours'), thereby excluding other losses from counting as losses in the first place.[12]

Queer losses were among the losses excluded from the public cultures of grief. As David L. Eng has argued, the public scripts of grief after September 11 were full of signs of heteronormativity: 'The rhetoric of the loss of "fathers and mothers", "sons and daughters", and "brothers and sisters" attempts to trace the smooth alignment between the nation-state and the nuclear family, the symbolics of blood relations and nationalist domesticity' (Eng 2002: 90). It is because of this erasure that some queer groups have intervened, by naming queer losses. The president of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association,[13] for example, names queer loss both by naming individual queers who were lost in September 11, and by describing that event as a loss for the queer community. What is interesting about this response is how it addresses two communities: the nation and the queer community, using inclusive pronouns to describe both. The first community is that of all Americans: 'This unimaginable loss has struck at the very core of our sense of safety and order.' Here, September 11 is viewed as striking 'us' in the same place. But even in this use of inclusive language, the difference of GLBT Americans is affirmed: 'Even on a good day, many GLBT Americans felt unsafe or at least vulnerable in ways large and small. Now, that feeling has grown even more acute and has blanketed the nation.' The feelings of vulnerability that are specific to queer communities are first named, and then get extended into a feeling that blankets the nation, covering over the differences. The extension relies on an analogy between queer feelings (unsafety, vulnerability) and the feelings of citizens living with the threat of terrorism (see Chapter 3). The narrative implies that the nation is almost made queer by terrorism: heterosexuals 'join' queers in feeling vulnerable and fearful of attack. Of course, in 'becoming' queer, the nation remains differentiated from those who 'are' already queer.

This tension between the 'we' of the nation and the 'we' of the queer community is also expressed through the evocation of 'hate': 'Like others, our community knows all too well the devastating effects of hate.' This is a complicated utterance. On the one hand, this statement draws attention to

experiences of being hated that trouble the national imaginary, which assumes a distinction between tolerant multicultural subjects who 'love' and fundamentalists and racists who 'hate' (see Chapter 6). By showing how queers are a community 'that is hated' by the imagined nation, the statement breaches the ideal image the nation has of itself ('America can hate others (queers), as well as be hated by others'). But at the same time, this narrative repeats the dominant one: the tragedy of the event is the consequence of 'their hate' for 'us' ('Why do they hate us?'). The construction of the queer community as a hated community, which splits the nation, slides into a construction of the nation as 'being' hated by others. The nation is reinstalled as a coherent subject within the utterance: together, we are hated, and in being hated, we are together.

Within this queer response, mourning responds to the loss of 'every life', which includes 'members of our own community'. Individual names are given, and the losses are named as queer losses: 'They include an American Airlines co-pilot on the flight that crashed into the Pentagon; a nurse from New Hampshire; a couple travelling with their 3-year old son.' Furthermore, the losses are evoked through the language of heroism and courage: 'Father Mychal Judge, the New York Fire Department chaplain, who died whilst administering last rites to a fallen fire fighter, and Mark Bingham, a San Francisco public relations executive, who helped thwart the hijackers'. Certainly, the call for a recognition of queer courage and queer loss works to 'mark' the others already named as losses. That is, the very necessity of identifying some losses *as* queer losses reveals how most losses were narrated as heterosexual losses in the first place. The apparently unmarked individual losses privileged in the media are here marked by naming these other losses *as* queer losses. The risk of the 'marking' is that queer loss is then named as loss *alongside* those other losses; the use of humanist language of individual courage and bravery makes these losses *like the others*. Hence, queer loss becomes incorporated into the loss of the nation, in which the 'we' is always a 'we too'. The utterance, 'we too', implies both a recognition of a past exclusion (the 'too' shows how the 'we' must be supplemented), and a claim for inclusion (we are like you in having lost). Although such grief challenges the established 'hierarchy between the dead' (Sturken 2002: 384), it also works as a form of covering; the expression of grief 'blankets' the nation. Queer lives are grieved *as* queer lives only to support the grief of the nation, which perpetuates the concealment of other losses (such as, for example, the losses in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine).

So whilst the NLGJA response to September 11 challenges the way in which the nation is secured by making visible some losses more than others, it allows the naming of queer losses to support the narrative it implicitly critiques. But our response cannot be to suspend the demand for the recog-

nition of queer grief. We have already registered the psychic and social costs of unrecognised loss. The challenge for queer politics becomes finding a different way of grieving, and responding to the grief of others. In order to think differently about the ethics and politics of queer grief, I want to reconsider the complexity of grief as a psycho-social process of coming to terms with loss.

Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia might help us here. For Freud, mourning is a healthy response to loss, as it is about 'letting go' of the lost object, which may include a loved person or an abstraction which has taken the place of one (Freud 1934b: 153). Melancholia is pathological: the ego refuses to let go of the object, and preserves the object 'inside itself' (Freud 1934b: 153). In the former 'the world becomes poor and empty', whilst in the latter, 'it is the ego itself' (Freud 1934b: 155). Melancholia involves assimilation: the object persists, but only insofar as it is taken within the subject, as a kind of ghostly death. The central assumption behind Freud's distinction is that it is good or healthy to 'let go' of the lost object (to 'let go' of that which is already 'gone'). Letting go of the lost object may seem an ethical as well as 'healthy' response to the alterity of the other.

But the idea that 'letting go' is 'better' has been challenged. For example, the collection *Continuing Bonds*, 'reexamines the idea that the purpose of grief is to sever the bonds with the deceased in order to free the survivor to make new attachments' (Silverman and Klass 1996: 3). Silverman and Klass suggest that the purpose of grief is not to let go, but lies in 'negotiating and renegotiating the meaning of the loss over time' (Silverman and Klass 1996: 19). In other words, melancholia should not be seen as pathological; the desire to maintain attachments with the lost other is enabling, rather than blocking new forms of attachment. Indeed, some have argued that the refusal to let go is an ethical response to loss. Eng and Kazanjian, for example, accept Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia, but argue that melancholia is preferable as a way of responding to loss. Mourning enables gradual withdrawal from the object and hence denies the other through forgetting its trace. In contrast, melancholia is 'an enduring devotion on the part of the ego to the lost object', and as such is a way of keeping the other, and with it the past, alive in the present (Eng and Kazanjian 2003: 3). In this model, keeping the past alive, even as that which has been lost, is ethical: the object is not severed from history, or encrypted, but can acquire new meanings and possibilities in the present. To let go might even be to kill again (see Eng and Han 2003: 365).

Eng and Han's work points to an ethical duty to keep the dead other alive. The question of how to respond to loss requires us to rethink what it means to live with death. In Freud's critique of melancholia, the emphasis is on a

lost external object, that which is other to me, being preserved by becoming internal to the ego. As Judith Butler puts it, the object is not abandoned, but transferred from the external to the internal (Butler 1997b: 134). However, the passage in grief is not simply about what is 'outside' being 'taken in'. For the object to be lost, *it must already have existed within the subject.* It would be too narrow to see this 'insideness' only in terms of a history of past assimilation ('taking in' as 'the making of likeness'), although assimilation remains crucial to love as well as grief, as I have already suggested. We can also think of this 'insideness' as an effect of the 'withness' of intimacy, which involves the process of being affected by others. As feminist critics in particular have argued, we are 'with others' before we are defined as 'apart from' others (Benjamin 1995). Each of us, in being shaped by others, carries with us 'impressions' of those others. Such impressions are certainly memories of this or that other, to which we return in the sticky metonymy of our thoughts and dreams, and through prompting either by conversations with others or through the visual form of photographs. Such 'withness' also shapes our bodies, our gestures, our turns of phrase: we pick up bits and pieces of each other as the effect of nearness or proximity (see Diprose 2002). Of course, to some extent this proximity involves the making of likeness. But the hybrid work of identity-making is never about pure resemblance of one to another. It involves a dynamic process of perpetual resurfacing: the parts of me that involve 'impressions' of you can never be reduced to the 'you-ness' of 'you', but they are 'more' than just me. The creation of the subject hence depends upon the impressions of others, and these 'impressions' cannot be conflated with the character of 'others'. The others exist within me and apart from me at the same time. Taking you in will not necessarily be 'becoming like you', or 'making you like me', as other others have also impressed upon me, shaping my surfaces in this way and that.

So to lose another is not to lose one's impressions, not all of which are even conscious. To preserve an attachment is not to make an external other internal, *but to keep one's impressions alive*, as aspects of one's self that are both oneself and more than oneself, as a sign of one's debt to others. One can let go of another as an outsider, but maintain one's attachments, by keeping alive one's impressions of the lost other. This does not mean that the 'impressions' stand in for the other, as a false and deadly substitute. And nor do such 'impressions' have to stay the same. Although the other may not be alive to create new impressions, the impressions move as I move: the new slant provided by a conversation, when I hear something I did not know; the flickering of an image through the passage of time, as an image that is both your image, and my image of you. To grieve for others is to keep their impressions alive in the midst of their death.

The ethical and political question for queer subjects might, then, not be

whether to grieve but *how* to grieve. In some queer responses to September 11, the public display of grief installs queer loss as an object, alongside other losses, and in this way constructs the nation as the true subject of grief. But queer subjects can also share their impressions of those they have lost without transforming those impressions into objects that can be appropriated or taken in by the nation. For some, this was precisely the work of the Names Project Quilt, despite the reservations theorists such as Crimp have expressed about the way it sanitised loss for the mainstream audience (Crimp 2002: 196). As Ken Plummer has argued, the Project might matter not because of how it addresses the nation, as an imagined subject who might yet take this grief on as its own, but because of the process of working through loss with others. He suggests that 'stories help organise the flow of interaction, binding together or disrupting the relation of self to other and community' (Plummer 1995: 174). Perhaps queer forms of grief sustain the impressions of those who have been lost by sharing impressions with others. Sharing impressions may only be possible if the loss is not transformed into 'our loss', or converted into an object: when the loss becomes 'ours', it is taken away from others. Not to name 'my' or 'your' loss as 'our loss' does not mean the privatisation of loss, but the generation of a public in which sharing is not based on the presumption of shared ownership. A queer politics of grief needs to allow others, those whose losses are not recognised by the nation, to have the space and time to grieve, rather than grieving for those others, or even asking 'the nation' to grieve for them. In such a politics, recognition does still matter, not of the other's grief, but of the other as a griever, as the subject rather than the object of grief, a subject that is not alone in its grief, since grief is both about and directed to others.[14]

It is because of the refusal to recognise queer loss (let alone queer grief), that it is important to find ways of sharing queer grief with others. As Nancy A. Naples shows us in her intimate and moving ethnography of her father's death, feeling pushed out by her family during her father's funeral made support from her queer family of carers even more important (Naples 2001: 31). To support others as grievers – not by grieving for them but allowing them the space and time to grieve – becomes even more important when those others are excluded from the everyday networks of legitimation and support. The ongoing work of grief helps to keep alive the memories of those who have gone, provide care for those who are grieving, and allow the impressions of others to touch the surface of queer communities. This queer community resists becoming one, and aligned with the patriotic 'we' of the nation, only when loss is recognised as that which cannot simply be converted into an object, and yet is with and for others. Here, your loss would not be translated into 'our loss', but would prompt me to turn towards you, and allow you to impress upon me, again.

QUEER PLEASURES

Of course, queer feelings are not simply about the space of negativity, even when that negativity gets translated into the work of care for others. Queer politics are also about enjoyment, where the 'non' offers hope and possibility for other ways of inhabiting bodies. How do the pleasures of queer intimacies challenge the designation of queer as abject, as that which is 'cast out from the domain of the liveable' (Butler 1993: 9), or even as the 'death' made inevitable by the failure to reproduce life itself? This is a risky question. Whilst queers have been constructed as abject beings, they are also sources of desire and fascination. Michael Bronski explores the tension between 'heterosexual fear of homosexuality and gay culture (and the pleasure they represent) and the equally strong envy of and desire to enjoy that freedom and pleasure' (Bronski 1998: 2). Žižek also examines the ambivalence of the investment in 'the other' as the one 'who enjoys', and whose enjoyment exceeds the economies of investment and return (Žižek 1991: 2). The racist or homophobe tries to steal this enjoyment, which he assumes was taken from him, through the aggression of his hatred (see also Chapters 2 and 6). To speak of queer pleasure as potentially a site for political transformation risks confirming constructions of queerness that sustain the place of the (hetero)normative subject.

Equally though, others can be envied for their lack of enjoyment, for the authenticity of their suffering, their vulnerability, and their pain. I have examined, for example, how the investment in the figure of the suffering other gives the Western subject the pleasures of being charitable (see Chapter 1). Within the Leninist theory of the vanguard party, or the work of the Subaltern Studies group, there also seems to be an investment in the pain and struggle of the proletariat or peasant. Here the investment allows the project of speaking for the other, whose silence is read as an injury (Spivak 1988). In other words, the other becomes an investment by providing the normative subject with a vision of what is lacking, whether that lack is a form of suffering or deprivation (poverty, pain), or excess (pleasure, enjoyment). The other is attributed with affect (as being *in* pain, or *having* pleasure) as a means of subject constitution. I will not suggest that what makes queers 'queer' is their pleasure (from which straight subjects are barred), but will examine how the bodily and social practices of queer pleasure might challenge the economies that distribute pleasure as a form of property – as a feeling we have – in the first place.

In mainstream culture, it is certainly not the case that pleasure is excluded or taboo (there are official events and places where the public is required to display pleasure – where pleasure is a matter of being 'a good sport'). Indeed within global capitalism the imperative is to have more pleasure (through the

consumption of products designed to tantalise the senses). And yet alongside this imperative to enjoy, there is a warning: pleasures can distract you, and turn you away from obligations, duties and responsibilities. Hedonism does not get a good press, certainly. Pleasure becomes an imperative only as an incentive and reward for good conduct, or as an 'appropriate outlet' for bodies that are busy being productive ('work hard play hard'). This imperative is not only about having pleasure as a reward, but also about having the right kind of pleasure, in which rightness is determined as an orientation towards an object. Pleasure is 'good' only if it is orientated towards some objects, not others. The 'orientation' of the pleasure economy is bound up with heterosexuality: women and men 'should' experience a surplus of pleasure, but only when exploring each other's bodies under the phallic sign of difference (pleasure as the enjoyment of sexual difference). Whilst sexual pleasure within the West may now be separated from the task or duty of reproduction, it remains tied in some way *to the fantasy of being reproductive*: one can enjoy sex with a body that it is imagined one *could be* reproductive with. Queer pleasures might be legitimate here, as long as 'the queer' is only a passing moment in the story of heterosexual coupling ('queer as an enjoyable distraction'). The promise of this pleasure resides in its convertability to reproduction and the accumulation of value.

We might assume that queer pleasures, because they are 'orientated' towards an illegitimate object, will not return an investment. But this is not always or only the case. As Rosemary Hennessy has argued, 'queer' can be commodified, which means that queer pleasures can be profitable within global capitalism: the pink pound, after all, does accumulate value (Hennessy 1995: 143). Hennessy argues that money and not liberation is crucial to recent gay visibility. As she puts it: 'The freeing up of sensory-affective capacities from family alliances was simultaneously rebinding desire into new commodified forms' (Hennessy 2000: 104). The opening up of non-familial desires allows new forms of commodification; the 'non' of the 'non-normative' is not outside existing circuits of exchange, but may even intensify the movement of commodities, which converts into capital (see Chapter 2). Global capitalism involves the relentless search for new markets, and queer consumers provide such a market. The production of surplus value relies, as Marx argued, on the exploitation of the labour of others. The commodification of queer involves histories of exploitation: the leisure industries that support queer leisure styles, as with other industries, depend upon class and racial hierarchies. So it is important not to identify queer as outside the global economy, which transforms 'pleasures' into 'profit' by exploiting the labour of others.

Such an argument challenges the way in which sexual pleasure is idealised – as almost revolutionary in and of itself – within some versions of queer

theory. For example, Douglas Crimp offers a vision of gay male promiscuity as 'a positive model of how sexual pleasures might be pursued' (Crimp 2002: 65), while Michael Warner defines sexual autonomy as 'access to pleasures' (Warner 1999: 7). Michael Bronski sees the 'pleasure principle' as the reason for the fear of homosexuality and also for its power: 'Homosexuality offers a vision of sexual pleasure completely divorced from the burden of reproduction: sex for its own sake, a distillation of the pleasure principle' (Bronski 1998: 8). This idealisation of pleasure supports a version of sexual freedom that is not equally available to all: such an idealisation may even extend rather than challenge the 'freedoms' of masculinity. A negative model of freedom is offered in such work, according to which queers are free to have pleasure as they are assumed to be free *from* the scripts of (hetero)normative existence: 'Because gay social life is not as ritualised and institutionalised as straight life, each relation is an adventure in nearly uncharted territory' (Warner 1999: 115; see also Bell and Binnie 2000: 133). Ironically, such a reading turns queer pleasure into a discovery narrative that is not far off genres that narrated the pleasures of colonialism: as a journey into uncharted territory. Who is the explorer here? And who provides the territory?

And yet, despite the way in which queer pleasures can circulate as commodities within global capitalism, I want to suggest that they can also work to challenge social norms, as forms of investment. To make this argument, we need to reconsider how bodies are shaped by pleasure and take the shape of pleasures. I have already addressed the phenomenology of pain (see Chapter 1), arguing that pain reshapes the surfaces of the body through the way in which the body turns in on itself. Pleasure also brings attention to surfaces, which surface as impressions through encounters with others. But the intensification of the surface has a very different effect in experiences of pleasure: the enjoyment of the other's touch opens my body up, opens me up. As Drew Leder has argued, pleasure is experienced in and from the world, not merely in relation to one's own body. Pleasure is expansive: 'We fill our bodies with what they lack, open up to the stream of the world, reach out to others' (Leder 1990: 75).

Pleasures open bodies to worlds through an opening up of the body to others. As such, pleasures can allow bodies to take up more space. It is interesting to consider, for example, how the display of enjoyment and pleasure by football fans can take over a city, excluding others who do not 'share' their joy, or return that joy through the performance of pleasure. Indeed, the publicness of pleasure can function as a form of aggression; as a declaration of 'We are here.' Beverley Skeggs (1999) shows how the display of pleasure by heterosexuals in queer space can also work as a form of colonisation; a 'taking over' of queer space, which leaves queer subjects, especially lesbians, feeling unsettled, displaced and exposed. These examples demonstrate an important spatial relation between pleasure and power. Pleasure involves not only the

capacity to enter into, or inhabit with ease, social space, but also functions as a form of entitlement and belonging. Spaces are claimed through enjoyment, an enjoyment that is returned by being witnessed by others. Recalling my argument in the first section of this chapter, the display of queer pleasure may generate discomfort in spaces that remain premised on the 'pleasures' of heterosexuality. For queers, to display pleasure through what we do with our bodies is to make the comforts of heterosexuality less comfortable.

Further, pleasure involves an opening towards others; pleasure orientates bodies towards other bodies in a way that impresses on the surface, and creates surface tensions. But pleasure is not simply about any body opening up to any body. The contact is itself dependent on differences that already impress upon the surfaces of bodies. Pleasures are about the contact between bodies that are already shaped by past histories of contact. Some forms of contact don't have the same effects as others. Queer pleasures put bodies into contact that have been kept apart by the scripts of compulsory heterosexuality. I am not sure that this makes the genitals 'weapons of pleasure against their own oppression' (Berlant and Freeman 1997: 158). However queer pleasures in the enjoyment of forbidden or barred contact engender the possibility of different kinds of impressions. When bodies touch and give pleasure to bodies that have been barred from contact, then those bodies are reshaped. The hope of queer is that the reshaping of bodies through the enjoyment of what or who has been barred can 'impress' differently upon the surfaces of social space, creating the possibility of social forms that are not constrained by the form of the heterosexual couple.

Queer pleasures are not just about the coming together of bodies in sexual intimacy. Queer bodies 'gather' in spaces, through the pleasure of opening up to other bodies. These queer gatherings involve forms of activism; ways of claiming back the street, as well as the spaces of clubs, bars, parks and homes. The hope of queer politics is that bringing us closer to others, from whom we have been barred, might also bring us to different ways of living with others. Such possibilities are not about being free from norms, or being outside the circuits of exchange within global capitalism. *It is the non-transcendence of queer that allows queer to do its work.* A queer hope is not, then, sentimental. It is affective precisely in the face of the persistence of forms of life that endure in the negative attachment of 'the not'. Queer maintains its hope for 'non-repetition' only insofar as it announces the persistence of the norms and values that make queer feelings queer in the first place.

NOTES

1. I borrow this phrase, of course, from Adrienne Rich. I am indebted to her work, which demonstrates the structural and institutional nature of heterosexuality.

2. A queer phenomenology might offer an approach to 'sexual orientation' by rethinking the place of the object in sexual desire, attending to how bodily directions 'towards' some objects and not others affects how bodies inhabit spaces, and how spaces inhabit bodies.
3. To reflect on queer feelings is also to reflect on 'queer' as a sticky sign. As Butler points put, the word 'queer' is performative: through repetition, it has acquired new meanings (Butler 1997c). Queer, once a term of abuse (where to be queer was to be not us, not straight, not normal, not human) has become a name for an alternative political orientation. Importantly, as a sticky sign, 'queer' acquires new meanings not by being cut off from its previous contexts of utterance, but by preserving them. In queer politics, the force of insult is retained; 'the not' is not negated ('we are positive'), but embraced, and is taken on as a name. The possibility of generating new meanings, or new orientations to 'old' meanings, depends on collective activism, on the process of gathering together to clear spaces or ground for action. In other words, it takes more than one body to open up semantic as well as political possibilities. Furthermore, we should remember that queer still remains a term of abuse, and that not all those whose orientations we might regard as queer, can or would identify with this name, or even be able to 'hear' the name without hearing the history of its use as an injurious term: 'Now, the word *queer* emerges. But other than referring to it in quotations, I will never use the term *queer* to identify myself or any other homosexual. It's a word that my generation – and my companion, who's twenty-five years younger than I am, feels the same way – will never hear without evoked connotations – of violence, gay-bashings, arrest, murder' (Rechy 2000: 319). What we hear when we hear words such as 'queer' depends on complex psycho-biographical as well as institutional histories.
4. See Chapter 5 on shame, where I discuss the way in which normative bodies have a 'tautological' relation to social ideals: *they feel pride at approximating an ideal that has already taken their shape*.
5. My analysis in Chapter 8, section 2, of the relation between wonder and the departure from what is ordinary takes this argument forward.
6. Of course, heterosexual subjects may experience discomfort when faced by queers, and queer forms of coupling, in the event of the failure to conceal signs of queerness. A queer politics might embrace this discomfort: it might seek to make people feel uncomfortable through making queer bodies more visible. Not all queers will be comfortable with the imperative to make others uncomfortable. Especially given that 'families of origin' are crucial spaces for queer experiences of discomfort, it may be in the name of love, or care, that signs of queerness are concealed. Thanks to Nicole Vittelone who helped me to clarify this argument. See also Chapter 5 on shame for a related discussion of queer shame within families.
7. Global capitalism relies on the 'feeling fetish' of comfort: for consumers to be comfortable, others must work hard, including cleaners as well as other manual workers. This division of labour and leisure (as well as between mental and manual labour) functions as an instrument of power between and within nation states. But the 'work' relation is concealed by the transformation of comfort into property and entitlement. We can especially see this in the tourism industry: the signs of work are removed from the commodity itself, such as the tourist package, as a way of increasing its value. See McClintock (1995) for an analysis of commodification and fetishism and Hochschild (1983: 7) for an analysis of the emotional labour that is required for the well-being of consumers.

8. I am, of course, paraphrasing Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. The analogy has its limits: assimilation into whiteness and assimilation into straightness cannot be assumed to be equivalent, partly given the different relation of race and sexuality to signs of visibility. See Lorde 1984.
9. Thanks to Jackie Stacey whose astute comments during a conversation helped me to formulate this argument.
10. Of course, some queer bodies can pass, which means passing into straight space. Passing as a technology entails the work of concealment: to pass might produce an effect of comfort (we can't see the difference), but not for the subject who passes, who may be feeling a sense of discomfort, or not being at ease, given the constant threat of 'being seen' or caught out. See Ahmed (1999).
11. The debate about queer families has also been defined in terms of the opposition between assimilation and resistance (Goss 1997; Sandell 1994; Phelan 1997: 1; Weston 1991: 2; Weston 1998).
12. Of course, a question remains as to whether 'others' would want collective grief to be extended to them. What would it mean for the ungrieved to be grieved? The other might not want my grief precisely because such a grief might 'take in' what was not, in the first place, 'allowed near'. Would Iraqis, Afghanistanis want the force of Western grief to transform them into losses? Would this not risk another violent form of appropriation, one which claims their losses as 'ours', a claim that conceals rather than reveals our responsibility for loss? Expressions of nostalgia and regret by colonisers for that which has been lost as an effect of colonisation are of course mainstream (see hooks 1992). Recognising the other *as* grieving, as having experienced losses (for which we might have responsibility) might be more ethically and politically viable than grieving for the other, *or claiming their grief as our own*. See my conclusion, 'Just Emotions', for an analysis of the injustice that can follow when the ungrievable is transformed into the grieved.
13. The National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association 'is an organization of journalists, online media professionals, and students that works from within the journalism industry to foster fair and accurate coverage of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues. NLGJA opposes workplace bias against all minorities and provides professional development for its members.' Their web site is available on: http://www.nlgja.org/ Accessed 22 December 2003.
14. The political and legal battle for the recognition of queer partners in claims for compensation post September 11 is crucial. However, so far no such recognition has been offered. Recognising queer losses, and queers as the subjects of grief would mean recognising the significance of queer attachments. Bill Berkowitz interprets the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund, which leaves the determination of eligibility for compensation to states, as follows: 'In essence, in a rather complicated and convoluted decision, families of gays and lesbians will not be given federal compensation unless they have wills, or the states they live in have laws recognizing domestic partnerships, which of course most states do not.' 'Victims of 9/11 and Discrimination', http://www.workingforchange.com/article.cfm?ItemId=13001 Accessed 6 January 2004.