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QUEER PHENOMENOLOGY

Orientations, Objects, Others

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For Albertina

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INTRODUCTION **Find Your Way**

What does it mean to be orientated? This book begins with the question of orientation, of how it is that we come to find our way in a world that acquires new shapes, depending on which way we turn. If we know where we are when we turn this way or that way, then we are orientated. We have our bearings. We know what to do to get to this place or to that place. To be orientated is also to be turned toward certain objects, those that help us to find our way. These are the objects we recognize, so that when we face them we know which way we are facing. They might be landmarks or other familiar signs that give us our anchoring points. They gather on the ground, and they create a ground upon which we can gather. And yet, objects gather quite differently, creating different grounds. What difference does it make "what" we are orientated toward?

My interest in this broad question of orientation is motivated by an interest in the specific question of sexual orientation. What does it mean for sexuality to be lived as orientated? What difference does it make "what" or "who" we are orientated toward in the very direction of our desire? If orientation is a matter of how we reside in space, then sexual orientation might also be a matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces as well as "who" or "what" we inhabit spaces with. After all, queer geographers have shown us how spaces are sexualized (Bell and Valentine 1995; Browning 1998; Bell 2001). If we foreground the concept of "orientation," then we can retheorize this sexualization of space, as well as the spatiality of sexual desire. What would it mean for queer studies if we were to pose the question of "the orientation" of "sexual orientation" as a phenomenological question?

In this book I take up the concept of orientation as a way of putting queer studies in closer dialogue with phenomenology. I follow the concept of "ori-

entation" through different sites, spaces, and temporalities. In doing so, I hope to offer a new way of thinking about the spatiality of sexuality, gender, and race. Further, in this book I offer an approach to how bodies take shape through tending toward objects that are reachable, that are available within the bodily horizon. Such an approach is informed by my engagement with phenomenology, though it is not "properly" phenomenological; and, indeed, I suspect that a queer phenomenology might rather enjoy this failure to be proper. Still, it is appropriate to ask: Why start with phenomenology? I start *here* because phenomenology makes "orientation" central in the very argument that consciousness is always directed "toward" an object, and given its emphasis on the lived experience of inhabiting a body, or what Edmund Husserl calls the "living body (*Leib*)."[1] Phenomenology can offer a resource for queer studies insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds.

I arrived at phenomenology because, in part, the concept of orientation led me there. It matters how we arrive at the places we do. I also arrived at the concept of orientations by taking a certain route. In my previous book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, the concept of orientation was also crucial. Here I worked with a phenomenological model of emotions as intentional: as being "directed" toward objects. So when we feel fear, we feel fear *of* something. I brought this model of emotional intentionality together with a model of affect as contact: we are affected by "what" we come into contact with. In other words, emotions are directed to what we come into contact with: they move us "toward" and "away" from such objects. So, we might fear an object that approaches us. The approach is not simply about the arrival of an object: it is also how we turn toward that object. The feeling of fear is directed toward that object, while it also apprehends the object in a certain way, as being fearsome. The timing of this apprehension matters. For an object to make this impression is dependent on past histories, which surface as impressions on the skin. At the same time, emotions shape what bodies do in the present, or how they are moved by the objects they approach. The attribution of feeling toward an object (I feel afraid because you are fearsome) moves the subject away from the object, creating distance through the registering of proximity as a threat. Emotions involve such affective forms of (re)orientation. It is not just that bodies are moved by the orientations they have; rather, the orientations we have toward others shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies. Importantly, even what is kept at a distance must still be proximate enough if it is to make or leave an impression.

This point can be made quite simply: orientations involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others. Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as "who" or "what" we direct our energy and attention toward. A queer phenomenology, perhaps, might start by redirecting our attention toward different objects, those that are "less proximate" or even those that deviate or are deviant. And yet, I would not say that a queer phenomenology would simply be a matter of generating queer objects. A queer phenomenology might turn to phenomenology by asking not only about the concept of orientation *in* phenomenology, but also about the orientation *of* phenomenology. This book thus considers how objects that appear in phenomenological writing function as "orientation devices." If we start with Husserl's first volume of *Ideas*, for instance, then we start with the writing table. The table appears, we could say, because the table is the object nearest the body of the philosopher. That the writing table appears, and not another kind of table, might reveal something about the "orientation" of phenomenology, or even of philosophy itself.

After all, it is not surprising that philosophy is full of tables.[2] Tables are, after all, "what" philosophy is written upon: they are in front of the philosopher, we imagine, as a horizontal surface "intended" for writing. The table might even take the shape of this intention (see chapter 1). As Ann Banfield observes in her wonderful book *The Phantom Table:* "Tables and chairs, things nearest to hand for the sedentary philosopher, who comes to occupy chairs of philosophy, are the furniture of 'that room of one's own' from which the real world is observed" (2000: 66). Tables are "near to hand," along with chairs, as the furniture that secures the very "place" of philosophy. The use of tables shows us the very orientation of philosophy in part by showing us what is proximate to the body of the philosopher, or "what" the philosopher comes into contact "with." How the table appears might be a matter of the different orientations that philosophy takes toward the objects that it comes into contact with.[3]

Even if it is not surprising that the object on which writing happens ap-

pears in writing, we might also point to how such writing turns its back on the table. So even when tables appear, they only seem to do so as background features of a landscape, which is full of many other half-glimpsed objects. As I suggest in chapter 1, this relegation of the table to the background is evident in Husserl's work even though he returns us to the object. Despite how the table matters it often disappears from view, as an object "from" which to think and toward which we direct our attention. In this book, I bring the table to "the front" of the writing in part to show how "what" we think "from" is an orientation device. By bringing what is "behind" to the front, we might queer phenomenology by creating a new angle, in part by reading for the angle of the writing, in the "what" that appears. To queer phenomenology is to offer a different "slant" to the concept of orientation itself.

To queer phenomenology is also to offer a queer phenomenology. In other words, queer does not have a relation of exteriority to that with which it comes into contact. A queer phenomenology might find what is queer within phenomenology and use that queerness to make some rather different points. After all, phenomenology is full of queer moments; as moments of disorientation that Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests involve not only "the intellectual experience of disorder, but the vital experience of giddiness and nausea, which is the awareness of our contingency, and the horror with which it fills us" (2002: 296). *Phenomenology of Perception* gives an account of how these moments are overcome, as bodies become reoriented. But if we stay with such moments then we might achieve a different orientation toward them; such moments may be the source of vitality as well as giddiness. We might even find joy and excitement in the horror.

In offering a queer phenomenology, I am indebted to the work of feminist, queer, and antiracist scholars who have engaged creatively and critically with the phenomenological tradition. This includes feminist philosophers of the body such as Sandra Bartky (1990), Iris Marion Young (1990, 2005), Rosalyn Diprose (1994, 2002), Judith Butler (1997a), and Gail Weiss (1999); the earlier work of women phenomenologists such as Edith Stein (1989) and Simone de Beauvoir (1997); recent work on queer phenomenology by David Fryer (2003); and phenomenologists of race such as Frantz Fanon (1986), Lewis R. Gordon (1985), and Linda Alcoff (1999).[4]

Through the corpus of this work, I have learned not only to think about how phenomenology might universalize from a specific bodily dwelling, but also what follows "creatively" from such a critique, in the sense of what that critique allows us to think and to do. Feminist, queer, and critical race philosophers have shown us how social differences are the effects of how bodies inhabit spaces with others, and they have emphasized the intercorporeal aspects of bodily dwelling. I am also indebted to generations of feminist writers who have asked us to think from the "points" at which we stand and who have called for a politics of location as a form of situated dwelling (Lorde 1984; Rich 1986; Haraway 1991; Collins 1998), and to the black feminist writers who have staged the impossible task of thinking through how race, gender, and sexuality intersect—as lines that cross and meet at different points (Lorde 1984: 114–23; Brewer 1993; Smith 1998). My task here is to build upon this work by reconsidering the "orientated" nature of such standpoints.

Phenomenology is not the only material used in formulating a queer model of orientations: in addition to queer studies, feminist theory, and critical race theory, this book also draws on Marxism and psychoanalysis in its concern with how objects and bodies acquire orientations in part by how they "point" to each other. By using two strategies simultaneously—queering phenomenology and moving queer theory toward phenomenology—the book aims to show how bodies are gendered, sexualized, and raced by how they extend into space, as an extension that differentiates between "left" and "right," "front" and "behind," "up" and "down," as well as "near" and "far." What is offered, in other words, is a model of how bodies become orientated by how they take up time and space.

My aim is not to prescribe what form a queer phenomenology should take, as if the encounter itself must take the form of this book. After all, both queer studies and phenomenology involve diverse intellectual and political histories that cannot be stabilized as objects that could then be given to the other. My task instead is to work from the concept of "orientations" as it has been elaborated within some phenomenological texts, and to make that concept itself the site of an encounter. So, what happens if we start from this point?

Starting Points

In order to become orientated, you might suppose that we must first experience disorientation. When we are orientated, we might not even notice that we are orientated: we might not even think "to think" about this point. When

we experience disorientation, we might notice orientation as something we do not have. After all, concepts often reveal themselves as things to think "with" when they fail to be translated into being or action. It is in this mode of disorientation that one might begin to wonder: What does it mean to be orientated? How do we begin to know or to feel where we are, or even where we are going, by lining ourselves up with the features of the grounds we inhabit, the sky that surrounds us, or the imaginary lines that cut through maps? How do we know which way to turn to reach our destination?

It is by understanding how we become orientated in moments of disorientation that we might learn what it means to be orientated in the first place. Kant, in his classic essay "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thought?" (1786, cited in Casey 1997), begins precisely with this point. He uses the example of walking blindfolded into an unfamiliar room. You don't know where you are, or how where you are relates to the contours of the room, so how would you find your way around the room? How would you find your way to the door so you can leave the room? Kant argues that to become orientated in this situation depends on knowing the difference between the left and right side of the body. Such a difference, in its turn, shows that orientation is not so much about the relation between objects that extend into space (say, the relation between the chair and the table); rather, orientation depends on the bodily inhabitance of that space. We can only find our way in a dark room if we know the difference between the sides of the body: "Only by reference to these sides, can you know which way you are turning" (cited in Casey 1997: 20; see also Kant 1992: 367). Space then becomes a question of "turning," of directions taken, which not only allow things to appear, but also enable us to find our way through the world by situating ourselves in relation to such things.

The concept of "orientation" allows us then to rethink the phenomenality of space—that is, how space is dependent on bodily inhabitance. And yet, for me, learning left from right, east from west, and forward from back does not necessarily mean I know where I am going. I can be lost even when I know how to turn, this way or that way. Kant describes the conditions of possibility for orientation, rather than how we become orientated in given situations. In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger takes up Kant's example of walking blindfolded into a dark room. For Heidegger, orientation is not about differentiating between the sides of the body, which allow us to know which way to turn, but about the familiarity of the world: "I necessarily orient myself both in and from my being already alongside a world which is 'familiar'" (1973: 144). Familiarity is what is, as it were, given, and which in being given "gives" the body the capacity to be orientated in this way or in that. The question of orientation becomes, then, a question not only about how we "find our way" but how we come to "feel at home."

Let us consider the difference it makes to walk blindfolded in a room that is familiar compared to one that is not. In a familiar room we have already extended ourselves. We can reach out, and in feeling what we feel—say, the corner of a table—we find out which way we are facing. Orientation involves aligning body and space: we only know which way to turn *once we know which way we are facing*. If we are in a strange room, one whose contours are not part of our memory map, then the situation is not so easy. We can reach out, but what we feel does not necessarily allow us to know which way we are facing; a lack of knowledge that involves an uncertainty about which way to turn. At the same time our intimacy with rooms, even dark ones, can allow us to navigate our way. We might reach out and feel a wall. That we know how a wall feels, or even what it does (that it marks, as it were, the edge of the room) makes the dark room already familiar. We might walk slowly, touching the wall, following it, until we reach a door. We know then what to do and which way to turn.

In this way the differentiation between strange and familiar is not sustained. Even in a strange or unfamiliar environment we might find our way, given our familiarity with social form, with how the social is arranged. This is not to say we don't get lost, or that at times we don't reach our destination. And this is not to say that in some places we are not shocked beyond the capacity for recognition. But "getting lost" still takes us somewhere; and being lost is a way of inhabiting space by registering what is not familiar: being lost can in its turn become a familiar feeling. Familiarity is shaped by the "feel" of space or by how spaces "impress" upon bodies. This familiarity is not, then, "in" the world as that which is already given. The familiar is an effect of inhabitance; we are not simply in the familiar, but rather the familiar is shaped by actions that reach out toward objects that are already within reach. Even when things are within reach, we still have to reach for those things for them to be reached. The work of inhabiting space involves a dynamic negotiation between what is familiar and unfamiliar, such that it is still possible for the world to create new

impressions, depending on which way we turn, which affects what is within reach. Extending into space also extends what is "just about" familiar or what is "just about" within reach.

If we become orientated by tending toward the "just about," then to be orientated is also to extend the reach of the body. It is by registering the significance of this point that we can return to the question of bodily sides posed by Kant. It is interesting to note that for Husserl, while orientations also do not simply involve differentiating left from right sides of the body, they do involve the question of sides. As Husserl describes in the second volume of *Ideas:* "If we consider the characteristic way in which the Body presents itself and do the same for things, then we find the following situation: each Ego has its own domain of perceptual things and necessarily perceives the things in a certain orientation. The things appear and do so from this or that side, and in this mode of appearing is included irrevocably a relation to a here and its basic directions" (1989: 165–66). Orientations are about how we begin; how we proceed from "here," which affects how what is "there" appears, how it presents itself. In other words, we encounter "things" as coming from different sides, as well as having different sides. Husserl relates the questions of "this or that side" to the point of "here," which he also describes as the zero point of orientation, the point from which the world unfolds and which makes what is "there" over "there" (1989: 166; see also Husserl 2002: 151–53). It is from this point that the differences between "this side" and "that side" matter. It is only given that we are "here" at this point, the zero point, that near and far are lived as relative markers of distance. Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann also describe orientation as a question of one's starting point: "The place in which I find myself, my actual 'here,' is the starting point for my orientation in space" (1974: 36). The starting point for orientation is the point from which the world unfolds: the "here" of the body and the "where" of its dwelling.

Orientations, then, are about the intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty suggests that "spatial forms or distance are not so much relations between different points in objective space as they are relations between these points and a central perspective—our body" (1964: 5) The body provides us with a perspective: the body is "here" as a point from which we begin, and from which the world unfolds, as being both more and less over there. The "here" of the body does not simply refer to the body, but to "where" the body dwells. The "here" of bodily dwelling is thus what takes the body outside of itself, as it is affected and shaped by its surroundings: the skin that seems to contain the body is also where the atmosphere creates an impression; just think of goose bumps, textures on the skin surface, as body traces of the coldness of the air. Bodies may become orientated in this responsiveness to the world around them, given this capacity to be affected. In turn, given the history of such responses, which accumulate as impressions on the skin, bodies do not dwell in spaces that are exterior but rather are shaped by their dwellings and take shape by dwelling.

If orientations are as much about feeling at home as they are about finding our way, then it becomes important to consider how "finding our way" involves what we could call "homing devices." In a way, we learn what home means, or how we occupy space at home and as home, when we leave home. Reflecting on lived experiences of migration might allow us to pose again the very question of orientation.[5] Migration could be described as a process of disorientation and reorientation: as bodies "move away" as well as "arrive," as they reinhabit spaces. As I have suggested, phenomenology reminds us that spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body. In *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000), I reflect on how migration involves reinhabiting the skin: the different "impressions" of a new landscape, the air, the smells, the sounds, which accumulate like points, to create lines, or which accumulate like lines, to create new textures on the surface of the skin. Such spaces "impress" on the body, involving the mark of unfamiliar impressions, which in turn reshapes the body surface. The social also has its skin, as a border that feels and that is shaped by the "impressions" left by others (Probyn 1996: 5; Ahmed 2004a). The skin of the social might be affected by the comings and goings of different bodies, creating new lines and textures in the ways in which things are arranged. This is not to say that one has to leave home for things to be disoriented or reoriented: homes too can be "giddy" places where things are not always held in place, and homes can move, as we do.

After all, homes are effects of the histories of arrival. Avtar Brah in her reflections on diasporic space discusses the "entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put.'" (1996:16) Diasporic spaces do not simply begin to take shape with the arrival of migrant bodies; it is more that we only notice the arrival of those who appear "out of place." Those who are "in place" also must arrive; they must get "here," but their arrival is more easily

forgotten, or is not even noticed. The disorientation of the sense of home, as the "out of place" or "out of line" effect of unsettling arrivals, involves what we could call a migrant orientation. This orientation might be described as the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home. And yet a migrant orientation does not necessarily reside within the migrant body, as the "double point" of its view. In a way, reflecting on migration helps us to explore how bodies arrive and how they get directed in this way or that way as a condition of arrival, which in turn is about how the "in place" gets placed.

I do not mean to imply that the viewing points of migrant bodies do not matter. After all, it is my own experience as a migrant subject, and as someone from a family of migrants, that has led me to think about orientation and to wonder about how it is that we come to inhabit spaces as if they extend our skin. Indeed, I could start the story here. What I remember, what takes my breath away, are not so much the giddy experiences of moving and the disorientation of being out of place, but the ways we have of settling; that is, of inhabiting spaces that, in the first instance, are unfamiliar but that we can imagine—sometimes with fear, other times with desire—might come to feel like home. Such becoming is not inevitable. It is not always obvious which places are the ones where we can feel at home.

Those ways we have to settle. Moving house. I hate packing: collecting myself up, pulling myself apart. Stripping the body of the house: the walls, the floors, the shelves. Then I arrive, an empty house. It looks like a shell. How I love unpacking. Taking things out, putting things around, arranging myself all over the walls. I move around, trying to distribute myself evenly between rooms. I concentrate on the kitchen. The familiar smell of spices fills the air. I allow the cumin to spill, and then gather it up again. I feel flung back somewhere else. I am never sure where the smell of spices takes me, as it has followed me everywhere. Each smell that gathers returns me somewhere; I am not always sure where that somewhere is. Sometimes the return is welcome, sometimes not. Sometimes it is tears or laughter that makes me realize that I have been pulled to another place and another time. Such memories can involve a recognition of how one's body already feels, coming after the event. The surprise when we find ourselves moved in this way or that. So we ask the question, later, and it often seems too late: what is it that has led me away from the present, to another place and another time? How is that I have arrived here or there?

After the kitchen, the room I hope to inhabit is always the study. Or the place that I have decided is the place where I will write. There, that will be my desk. Or it could just be the writing table. It is here that I will gather my thoughts. It is here that I will write, and even write about writing. This book is written on different writing tables, which orientate me in different ways or which come to "matter" as effects of different orientations. On the tables, different objects gather. Making a place feel like home, or becoming at home in a space, is for me about being at my table. I think fondly of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. How important it is, especially for women, to claim that space, to take up that space through what one does with one's body. And so when I am at my table, I am also claiming that space, I am becoming a writer by taking up that space.

Each time I move, I stretch myself out, trying this door, looking here, looking there. In stretching myself out, moving homes for me is coming to inhabit spaces, coming to embody them, where my body and the rooms in which it gathers—sitting, sleeping, writing, acting as it does, in this room and that room—cease to be distinct. It times take, but this work of inhabitance does take place. It is a process of becoming intimate with where one is: an intimacy that feels like inhabiting a secret room that is concealed from the view of others. Loving one's home is not about being fixed into a place, but rather it is about becoming part of a space where one has expanded one's body, saturating the space with bodily matter: home as *overflowing* and *flowing over*. Of course, sometimes we do not feel at home; you might feel discomfort and alienation in a space that is still overflowing with memories. Or you might feel homesick; estranged from your present location and long for a space that you once inhabited as home. Or you might not feel at home, and you dance with joy at the anonymity of bare walls, untouched by the faces of loved ones that throw the body into another time and place.

The work of inhabitance involves orientation devices; ways of extending bodies into spaces that create new folds, or new contours of what we could call livable or inhabitable space. If orientation is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space, then disorientation occurs when that extension fails. Or we could say that some spaces extend certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others. Now in living a queer life, the act of going home, or going back to the place I was brought up, has a certain disorienting effect. As I discuss in chapter 2, "the family home" seems so full of traces of heterosexual intimacy that it is hard to take up my place without

feeling those traces as points of pressure. In such moments, when bodies do not extend into space, they might feel "out of place" where they have been given "a place." Such feelings in turn point to other places, even ones that have yet to be inhabited. My own story of orientation makes just such a queer point.

Lines That Direct Us

If we think of bodies and spaces as orientated, then we re-animate the very concept of space. As Henri Lefebvre concludes in *The Production of Space:* "I speak of an *orientation* advisedly. We are concerned with *nothing more and nothing less than that.* We are concerned with what might be called a 'sense': an organ that perceives, a direction that may be conceived, and a directly lived movement progressing towards the horizon" (1991: 423; second emphasis added). If space is orientated, then what appears depends on one's point of view. Within cultural geography and social theories of space, the idea that space is dynamic and lived is well established (see Crang and Thrift 2000: 2, 6; Massey 1993: 156; Soja 1989). As Benno Werlen argues: "Space does not exist as a material object, or as a (consistent) theoretical object" (1998: 2). And yet the significance of the term "orientation," despite its centrality in Lefebvre's work, has not really been taken up. If we think of space through orientation, as I will suggest, then our work will in turn acquire a new direction, which opens up how spatial perceptions come to matter and be directed as matter.

Space acquires "direction" through how bodies inhabit it, just as bodies acquire direction in this inhabitance. Adding "orientation" to the picture gives a new dimension to the critique of the distinction between absolute space and relative space, also described as the distinction between location and position. As Neil Smith and Cindi Katz state: "In geographical terms, 'location' fixes a point in space, usually by reference to some abstract co-ordinate systems such as latitude and longitude," while "'Position,' by contrast, implies location vis-à-vis other locations and incorporates a sense of perspective on other places" (1993: 69; see also Cresswell 1996: 156). We might then distinguish "left" as a relative marker, or a position, from the east, which refers to a system of coordinates that must, if they are to work, be absolute.

We can be in the East, for instance, or in the West, even if east and west can also be used as relative positions ("to the east" or "east of here"). The distinction between absolute and relative space, or even between location and position, does not always hold. This is not, however, to make all space relative to "my position." Spaces are not just dependent on where I am located: such a model, in its turn, would presume the subject as originary, as the container of space rather than contained by space. The social depends in part on agreement about how we measure space and time, which is why social conflict can often be experienced as being "out of time" as well as "out of place" with others. But the social dependence upon agreed measures tells us more about the social than it does about space. Or if it tells us about space, then it reminds us that "absolute space" is invented, as an invention that has real and material effects in the arrangement of bodies and worlds. We might not be able to imagine the world without dividing the world into hemispheres, which are themselves created by the intersection of lines (the equator and the prime meridian), even when we know that there are other ways of inhabiting the world.

We need to complicate the relation between the lines that divide space, such as the equator and the prime meridian, and the "line" of the body. After all, direction only makes sense as a relationship between body and space. For instance, one definition of the left direction is: "on or towards the side of the human body which corresponds to the position of west if one regards oneself as facing north."[6] The body orientates itself by lining itself up with the direction of the space it inhabits (for instance, by turning left to exit through the door "on the left side of the room.") The left is both a way we can turn and one side of our body. When we turn left, we turn in the direction that "follows" one side of the body.

It is useful here to recall that the distinction between right and left is not a neutral one. Kant suggests, for instance, that the right and left only become directions insofar as the right and left sides of the body are not symmetrical. He does not give equal weight to each side of the body. As he puts it, the right side "enjoys an indisputable advantage over the other in respect of skill and perhaps of strength too" (1992: 369). Indeed, we can note here that the etymology of the word left is "weak and worthless," and Kant himself describes the left in terms of "more sensitivity." Women and racial others are associated with the left hemisphere of the brain. Further, we only need to think about "the left" as a marker of political allegiance, or of the associations that gather around the term "left field." The right is associated with truth, reason, normality and with getting "straight to the point." The distinction between left

and right is far from neutral, as Robert Hertz (1973) shows so powerfully in his classic anthropological essay on this distinction. This lack of neutrality is what grounds the distinction between right and left: the right becomes the straight line, and the left becomes the origin of deviation.

The distinction between east and west is also far from neutral; it is not that they exist as independent spatial attributes, in contrast to right and left. The distinction between east and west is asymmetrical. As I suggest in my analysis of "orientalism" in chapter 3, following postcolonial feminist scholars, the East is associated with women, sexuality and the exotic, with what is "behind" and "below" the West, as well as what is on "the other side." Indeed, the prime meridian as the line that divides the West from the East as "two sides" of the globe is imagined, and it is drawn through Greenwich in London. As Dava Sobel states in her reflections on this line, "The placement of the prime meridian is a purely political decision" (1998: 4). So what is "East" is actually what is east of the prime meridian, the zero point of longitude. The East as well as the left is thus orientated; *it acquires its direction only by taking a certain point of view as given.*

In this book I hope to explore what it means for "things" to be orientated, by showing how "orientations" depend on taking points of view as given. The gift of this point is concealed in the moment of being received as given. Such a point accumulates as a line that both divides things and creates spaces that we imagine we can be "in." In a way, it is lines that give matter form and that create the impression of "surface, boundaries and fixity" (Butler 1993: 9).[7] For William James, lines are sensational: "When we speak of the direction of two points toward each other, we mean simply the sensation of the line that joins the two points together" (1890: 149). So space itself is sensational: it is a matter of how things make their impression as being here or there, on this side or that side of a dividing line, or as being left or right, near or far. If space is always orientated, as Lefebvre argues, then inhabiting spaces "decides" what comes into view. The point of such decisions may be precisely that we have lost sight of them: that we take what is given as simply a matter of what happens to be "in front" of us.

The lines that allow us to find our way, those that are "in front" of us, also make certain things, and not others, available. What is available is what might reside as a point on this line. When we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach. Such exclusions—the constitution of a field of unreachable objects—are the indirect consequences of following lines that are before us: we do not have to consciously exclude those things that are not "on line." The direction we take excludes things for us, before we even get there.[8]

The lines we follow might also function as forms of "alignment," or as ways of being in line with others. We might say that we are orientated when we are in line. We are "in line" when we face the direction that is already faced by others. Being "in line" allows bodies to extend into spaces that, as it were, have already taken their shape. Such extensions could be redescribed as an extension of the body's reach. A key argument in this book is that the body gets directed in some ways more than others. We might be used to thinking of direction as simply which way we turn, or which way we are facing, at this or that moment in time. Direction then would be a rather casual matter. But what if direction, as the way we face as well as move, is organized rather than casual? We might speak then of collective direction: of ways in which nations or other imagined communities might be "going in a certain direction," or facing the same way, such that only some things "get our attention." Becoming a member of such a community, then, might also mean following this direction, which could be described as the political requirement that we turn some ways and not others (see chapter 3). We follow the line that is followed by others: the repetition of the act of following makes the line disappear from view as the point from which "we" emerge.

We could recall here that Judith Butler, following Louis Althusser, makes "turning" crucial to subject formation. One becomes a subject through "turning around" when hailed by the police. For Butler, this "turning" takes the form of hearing oneself as the subject of an address: it is a turning that is not really about the physicality of the movement (1997c: 33). But we can make this question of direction crucial to the emergence of subjectivity and the "force" of being given a name. In other words, we could reflect on the difference it makes *which way subjects turn.* Life, after all, is full of turning points. Turning might not only constitute subjects in the sense that the "turning" allows subjects to misrecognize themselves in the policeman's address, but it might also take subjects in different directions. Depending on which way one turns, different worlds might even come into view. If such turns are repeated over time, then bodies acquire the very shape of such direction. It is not, then, that bodies simply have a direction, or that they follow directions, in moving this way or

that. Rather, in moving this way, rather than that, and moving in this way again and again, the surfaces of bodies *in turn* acquire their shape. Bodies are "directed" and they take the shape of this direction.

It is worth noting here the etymology of "direction." As a word, it so easily loses itself in a referent: when I think of direction, I think of this or that direction or of going this way or that way. But direction is not such a simple matter. A direction is also something one gives. When you tell someone who is lost how to find their way, you give them directions to help them on their way. When you give an order or an instruction (especially a set of instructions guiding the use of equipment) you give directions. Directions are instructions about "where," but they are also about "how" and "what": directions take us somewhere by the very requirement that we follow a line that is drawn in advance. A direction is thus produced over time; a direction is what we are asked to follow. The etymology of "direct" relates to "being straight" or getting "straight to the point." To go directly is to follow a line without a detour, without mediation. Within the concept of direction is a concept of "straightness." To follow a line might be a way of becoming straight, by not deviating at any point.

The relationship between "following a line" and the conditions for the emergence of lines is often ambiguous. Which one comes first? I have always been struck by the phrase "a path well trodden." A path is made by the repetition of the event of the ground "being trodden" upon. We can see the path as a trace of past journeys. The path is made out of footprints—traces of feet that "tread" and that in "treading" create a line on the ground. When people stop treading the path may disappear. And when we see the line of the path before us, we tend to walk upon it, as a path "clears" the way. So we walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect of being walked upon. A paradox of the footprint emerges. Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition. To say that lines are performative is to say that we find our way and we know which direction we face only as an effect of work, which is often hidden from view. So in following the directions, I arrive, as if by magic.

Directions are about the magic of arrival. In a way, the work of arrival is forgotten in the very feeling that the arrival is magic. The work involves following directions. We arrive when we have followed them properly: bad readings just won't get us there. We can think of following as a form of commitment as well as a social investment. Following a line is not disinterested: to follow a line takes time, energy, and resources, which means that the "line" one takes does not stay apart from the line of one's life, as the very shape of how one moves through time and space. We then come to "have a line," which might mean a specific "take" on the world, a set of views and viewing points, as well as a route through the contours of the world, which gives our world its own contours. So we follow the lines, and in following them we become committed to "what" they lead us to as well as "where" they take us. A commitment is also a commitment made as an effect of an action. To say "we are already committed" is not simply a pledge or a promise that points to the future. Such a statement might suggest that it is too late to turn back, and that what will happen "will happen" as we are already "behind" it. If we are already committed to a bodily action (such as a specific stroke in tennis), then the body is already "behind" the action. To commit may then also be a way of describing how it is that we become directed toward specific goals, aims, and aspirations through what we "do" with our bodies.

Following lines also involves forms of social investment. Such investments "promise" return (if we follow this line, then "this" or "that" will follow), which might sustain the very will to keep going. Through such investments in the promise of return, subjects *reproduce the lines that they follow.* In a way, thinking about the politics of "lifelines" helps us to rethink the relationship between inheritance (the lines that we are given as our point of arrival into familial and social space) and reproduction (the demand that we return the gift of the line by extending that line). It is not automatic that we reproduce what we inherit, or that we always convert our inheritance into possessions. We must pay attention to *the pressure* to make such conversions. We can recall here the different meanings of the word "pressure": the social pressure to follow a certain course, to live a certain kind of life, and even to reproduce that life can feel like a physical "press" on the surface of the body, which creates its own impressions. We are pressed into lines, just as lines are the accumulation of such moments of pressure, or what I call "stress points" in chapter 3.

How ironic that "a lifeline" can also be an expression for something that saves us. A lifeline thrown to us is what gives us the capacity to get out of an

impossible world or an unlivable life. Such a line would be a different kind of gift: one that is thrown without the expectation of return in the immediacy of a life-and-death situation. And yet, we don't know what happens when we reach such a line and let ourselves live by holding on. If we are pulled out, we don't know where the force of the pull might take us. We don't know what it means to follow the gift of the unexpected line that gives us the chance for a new direction and even a chance to live again.

A lifeline can also be something that expresses our identity, such as the lines carved on the skin that are created as an effect of the repetition of certain expressions: the laugh line, the furrow created by the frown, and so on. Lines become the external trace of an interior world, as signs of who we are on the flesh that folds and unfolds before others. What we follow, what we do, becomes "shown" through the lines that gather on our faces, as the accumulation of gestures on the skin surface over time. If we are asked to reproduce what we inherit, then the lines that gather on the skin become signs of the past, as well as orientations toward the future, a way of facing and being faced by others. Some lines might be marks of the refusal to reproduce: the lines of rebellion and resistance that gather over time to create new impressions on the skin surface or on the skin of the social.

For it is important to remember that life is not always linear, or that the lines we follow do not always lead us to the same place. It is not incidental that the drama of life, those moments of crisis that demand we make a decision, are represented by the following scene: you face a fork in the road and have to decide which path to take: this way or that way. And you go one way by following its path. But then perhaps you are not so sure. The longer you proceed on this path the harder it is to go back even in the face of this uncertainty. You make an investment in going and the going extends the investment. You keep going out of the hope that you are getting somewhere. Hope is an investment that the "lines" we follow will get us somewhere.[9] When we don't give up, when we persist, when we are "under pressure" to arrive, to get somewhere, we give ourselves over to the line. Turning back risks the wasting of time, a time that has already been expended or given up. If we give up on the line that we have given our time to, then we give up more than a line; we give up a certain life we have lived, which can feel like giving up on ourselves.

And so you go on. Your journey might still be full of doubt. When doubt gets in the way of hope, which can often happen in a moment, as abruptly as turning a switch, then you go back, you give up. You even hurry back, as the time expended without hope is time taken away from the pursuit of another path. So, yes, sometimes you do go back. Sometimes you get there. Sometimes you just don't know. Such moments do not always present themselves as life choices available to consciousness. At times, we don't know that we have followed a path, or that the line we have taken is a line that clears our way only by marking out spaces that we don't inhabit. Our investments in specific routes can be hidden from view, as they are the point from which we view the world that surrounds us. We can get directed by losing our sense of this direction. The line becomes then simply a way of life, or even an expression of who we are.

So at one level we do not encounter that which is "off course"; that which is off the line we have taken. And yet, accidental or chance encounters do happen, and they redirect us and open up new worlds. Sometimes, such encounters might come as the gift of a lifeline, and sometimes they might not; they can be lived purely as loss. Such sideways moments might generate new possibilities, or they might not. After all, it is often loss that generates a new direction; when we lose a loved one, for instance, or when a relationship with a loved one ends, it is hard to simply stay on course because love is also what gives us a certain direction. What happens when we are "knocked off course" depends on the psychic and social resources "behind" us. Such moments can be a gift, or they might be the site of trauma, anxiety, or stress about the loss of an imagined future. It is usually with the benefit of "hindsight" that we reflect on such moments, where a fork in the road before us opens up and we have to decide what to do, even if the moment does not present itself as a demand for a decision. The "hind" does not always give us a different point of view, yet it does allow those moments to be revisited, to be reinhabited, as moments when we change course.

I think one of the reasons that I became interested in the very question of "direction" was because in the "middle" of my life I experienced a dramatic redirection: I left a certain kind of life and embraced a new one. I left the "world" of heterosexuality, and became a lesbian, even though this means staying in a heterosexual world. For me, this line was a lifeline, and yet it also meant leaving the well trodden paths. It is interesting to note that in landscape architecture they use the term "desire lines" to describe unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where

people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow. Deviation leaves its own marks on the ground, which can even help generate alternative lines, which cross the ground in unexpected ways. Such lines are indeed traces of desire; where people have taken different routes to get to this point or to that point. It is certainly desire that helps generate a lesbian landscape, a ground that is shaped by the paths that we follow in deviating from the straight line. And yet, becoming a lesbian still remains a difficult line to follow. The lesbian body does not extend the shape of this world, as a world organized around the form of the heterosexual couple. Inhabiting a body that is not extended by the skin of the social means the world acquires a new shape and makes new impressions. Becoming a lesbian taught me about the very point of how life gets directed and how that "point" is often hidden from view. Becoming reorientated, which involves the disorientation of encountering the world differently, made me wonder about orientation and how much "feeling at home," or knowing which way we are facing, is about the making of worlds.

We talk about losing our way as well as finding our way. And this is not simply a reference to moments when we can't find our way to this or that destination: when we are lost in the streets, or in rooms that are unfamiliar; when we don't know how we have got where it is that we are. We can also lose our direction in the sense that we lose our aim or purpose: disorientation is a way of describing the feelings that gather when we lose our sense of who it is that we are. Such losses can be converted into the joy of a future that has been opened up. "Life itself" is often imagined in terms of "having a direction," which decides from the present what the future should be. After all, to acquire a direction takes time, even if it feels as if we have always followed one line or another, or as if we "began" and "ended" in the same place. Indeed, it is by following some lines more than others that we might acquire our sense of who it is that we are. The temporality of orientation reminds us that orientations are effects of what we tend toward, where the "toward" marks a space and time that is almost, but not quite, available in the present.

The question of "orientation" is thus not only a spatial question. We might note here that "dwelling" refers to the process of coming to reside, or what Heidegger calls "making room" (1973: 146), and also to time: to dwell on something is to linger, or even to delay or postpone. If orientation is a matter of how we reside, or how we clear space that is familiar, then orientations also take time and require giving up time. Orientations allow us to take up space insofar as they take time. Even when orientations seem to be about which way we are facing in the present, they also point us toward the future. The hope of changing directions is that we don't always know where some paths may take us: risking departure from the straight and narrow makes new futures possible, which might involve going astray, getting lost, or even becoming queer, as I discuss in chapter 2.

In the case of sexual orientation, it is not simply that we have it. To become straight means that we not only have to turn toward the objects that are given to us by heterosexual culture, but also that we must "turn away" from objects that take us off this line. The queer subject within straight culture hence deviates and is made socially present as a deviant. What I seek to offer in this book is an argument that what is "present" or near to us is not casual: we do not acquire our orientations just because we find things here or there. Rather certain objects are available to us because of lines that we have already taken: our "life courses" follow a certain sequence, which is also a matter of following a direction or of "being directed" in a certain way (birth, childhood, adolescence, marriage, reproduction, death), as Judith Halberstam has shown us in her reflections on the "temporality" of the family and the expenditure of family time (2005: 152–53). The concept of "orientations" allows us to expose how life gets directed in some ways rather than others, through the very requirement that we follow what is already given to us. For a life to count as a good life, then it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one's futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. A queer life might be one that fails to make such gestures of return.

This book is a modest one, made up of three chapters. Each chapter follows the concept of orientations: starting with a reflection on the concept within phenomenology, and then turning to the question of sexual orientation, and then finally to the orientation of orientalism as a point of entry for reconsidering how racism "orientates" bodies in specific ways.

Although I follow the concept of orientations in this book, it is important to note that I start with phenomenology. And yet, even at this starting point I seem to lose my way. Perhaps my own orientation toward orientation is re-

vealed by the style of the book, which tends to drift away from philosophy toward other matters. My writing moves between conceptual analysis and personal digression. But why call the personal a digression? Why is it that the personal so often enters writing as if we are being led astray from a proper course?

My writing takes detours, turns, and moves this way and that. As noted above, I turned toward the table quite by chance. Once I caught sight of the table in Husserl's writing, which is revealed just for a moment, I could not help but follow tables around. When you follow tables, you can end up anywhere. So I followed Husserl in his turn to the table, but when he turns away, I got led astray. I found myself seated at my table, at the different tables that mattered at different points in my life. How I wanted to make these tables matter! So I kept returning to tables, even when it seemed that phenomenology had turned another way. Quite ironically, it was the appearance of Husserl's table that led me this way, even though it turned me toward the very objects that gathered at home, and to the queer potential of this gathering.

Perhaps my preference for such queer turnings is because I don't have a disciplinary line to follow—I was "brought up" between disciplines and I have never quite felt comfortable in the homes they provide. The lines of disciplines are certainly a form of inheritance. The line, for instance, that is drawn from philosopher to philosopher is often a paternal one: the line begins with the father and is followed by those who "can" take his place. We know, I think, that not just "any body" can receive such an inheritance or can turn what they receive into a possession. Disciplines also have lines in the sense that they have a specific "take" on the world, a way of ordering time and space through the very decisions about what counts as within the discipline. Such lines mark out the edges of disciplinary homes, which also mark out those who are "out of line."

I write this book as someone who does not reside within philosophy; I feel out of line even at the point from which I start. It is a risk to read philosophy as a non-philosopher. When we don't have the resources to read certain texts, we risk getting things wrong by not returning them to the fullness of the intellectual histories from which they emerge. And yet, we read. The promise of interdisciplinary scholarship is that the failure to return texts to their histories will do something. Of course, not all failures are creative. If we don't take care with the texts we read, if we don't pay attention, then the failure to read them "properly" won't do very much at all. Taking care involves work, and it is work that we must do if we are to create something other than another point on a line. We must remember that to "not return" still requires the act of following, we have to go with something if we are to depart from that thing. The following takes us in a different direction, as we keep noticing other points.

I begin in chapter 1 by exploring the concept of orientation in phenomenology and, in particular, the relationship between perception, action, and direction. My task in this chapter is to work closely with phenomenological texts in order to develop an approach to the concept of orientations, which I then explore with reference to more concrete examples in the following chapters. I also aim in chapter 1 to think about how the objects that appear within phenomenology show us how phenomenology might be directed in some ways rather than others. Using Marxism and feminist theory I explore how the orientation of phenomenology toward the writing table might depend upon forms of labor, which are relegated to the background. Chapter 1 considers how spatial orientations (relations of proximity and distance) are shaped by other social orientations, such as gender and class, that affect "what" comes into view, but also are not simply given, as they are effects of the repetition of actions over time.

In the second chapter I ask more directly: what does it mean to queer phenomenology? In my answer I begin by noting that in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* queer moments do happen—as moments where the world appears "slantwise." Merleau-Ponty describes how this queer world is "reorientated," which we can describe as the "becoming vertical" of perception. In light of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of such queer moments, in this chapter I explore how bodies become straight by "lining up" with lines that are already given. I show how compulsory heterosexuality operates as a straightening device, which rereads signs of queer desire as deviations from the straight line. I suggest that a queer phenomenology might offer an approach to sexual orientation by rethinking the place of the object in sexual desire; by attending to how the bodily direction "toward" such objects affects how bodies inhabit spaces and how spaces inhabit bodies. It is here that I introduce the figure of the "contingent lesbian," where contingency points to the role of contact and touch in the generation of both space and desire.

I begin chapter 3 by thinking about the significance of "the orient" in "orientation," and I suggest that orientations involve the racialization of space.

I consider how racism is an ongoing and unfinished history; how it works as a way of orientating bodies in specific directions, thereby affecting how they "take up" space. We "become" racialized in how we occupy space, just as space is, as it were, already occupied as an effect of racialization. I also address the question of how we can consider the orientations of bodies "at home" who do not inhabit whiteness, for which I draw on my own experience at home of being mixed race, with a white English mother and Pakistani father, and how this mixed genealogy shaped what objects for me are reachable. Being mixed might also involve a queer departure from the lines of conventional genealogy. Bodies that do not extend the whiteness of such spaces are "stopped," which produces, we could say, disorienting effects.

If we think with and through orientation we might allow the moments of disorientation to gather, almost as if they are bodies around a different table. We might, in the gathering, face a different way. Queer objects might take us to the very limits of social gathering, even when they still gather us around, even when they still lead us to gather at a table. Indeed, to live out a politics of disorientation might be to sustain wonder about the very forms of social gathering.

CHAPTER 1 Orientations Toward Objects

> In perception properly so-called, as an explicit awareness (*Gewahren*), I am turned towards the object, to the paper, for instance, I apprehend it as being this here and now. The apprehension is a singling out, every perceived object having a background in experience. Around and about the paper lie books, pencils, ink-well, and so forth, and these in a certain sense are also "perceived," perceptually there, in the "field of intuition."
>
> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*

Phenomenology is often characterized as a "turn toward" objects, which appear in their perceptual "thereness" as objects given to consciousness. Rather than consciousness being seen as directed toward itself, it is understood as having objects in its view—as being shaped by that which appears before it in "this here and now." But in turning toward objects, what actually appears within phenomenological writing? If phenomenology apprehends what is given to consciousness, then what is given within the writing about that apprehension? Or, in simpler terms, what objects appear within phenomenology as objects that the reader, in turn, can apprehend?

In Husserl's *Ideas* objects do appear for sure, though we cannot assume that they record an experience, in the sense that we cannot assume that Husserl saw or even "could see" the object at the moment of writing. As with much philosophy, the object appears in the language of "say" or "for instance": that is, "say, I see this"; or "for instance, I see that." Such words preface the example as illustration and not anecdote—the point is not whether or not this *really* happened. The object appears not as a thing to which we should, as readers, direct

our attention; it is not so much *a thing* as a way of saying something. And yet objects still become apprehended in the reading *as if* they were what Husserl was himself directed toward; the *as if* makes the objects matter not "in themselves," or even "for themselves," but as that which the writing is "around." The objects do not take the shape of an event, in the sense of recording something that happens or is happening, even though they allow phenomenology to take the shape that it does.

And yet, as Husserl notes, the object that is "singled out," or becomes available as a singular given, is "the paper," earlier described as "this white paper" (116). The object is an object that one imagines "would have been" in front of Husserl in the moment of writing, or even that "must have been" before him if the writing were to be written. We know enough about the "timing" of Husserl's writing to know, for instance, that what was in front of him was paper rather than a screen. Of course, the paper that Husserl might apprehend is not available to the reader. The paper can only be "missed" given that it is first apprehended as an object in the writing, which itself is dependent on the availability of paper. This paper weaves together the book I read *as* Husserl's book, and it was not available or "thrown" into Husserl's world as that which could appear to him. This paper, which was not given to him, must nevertheless be given in order for Husserl's writing to be given to me. I read writing printed on paper, and *on* the paper I read *about* the paper that is apprehended by Husserl. The paper is also "in" the writing, and hence the writing is "around" the paper. Around the paper are other objects, which are not singled out and thus form the "background" against and through which the paper appears. These again are tools of writing: inkwell, books, and pencils. The field of background intuition, against which the object becomes posited as given (the paper) provides for Husserl the very "stuff" for writing, the very materials out of which his phenomenology is borne.

How does the "matter" of the paper matter? How does the orientation of the paper, which is "on" the writing table, also function as an orientation device, which both shows the "direction" of phenomenology and also takes it in a certain direction? In this chapter I explore the concept of orientation by engaging with the work on objects by Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, as well as Marx. By reflecting specifically on "the table" as an object that matters within phenomenology, I also offer an account of gender as orientated. My aim is not to develop a phenomenology of sexual difference, as this has already convincingly been offered by feminist philosophers (see Beauvoir 1989; Young 1990, 2005; Heinämaa 2003; Fisher and Embree 2000). Instead, by showing how phenomenology faces a certain direction, which depends on the relegation of other "things" to the background, I consider how phenomenology may be gendered as a form of occupation.

Objects of Perception

The radical claim that phenomenology inherits from Franz Brentano's psychology is that consciousness is intentional: it is directed toward something. This claim immediately links the question of the object with that of orientation. First, consciousness itself is directed or orientated toward objects, which is what gives consciousness its "worldly" dimension. If consciousness is about how we perceive the world "around" us, then consciousness is also embodied, sensitive, and situated. This thesis does not simply function as a general thesis, but can also help show us how bodies are directed in some ways and not others, as a way of inhabiting or dwelling in the world.

We are turned toward things. Such things make an impression upon us. We perceive them as things insofar as they are near to us, insofar as we share a residence with them. Perception hence involves orientation; what is perceived depends on where we are located, which gives us a certain take on things. Merleau-Ponty makes this point directly when he suggests that "the word perception indicates a direction rather than a primitive function" (1962: 12). Perception is a way of facing something. I can perceive an object only insofar as my orientation allows me to see it (it must be near enough to me, which in turn means that I must be near enough to it), and in seeing it, in this way or that, it becomes an "it," which means I have already taken an orientation toward it. The object is an effect of towardness; it is the thing toward which I am directed and which in being posited as a thing, as being something or another for me, takes me in some directions rather than others.

For example, say I perceive something before me. In perceiving the object as an object, I perceive the object *in a certain way*, as being some kind of thing. Perceiving an object involves a way of apprehending that object. So it is not just that consciousness is directed toward objects, but also that I take different directions toward objects: I might like them, admire them, hate them, and so on. In perceiving them in this way or that, I also take a position upon them,

which in turns gives me a position. I might perceive an object as beautiful, for instance. Such a perception affects what I do: if I have this impression, then I might pick up the object, or get closer to it, and even press it nearer to me. Orientations involve directions toward objects that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space. We move toward and away from objects depending on how we are moved by them. For Husserl, the interpretation of the object as having this or that property is a secondary act involving what he calls a "twofold directedness" (1969: 122).[1] First, I am directed toward an object (I face it), and then I take a direction toward it (for instance, I might or might not admire it). While directionality might be twofold, this "twofoldness" does not necessarily involve a sequence in time: in seeing the object I already apprehend it in a certain way, as a concrete "it" that has qualities that might attract or repel me, or even leave me indifferent, which might affect how "it" enters my view and whether it stays in view or passes from view.[2] Turning toward an object turns "me" in this way or that, even if that "turn" does not involve a conscious act of interpretation or judgment.

We might ask, then, which way does Husserl turn? If Husserl turns toward certain objects in his writing, then what does this tell us *in turn* about his phenomenology? Let us start where he starts in his first volume of *Ideas*, which is with the world as it is given "from the natural standpoint." Such a world is the world that we are "in," as the world that takes place around us: "I am aware of a world, spread out in space endlessly" (1969: 101). This world is not simply spread out; rather, it has already taken certain shapes, which are the very form of what is "more and less" familiar: As Husserl states: "For me real objects are there, definite, more or less familiar, agreeing with what is actually perceived without being themselves perceived or even intuitively present. I can let my attention wander from the writing-table I have just seen and observed, through the unseen portions of the room behind my back to the veranda, into the garden, to the children in the summer-house, and so forth, to all the objects concerning which I precisely 'know' that they are there and yonder in my immediate co-perceived surroundings" (101).

The familiar world begins with the writing table, which is in "the room": we can name this room as Husserl's study or as the room in which he writes. *It is from here that the world unfolds.* He begins with the writing table and then turns to other parts of the room, those that are, as it were, behind him. To make this turn, we might suppose that he would have to turn around if he is to face what is behind him. But, of course, Husserl does not need to turn around as he "knows" what is behind him. And yet his mind wanders, as if thoughts are actions that demand that he turn around to face or "attend" to what is behind him. The verb "wander" helps us track the significance of "attention" as a mode of "turning toward." To "wander" can mean to ramble without certain course, to go aimlessly, to take one direction without intention or control, to stray from a path, or even to deviate in conduct or belief. So Husserl in attending to what is behind him is deviating from his proper course. The behind is here the "point" of deviation, such that when Husserl considers what is behind his back, he is turning his attention away from what he faces.

We are reminded that what we can see in the first place depends on which way we are facing. What gets our attention depends too on which direction we are facing. The things that are behind Husserl are also behind the table that he faces: it is "self-evident" that he has his back to what is behind him. We might even say that it is the behind that converts "the back" into the background. A queer phenomenology, I wonder, might be one that faces the back, which looks "behind" phenomenology, which hesitates at the sight of the philosopher's back. Having begun here, with what is in front of his front and behind his back, Husserl then turns to other spaces, which he describes as rooms, and which he "knows" are there insofar as they are already given to him as places by memory. These other rooms are co-perceived: that is, they are not singled out and they do not have his attention, even when he evokes them for the reader. They are made available to us only as background features of this domestic landscape.

Husserl's writing makes an impression on me when he offers this glimpse of the domesticity of his world. How I long for him to dwell there by lingering on the folds of the materials that surround him. How I long to hear about the objects that gather around him, as "things" he does "things" with. This is not a desire for biography, or even for an impossible intimacy with a writer who is no longer with us. This is, rather, a desire to read about the particularity of the objects that gather around the writer. It is also a desire to imagine philosophy as beginning here, with the pen and the paper, and with the body of the philosopher, who writes insofar as he is "at home" and insofar as home provides a space in which he does his work.

Yes, we are invited, at least temporarily, to imagine the world that is his home; to give it a face and a form. I see his desk in the corner. I see him at his

desk—leaning, writing, pressing pen to paper, creating the lines that make these impressions available to me. I see a leather chair to one side. I have such an image, such an impression already in mind. The study, the room dedicated to writing or other forms of contemplation, conjures up such a vivid image of a masculine domain at the front of the house. I imagine the furniture (dark, polished), the materials (leather, wood), and the feel of the room (serious, intense), even though I know I do not and will not know how he arranged his room. His words help to create these impressions. But my impression of this study does not begin with the words written on this paper. My impressions are affected by other books I have read in my own literary genealogy, especially nineteenth-century women's writing, which is saturated with images of domestic space. The study, the parlor, the kitchen: these rooms provide the settings for drama; they are where things happen.

The family home provides, as it were, the background against which an object (the writing table) appears in the present, in front of Husserl. The family home is thus only ever *co-perceived*, and allows the philosopher to do his work. This familiar place, the family home, is also a practical world: "Things in their immediacy stand there as objects to be used, the 'table with its books,' the 'glass to drink from,' the 'vase,' the 'piano,' and so forth" (1969: 103). If Husserl is facing the writing table, then this "direction" also shows us the nature of the work that he does for a living. It is the table, with its books, which first gets his attention. As Diana Fuss reminds us, "the theatre of composition is not an empty space but a place animated by the artefacts, momentos, machines, books, and furniture that frame any intellectual labour" (2004: 1).

The objects that first appear as the "more and less familiar" function as signs of orientation: being orientated toward the writing table might ensure that you inhabit certain rooms and not others, and that you do some things rather than others. In the following sections I will take up the significance of this example in terms of "doing things" and "inhabiting spaces." Being orientated toward the writing table not only relegates other rooms in the house to the background, but also might depend *on the work done to keep the desk clear.* The desk that is clear is one that is ready for writing. One might even consider the domestic work that must have taken place for Husserl to turn to the writing table, and to be writing on the table, and to keep that table as the object of his attention. We can draw here on the long history of feminist scholarship about the politics of housework: about the ways in which women, as wives and servants, do the work required to keep such spaces available for men and the work they do (Gilman 2002).[3] To sustain an orientation toward the writing table might depend on such work, while it erases the signs of that work, as signs of dependence. In Ruth Madigan and Moira Munro's critique of the town house, they note how its interior design "reflected the internal hierarchy of the bourgeois family with the public 'masculine' domain at the front of the house, and the private 'feminine' domain confined to the rear" (1990: 7). What is behind Husserl's back, what he does not face, might be the back of the house—the feminine space dedicated to the work of care, cleaning, and reproduction. Such work is often experienced as "the lack of spare time" (Davies 2001: 141); for example, the lack of time for oneself or for contemplation. To what extent does philosophy depend on the concealment of domestic labor and of the labor time that it takes to reproduce the very "materials" of home?

It is interesting to note, for instance, that in Husserl's writing, the familiar slides into the familial; the home is a family home as a residence that is inhabited by children. They are in the summer house, he tells us. The children evoke the familial only through being "yonder"—through being at a distance from the philosopher who in writing "about" them is doing his work. They are outside the house yet also part of its interior, near the "veranda," which marks "the edge," a line between what is inside and what is outside. In a way, the children who are "yonder" point to what is made available through memory or even habitual knowledge: they are sensed as being there, behind him, even if they are not seen by him at this moment in time. The children might be in the background because others (wives, mothers, nannies) care for them. They do not distract him from his work.

We can think, in other words, of the background not simply in terms of what is around what we face, as the "dimly perceived," but as produced by acts of relegation: some things are relegated to the background in order *to sustain* a certain direction; in other words, in order to keep attention on what is faced. Perception involves such acts of relegation that are forgotten in the very preoccupation with what it is that is faced. We can pose a simple question: Who faces the writing table? Does the writing table have a face, which points it toward some bodies rather than others? If such acts of facing depend on relegating the children or other dependants to the background, then the answer to this question would not simply involve a biographical approach, but would consider how other forms of social orientation affect how bodies

arrive at the table. One could read Husserl alongside other writers who have written about writing. Let's consider Adrienne Rich's account of writing a letter: "From the fifties and early sixties, I remember a cycle. It began when I had picked up a book or began trying to write a letter . . . The child (or children) might be absorbed in busyness, in his own dream world; but as soon as he felt me gliding into a world which did not include him, he would come to pull at my hand, ask for help, punch at the typewriter keys. And I would feel his wants at such a moment as fraudulent, as an attempt moreover to defraud me of living even for fifteen minutes as myself" (Rich 1991: 23).[4]

We can see from the point of view of this mother, who is also a writer, a poet, and a philosopher, that giving attention to the objects of writing, facing those objects, becomes impossible: the children, even if they are behind you, literally pull you away. This loss of time for writing feels like a loss of your own time, as you are returned to the work of giving your attention to the children. Attention involves a political economy, or an uneven distribution of attention time between those who arrive at the writing table, which affects what they can do once they arrive (and of course, many do not even make it). For some, having time for writing, which means time to face the objects upon which writing happens, becomes an orientation that is not available given the ongoing labor of other attachments, which literally pull you away. So whether we can sustain our orientation toward the writing table depends on other orientations, which affect what we can face at any given moment in time.

By reading the objects that appear in Husserl's writing, we get a sense of how being directed toward some objects and not others involves a more general orientation toward the world. The objects that we direct our attention toward reveal the direction we have taken in life. Other objects, and indeed spaces, are relegated to the background; they are only ever co-perceived. This relegation of unseen portions and the rooms to the background, as the fringe of the familiar, which is not the object of attention, is followed by a second act of relegation. For although Husserl directs our attention to these other rooms, *even if only as the background to his writing table*, he also suggests that phenomenology must "bracket" or put aside what is given, what is made available by ordinary perception. If phenomenology is to see the table, he suggests, it must see "without" the natural attitude, which keeps us within the familiar—indeed, within the space already "decided" as "being" the family home.

So this turn toward objects within phenomenology (which as we see is about some objects and not others) is not about the characteristics of such objects, which we can define in terms of type, the kind of objects they are, or their function, which names not only the "tendency" of the objects, what they do, but also what they allow us to do: the paper (what I write on), the pencil (what I write with), and so on. The social and familiar character of objects is "bracketed" by Husserl, as what is posited by the natural attitude, the attitude that in turn is inherited by psychologism and that takes for granted what is given to the subject as given (Husserl 1969: 16). The natural attitude does not "see the world," as it takes for granted what appears; what appears quickly disappears under the blanket of the familiar. In such a world, everything is orientated around me, as being available and familiar to me (Schutz and Luckmann 1974: 4). To see the paper, for instance, as simply the material that is available to write upon (the paper is white paper, even blank paper, as that which is *ready* for me to write upon), would not be to perceive the paper *as an object*. Phenomenology, in Husserl's formulation, can only come into being as a first philosophy, if it suspends all that gathers together as a natural attitude, not through Cartesian doubt but through a way of perceiving the world "as if" one did not assume its existence as taking some forms rather than others (1969: 107–10). If the objects of phenomenology are domesticated objects—that is, objects one imagines as "being available" within the familiar space provided by the home—then the domesticity of the setting is not allowed to reveal itself. Or, if signs of domesticity appear then, they also quickly disappear, and seemingly must do so if phenomenology is to do its work.

This domestic world, which surrounds the philosopher as he moves his attention "backward" from the space in which he writes, must be "put aside," or even "put to one side," in his turn toward objects as objects of perception. It is this world, which is familiar to him, that is given in the form of familiarity. What does it mean to assume that bracketing can "transcend" the familiar world of experience? Perhaps to bracket does not mean to transcend, even if we put something aside. We remain reliant on what we put in brackets; indeed, the activity of bracketing may sustain the fantasy that "what we put aside" can be transcended in the first place.[5] The act of "putting aside" might also confirm the fantasy of a subject who is transcendent, who places himself above the contingent world of social matter, a world that differentiates objects and subjects according to how they already appear. We could question not only

the formal aspects of the bracket (which creates the fantasy that we can do without what we put to one side), but also with the content of what is bracketed, with "what" is "put aside."[6] What is "put aside," we might say, is the very space of the familiar, which is also what clears the philosopher's table and allows him to do his work.

The objects that appear within phenomenology also disappear in the "passing over" of what is given as familiar (the paper is first named, and then would become something other than *that* as if it were *that* then I would be writing on the paper, rather than seeing it). This disappearance of familiar objects might make more than the object disappear. The writer who does the work of philosophy might disappear, if we are to erase the signs of "where" it is that he works. Feminist philosophers have shown us how the masculinity of philosophy is evidenced in the disappearance of the subject under the sign of the universal (Bordo 1987; Irigaray 1974; Braidotti 1991). The masculinity might also be evident in the disappearance of the materiality of objects, in the bracketing of the materials out of which, as well as upon which, philosophy writes itself, as a way of apprehending the world.

We could call this the fantasy of a "paperless" philosophy, a philosophy that is not dependent on the materials upon which it is written. As Audre Lorde reflects, "A room of one's own may be a necessity for writing prose, but so are reams of paper, a type writer and plenty of time" (1984: 116). The fantasy of a paperless philosophy can be understood as crucial not only to the gendered nature of the occupation of philosophy but also to the disappearance of political economy, of the "materials" of philosophy as well as its dependence on forms of labor, both domestic and otherwise. In other words, the labor of writing might disappear along with the paper. The paper here matters, both as the object upon which writing is written, but also as the condition of possibility for that work. If the suspension of the natural attitude, which sees itself as seeing beyond the familiar, or even seeing through it, involves *putting the paper aside*, then it might involve the concealment of the labor of philosophy, as well as the labor that allows philosophy to take up the time that it does. Rather than the familiar being posited as that which must be suspended in order to see, we might consider what "it" is that we "overlook" when we reside within the familiar.[7] We would look, then, at what we do with things, how the arrival of things may be shaped by the work that we do, rather than put aside what it is that we do.

Let us return to the table. Husserl begins again by taking up the matter of the table. He has put aside the knowing glance of the natural attitude, which would see the table as a writing table, in this room, in this house, in this world. How does the object appear when it is no longer familiar? As he puts it: "We start by taking an example. Keeping this table steadily in view as I go round it, changing my position in space all the time, I have continually the consciousness of the bodily presence out there of this one and the self-same table, which in itself remains unchanged throughout" (1969: 130).

We can see here how Husserl turns to "the table" as an object by looking at it rather than over it. The writing table, if we are to follow this line, would not be seen (even if we face it, it is in the background as what is more and less familiar). For Husserl, then to see the table means to *lose sight of its function*. The bracket means "this table" becomes "the table." By beginning with the table, on its own, as it were, the object then appears self-same. It is not that the object's self-sameness is available at first sight. Husserl moves around the table, changing his position. For such movement to be possible, consciousness must flow: we must not be interrupted by other matters. This flow of consciousness is made possible by having the time and space to attend to the table. Putting that point to one side (we can labor points, too, after all), we might follow his gaze. Apprehending the table as an object means that I must walk around it and approach it as if I had not encountered it before; seeing it *as an object* means not describing the table as occupying a familial order, as the writing table, or any other kind of table. Such biographical or practical knowledge must be bracketed, which Husserl describes as "*to put out of action*" (1969: 110). And in the bracketing, I do not see the table as my field of action but rather see it as an object, *as if* I did not already know it or even know what I do with it. I do not see "it" in one look, but only as a series of profiles of "it," which nevertheless allow me to posit "it" as more than what I see in any one look. As Husserl elaborates:

> I close my eyes. The other senses are inactive in relation to the table. I have now no perception of it. I open my eyes and the perception returns. The perception? Let us be more accurate. Under no circumstances does it return to me individually the same. *Only the table is the same*, known as identical through the synthetic consciousness, which connects the new experience with the recollection. The perceived thing can be, without being perceived, without my being aware of it even as a potential only (in the way of actuality, as previously described) and

> perhaps even without itself changing at all. But the perception itself is what it is within the steady flow of consciousness, and is itself constantly in flux; the perceptual now is ever passing over into the adjacent consciousness of the just-past, a new now simultaneously gleams forth, and so on. (130; emphasis added)

This argument suggests that the table as object is given as "the same," as a givenness that "holds" or is shaped by the "flow" of perception. Indeed, this is precisely Husserl's point: the object is intended through perception. As Robert Sokolowski describes, "When we perceive an object, we do not just have a flow of profiles, a series of impressions; in and through them all, we have one and the same object given to us, and the identity of the object is intended and given" (2000: 20). The "intending" of the object through which it becomes more than just one impression involves, in Husserl's terms, synthetic consciousness—that is, the connection of the new impression with what has gone before, in the very form of an active "re-collection" or synthesis. Significantly, the object becomes an object of perception only given the work of recollection, such that the "new" exists in relation *to what is already gathered by consciousness*: each impression is linked to the other, so that the object becomes more than the profile that is available in any moment.

Given this, the story of the sameness of the object involves the specter of absence and nonpresence. For despite the self-sameness of the object, I do not see it as "the self-same." I never see it as such; what "it is" cannot be apprehended as *I cannot view the table from all points of view at once*. The necessity of moving around the object, to capture more than its profile, shows that the object is unavailable to me, which is why it must be intended. It is a table, so I am hardly surprised to walk around, and from each view, to see a profile that matches what I expect to see. It might have four legs, or a wooden top—all of the things I would expect it to have if it is a table.

The table's sameness can only be intended. Husserl then makes what is an extraordinary claim: *only the table remains the same*. This is, in part, extraordinary given the implication that all other things fluctuate. The table is the only thing that keeps its place in the flow of perception. This already makes the table a rather queer object (as I will explore in the conclusion of this book). We can take what is powerful about Husserl's thesis of intentionality and suggest that the sameness of the table is spectral: the table is only the same given that we have conjured its missing sides. Or, we can even say that we have *conjured its behind*. I want to relate what is "missed" when we "miss" the table to the spectrality of history, what we miss may be behind the table in another sense: what is behind the table is what must have already taken place for the table to arrive.

Objects That Arrive

As noted above, phenomenology for Husserl means apprehending the object as if it were unfamiliar, so that we can attend to the flow of perception itself. What this flow of perception shows is the partiality of absence as well as presence: what we do not see (say, the back or side of the object), is hidden from view and can only be intended. The partiality of perception is not only about what is not in view, but also what is "around" it, which we can describe as the background. The figure "figures" insofar as the background both is and is not in view. We single out this object only by pushing other objects to the edges or "fringes" of vision.

Husserl suggests that inhabiting the familiar makes "things" into backgrounds for action: they are there, but they are there in such a way that I don't see them. The background is a "*dimly apprehended depth or fringe of indeterminate reality*" (1969: 102). We can thus see that although Husserl faces his writing table, this does not mean the table is perceived as an object. Even though the table is before him, it might also be in the background. We might not even "see" the writing table when we write upon it. My argument in the previous section hence needs some qualification: even when Husserl faces the writing table, it does not necessarily follow that the table is "in front" of him. What we face can also be part of the background, suggesting that the background may include more and less proximate objects. It is not incidental that when Husserl brings "the table" to the front that the writing table disappears. Being orientated toward the writing table might even provide the condition of possibility for its disappearance.

Husserl's approach to the background as what is "unseen" in its "thereness" or "familiarity" is extremely useful, even if he puts the familiar to one side. It allows us to consider how the familiar takes shape by being unnoticed. I want here to extend his model by thinking about the "background" of the writing table in another sense. Husserl considers how this table might be *in* the background, as well as the background that is *around* the table, when "it" comes into view. I want to consider how the table itself may *have* a background. The background would be understood as that which must take place in order for

something to appear. We can recall the different meanings of the word "background." A background can refer to the "ground or parts situated in the rear" (such as the rooms in the back of the house), or to the portions of the picture represented at a distance, which in turn allows what is "in" the foreground to acquire the shape that it does, as a figure or object. Both of these meanings point to the "spatiality" of the background. We can also think of background as having a temporal dimension.[8] When we tell a story about someone, for instance, we might give information about their background: this meaning of "background" would be about "what is behind," where "what is behind" refers to what is in the past or what happened "before." We might speak also of "family background," which would refer not just to the past of an individual but also to other kinds of histories, which shape an individual's arrival into the world, and through which "the family" itself becomes a social given (see chapter 2). Indeed, events can have backgrounds: a background is what explains the conditions of emergence or an arrival of something as the thing that it appears to be in the present.

So, if phenomenology is to attend to the background, it might do so by giving an account of the conditions of emergence for something, which would not necessarily be available in how that thing presents itself to consciousness. If we do not see (but intend) the back of the object, we might also not see (but intend) its background in this temporal sense. In order to see what the "natural attitude" has in its sight, we need to face the background of an object, redefined as the conditions for the emergence not only of the object (we might ask: How did it arrive?), as well as the act of perceiving the object, which depends on the arrival of the body that perceives. The background to perception might involve such intertwining histories of arrival, which would explain how Husserl got near enough to his table for it to become not only the object on which he writes, but also the object around which his phenomenology is written. After all, phenomenology has its own background, its own conditions for emergence, which might include the very matter of the table.

So how does the object arrive into one's field of vision? What is behind its arrival? Such a question implies that the "availability" of objects is an effect of actions, which are not necessarily perceivable on the surface of the object. The question is not a simple one; it cannot be answered by providing a biography of the object as if the object had an independent existence from the "points" at which they are viewed. Despite this, objects move in and out of view such that they do have an existence that is more than how they present or reveal themselves. As Arjun Appadurai suggests, "We have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories" (1988: 5). If phenomenology turns us toward things, in terms of how they reveal themselves in the present, then we may also need to "follow" such things around. We may need to supplement phenomenology with an "ethnography of things." The question of where an object "goes" would not then vacate the position of subjects, those to whom they present themselves as a figure, or background within familiar forms of the social. The story of the object's travel would involve "co-perception," to use Husserl's term. So our question, as an "ethno-phenomenological" one, would be: How did I or we arrive at the point where it is possible to witness the arrival of the object? How is the arrival a form of witnessing in which "what arrives" becomes a "what" only in the event of being apprehended as a "what"?

At least two entities have to arrive to create an encounter, a "bringing forth" in the sense of an occupation. So, this table and Husserl have to "co-incide," for him to write his philosophy about "the table." The dash in "co-incidence" must be highlighted here to avoid turning the shared arrival into a matter of chance. To "co-incide" suggests how different things happen at the same moment, a happening that bring things near to other things, whereby the nearness shapes the shape of each thing. Simultaneous arrivals are not necessarily a matter of chance; arrivals are determined, at least in a certain way, as a determination that might determine what gets near, even if it does not decide what happens *once we are near*. If being near to this or that object is not a matter of chance, what happens in the "now" of this nearness remains open, in the sense that we don't always know things affect each other, or how we will be affected by things (Deleuze 1992: 627).[9]

So, we can ask: How did the table arrive at the point, where Husserl could face the paper that is on it? How did he arrive at the table as the tool that "brings forth" his philosophy and is itself "brought forth" as the very materials on which his philosophy is written? How is the object, in Derrida's term, an "arrivant"? For Derrida, the arrivant signifies the "perhaps" of the "what arrives?" As he puts it: "What is going to come, *perhaps*, is not only this or that; it is at last the thought of the *perhaps* itself. The *arrivant* will arrive *perhaps*, for one must never be sure when it comes to *arrive*; but the *arrivant* could also be the *perhaps* itself, the unheard of, totally new experience of the *perhaps*" (1997: 29, see also Derrida 1994b: 33–34). To say the object is an arrivant is to signal not only that it is nearby but also that its nearness is not simply given.

The "bringing forth" of the object involves, for sure, its arrival; in coming into being it comes "here," near enough to me, or to you, as it must do if it is to be seen as this or that object. Nothing is not brought forth "without" coming to reside somewhere, where the somewhere (say, the house, the room, or the skin) shapes the surface of "what" it "is" that is brought forth. In "having arrived" how does the object become "what," where "what" is open to the "perhaps" of the future?

Heidegger turns to the etymology of the object when he considers how the object "is" insofar as "it is thrown." The word "thrown" risks turning the arrival of the object into an event, a happening, which is here insofar as it is "now." Lefebvre offers a critique of Heidegger's concept of "thrownness," which understands production as "causing to appear" (1991: 122). I would also suggest that the arrival of an object does not just happen in a moment; it is not that the object "makes an appearance," even though we can be thrown by an object's appearance. An arrival takes time, and the time that it takes shapes "what" it is that arrives. The object could even be described as the transformation of time into form, which itself could be redefined as the "direction" of matter. What arrives not only depends on time, but is shaped by the conditions of its arrival, by how it came to get here. Think of a sticky object; what it picks up on its surface "shows" where it has traveled and what it has come into contact with. You bring your past encounters with you when you arrive. In this sense an arrival has not simply happened; an arrival points toward a future that might or "perhaps" will happen, given that we don't always know in advance "what" we will come into contact with when we follow this or that line. At the same time, the arrival only becomes an arrival insofar as it has happened; and the object may "appear" only as an effect of work that has already taken place.

Our question could be reformulated as: What work goes into the making of things, such that they take form as this or that thing? Marxism provides a philosophy for rethinking the object as not only in history, but as an effect of history. The Marxian critique of German idealism begins after all with a critique of the idea that the object is "in the present," or that the object is "before me." As Marx and Engels put it, in their critique of Feuerbach:

> He does not see how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry, and of the state of society; and indeed, in the sense that it is a historical product, and the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, modifying its social system according to its changed needs. Even the objects of the simplest "sensuous certainty" are only given him through social demands, industry and commercial intercourse. The cherry-tree, like almost all fruit-trees, was, as is well known, only a few centuries ago transplanted by *commerce* into our zone, and therefore only *by* this action of a definite society in a definite age it has become "sensuous certainty" for Feuerbach. (1975: 170)

If phenomenologists were simply to "look at" the object that they face, then they would be erasing the "signs" of history. They would apprehend the object as simply there, as given in its sensuous certainty rather than as "having got here," an arrival that is at once the way in which objects are binding and how they assume a social form. So objects (such as the cherry tree) are "transplanted." They take the shape of a social action, which is forgotten in the givenness of the object. The temporality of "what comes before" is erased in the experience of the object as "what is before" in the spatial sense. For Marx and Engels, actions are generational and intergenerational (the point is not about individual action). What passes through history is not only the work done by generations, but the "sedimentation" of that work is the condition of arrival for future generations. Objects take the shape of this history; objects "have value" and they take shape through labor. They are formed out of labor, but they also "take the form" of that labor. What Marxism lets us do is to rearticulate the historicity of furniture, among other things.[10] History cannot simply be perceived on the surface of the object, even if how objects surface or take shape is an effect of such histories. In other words, history cannot simply be turned into something that is given in its sensuous certainty, as if it could be a property of an object.

If idealism takes the object as given, then it fails to account for its conditions of arrival, which are not simply given. Idealism is the philosophical counterpart to what Marx would later describe as commodity fetishism. I want to suggest that it is not just commodities that are fetishized: objects that I perceive as objects, as having properties of their own, as it were, are produced through the process of fetishism. The object is "brought forth" as a thing that is "itself" only insofar as it is cut off from its own arrival. So it becomes that which we have presented to us, only if we forget how it arrived, as a history that involves multiple forms of contact between others. Objects appear by being cut off from such histories of arrival, as histories that involve multiple genera-

tions, and the "work" of bodies, which is of course the work of some bodies more than others.

Let us turn to Marx's model of "commodity fetishism." In *Capital* he suggests that commodities are made up of two elements, "matter and labour," where labor is understood as "changing the form of matter" (1887: 50). The commodity is assumed to have value, or a life of its own, only if we forget the labor: "It becomes value only in its congealed state, when embodied in the form of some object" (57). The commodity, in other words, both transforms labor into an object and takes the very "form" of labor. Interestingly, Marx also uses the example of "the table" (although we don't know what kind of table he refers to). He suggests that the table is made from wood (which provides, as it were, the matter), and that the work of the table—the work that it takes to "make the table"—changes the form of the wood, even though the table "is" still made out of wood. As he states: "It is as clear as noon-day that man, by his industry, changes the forms of the material furnished by nature in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered by making a table out of it, for all that, the table continues to be that common every-day thing, wood. But, as soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent" (76).

The Marxian critique of commodity fetishism notably relies here on a distinction between matter and form, between the wood and the table. The "becoming table" of the wood is not the same as its commodification. The table has use value, even after it has transformed the "form" of the wood. The table can be used, and in being used the value of the table is not exchanged and made abstract. The table has use value until it is exchanged. One problem with this model is that the dynamism of "making form" is located in the transformation of nature into use value: we could also suggest that the "wood" (nature/matter) has acquired its form over time. Nature then would not be simply "there," waiting to be formed or to take form. Marx and Engel's earlier critique of idealism involves a more dynamic view of the "facts of matter": even the trees, which provide the wood, are themselves "brought forth" as effects of generational action. The wood is itself "formed matter" insofar as trees are not simply given but take shape as an effect of labor ("transplanted by commerce").[11] The orientation of this table, how it appears as a table for work, depends on these multiple histories of labor, redefined as matter taking form.[12]

It is not surprising that Derrida offers a critique of the Marxian distinction between use value and exchange value (1994a: 149), by turning toward the table. As he suggests: "The table is familiar, too familiar." For Derrida, the table is not simply something we use: "The table has been worn down, exploited, overexploited, or else set aside and beside itself, no longer in use, in antique shops or auction rooms" (149). He thus suggests that "the table in use" is as metaphysical as "table as commodity": use value as well as exchange value involves fetishism (162). While I agree with this argument, we might note that for Marx the table in use is not simply inert: it involves the "trans-formation" of matter into form. Use value is hence not a simple matter for Marx, even if he locates the transcendental in the "queer" commodity.[13]

What a Marxist approach could allow us to do, if we extend Marx's critique of the commodity to the very matter of wood as well as the form of the table, is to consider the history of "what appears" and how it is shaped by histories of work. The commodity might be one moment in the "life history" or career of an object (Appadurai 1988: 17). The table as an object also moves around; it acquires new forms; it is put to different uses. For example, I buy the table (for this or that amount of money) as a table "for" writing. I have to bring it to the space where it will reside (the study, or the space marked out in a corner of another room). Others bring it for me: they transport the table. They bring it up the stairs. I wince as the edge of the table hits the wall, leaving a mark on both the wall and the table—which shows, too, what the table came into contact with during the time of its arrival. The table, having arrived, is nestled in the corner of the room. I use it as a writing desk. Having arrived, I turn to the table and sit on the chair which is placed alongside it. The chair allows me to reach the table, to cover it with my arms, and to write upon it. And yet, I am not sure what will happen to the table in the future. I could put the table to a different use (I could use it as a dining table if it is big enough "to support" this kind of action), or I could even forget about the table if I ceased to write, whereupon it might be "put aside" out of reach. The object is not reducible to the commodity, even when it is bought and sold: indeed, the object is not reducible to itself, which means it does not "have" an "itself" that is apart from its contact with others. The actions performed on the object (as well as with the object) shape the object. The object in turn affects what we do, as I will discuss in the section following.

Going back to the table, we would remember that the table was made by somebody; and that there is a history to its arrival, as a history of trans-

portation, which could be redescribed as a history of *changing hands*. As Igor Kopytoff puts it, we can have a cultural biography of things, which would show how "they are culturally redefined and put to use" (1988: 67).[14] This table, you might say, has a story. What a story it could tell. What we need to recall is how the "thisness" of this table does not, as it were, belong to it: what is particular about this table, what we can tell through its biography, is also what allows us to tell a larger story: a story not only of "things" changing hands, but of how things come to matter by taking shape through and in the labor of others.[15]

Such histories are not simply available *on* the surface of the object, apart from the scratches that might be left behind. Histories shape "what" surfaces: they are behind the arrival of "the what" that surfaces. Histories are in this sense spectral; just like Husserl's "missing sides." We do not know, of course, the story of Husserl's table, how it arrived, or what happened to the table after he stopped writing. But having arrived, we can follow what the table allowed him to do by reading his philosophy as a philosophy that turns to the table. So even if the "thisness" of the table disappears in his work, we could allow its "thisness" to reappear by making this table "matter" in our reading.

Doing Things

The object has arrived. And, having arrived, what then does it do? I want to suggest that objects not only are shaped by work, but that they also take the shape of the work they do. To think about how objects are "occupied" we can begin by considering how we are busy "with" them. Whether we "take" up different objects depends on how we are already occupied and on the kind of work that we do. We say that we occupy space; that we have an occupation. We are occupied with objects, which present themselves as tools to extend "the reach" of our actions. We are occupied when we are busy. We are booked up; we are using up time when we are occupied with something. We might be preoccupied by something, which means we don't notice something else. The word "occupy" allows us to link the question of inhabiting or residing within space; to work, or even to having an identity through work (an occupation); to time (to be occupied with); to holding something; and to taking possession of something *as* a thing. How are we occupied with objects? How does an occupation orientate us toward some objects and, in that towardness, to some ways of living over others? How does this orientation take up time as well as space?

It is no accident that Heidegger poses this question of occupation, of what it is that we do, by turning to the table. In *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1999),[16] Heidegger contrasts two ways of describing tables. In the first model, the table is encountered as "a thing in space—as a spatial thing" (68). Although Heidegger evokes Husserl's description of "the table," Husserl is not named, or at least not at this point. As Heidegger states: "Aspects show themselves and open up in ever new ways as we walk around the thing" (68). Heidegger suggests that this description is inaccurate not because it is false (the table might after all appear in this way) but because it does not describe how the significance of such things is not simply "in" the thing, but rather a "characteristic of being" (67–68). For Heidegger what makes "the table" what it is, and not something else, is what the table allows us to do.

The words by Heidegger that follow form one of the richest phenomenological descriptions of the table as it is experienced from the points of view of those who share the space of its dwelling: "What is there in *the* room there at home is *the* table (not 'a' table among many other tables in other rooms and houses) at which one sits *in order to* write, have a meal, sew, or play. Everyone sees this right away, e.g. during a visit: it is a writing table, a dining table, a sewing table—such is the primary way in which it is being encountered in itself. This characteristic of 'in order to do something' is not merely imposed on the table by relating and assimilating it to something else which it is not" (69).[17] In other words, what we do with the table, or what the table allows us to do, is essential to the table. The table provides a surface around which a family gathers: Heidegger describes his wife sitting at the table and reading, and "the boys" busying themselves at the table.[18] The "in order to" structure of the table means that the people who are "at" the table are also part of what makes the table itself. Doing things "at" the table is what makes the table what it is and not some other thing.

We could perhaps then redescribe the table as a tool, as something we do something with. In *Being and Time* Heidegger offers us a powerful reading of tools as he does in his later work on technology. In the former, Heidegger considers the "pragmatic" character of things, which is obscured by the presentation of things as "mere things," and he considers such things as forms of equipment. As he suggests, "In our dealings, we come across equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation" (1973: 97). In ordering his phenomenology around equipment, Heidegger departs from Husserl by suggesting that the pragmatic orientation of things is associated within their being, or what he

describes as the "equipmentality" of objects. Equipmentality is about what "things" or "objects" allow bodies to do: they have an "in-order-to" structure, which assigns or refers to something. So what makes the object "itself" is what it allows us to do, and that "doing" takes the object out of itself and makes it "point" toward something, whether that something is an action or other objects. So the writing table is Husserl's equipment: it "points toward" writing as well as to other objects, which gather around writing as tools that allow this kind of work: the inkwell, pencils, and so on. The writing table might also point toward the writing body, as that which becomes "itself" once it "takes up" the equipment and "takes up" time and space, in doing the work that the equipment allows the body to do.

What objects do is what brings them forth in the shape they have. The wheel can roll, the desk can hold a computer, the pen can write, the jug can pour. The use of "can" here might help remind us that "usefulness" is not merely instrumental but is about capacities that are open to the future. The capacity is not so much "in" the tool, but depends on how the tool is taken up or "put to use." Heidegger makes exactly this point in his later work on technology. It is not just that the object tends toward something, where the tendency supports an action, but that the shape of the object is itself shaped by the work for which it is intended. For Heidegger, the thing "is not merely an aggregate of traits, nor an accumulation of properties by which the aggregate arises," rather it "is that around which the properties have been assembled" (1975: 22–23). We can see in this model of property as assemblage, how the thing becomes something that "has" properties. The thing would be a thing insofar as it is being used as the thing that it was brought into the world to be: "The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. *Only here are they what they are*" (33).

Technology does not simply refer to objects that we use to extend capacities for action. Technology (or *techne*) becomes instead the process of "bringing forth" or, as Heidegger states,"to make something appear, within what is present, as this or as that, in this way or that way" (159). The object is an effect of "bringing forth," where the "bringing forth" is a question of the determination of form: the object itself has been shaped for something, *which means it takes the shape of what it is for*. The object is not just material, although it is material: the object is matter given some form or another where the form "intends" toward something. The table has a horizontal surface, which "supports" the action for which it is intended. This "tending toward" is what shapes its form, which then allows us to recognize the object as this object and not another. Form takes shape through the "direction" of matter toward an action. So we do things "on the table," which is what makes the table what it is and take shape in the way that it does. *The table is assembled around the "support" it gives.*

And yet, objects do not only do what we intend them to do. Heidegger differentiates between using something and perceiving something, which he describes in terms of grasping that something thematically (98). The example he uses is the hammer. When the hammer hammers, then it is "ready-to-hand." The nearness of the hammer, the fact that it is available to me, is linked to its usefulness; it is near as it enables me to perform a specific kind of work. Such "ready-to-hand-ness" is interesting to Heidegger, insofar as it is something to do with what the hammer "is." Indeed, Heidegger suggests that the object as practice, as something we do something with, involves "*its own kind* of sight" (99) which is a different sight than looking at the hammer as if it were not something that simply hammered. Heidegger thus suggests that when the ready-to-hand is not "handy," we see it differently; it becomes "present-to-hand." So the hammer breaks, and it is not that I no longer see what the object really is (for it "is" a hammer), but that I see it in a different way, as something that does not move toward something: "When equipment cannot be used, this implies the constitutive assignment of the 'in-order-to' to a 'toward-this' has been disturbed . . . But when an assignment has been disturbed—when something is unusable for some purpose—then the assignment becomes explicit" (105). What difference does this "making explicit" make? Heidegger moves on:

> The entity which is held in our fore-having—for instance, the hammer—is proximally ready-to-hand as equipment. If this entity becomes the "object" of an assertion, then as soon as we begin this assertion, there is already a change over in the fore-having. Something *ready-to-hand with which* we have to do or perform something, turns into something "*about which*" the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-to-hand in what is ready-to-hand. Both *by* and *for* this way of looking at it [*Hin-sicht*], the ready-to-hand becomes veiled as ready-to-hand. Within this discovering of presence-at-hand, which is at the same time a covering up of readiness-to-hand, something present-at-hand which we encounter is given a definite character in its Being-present-at-hand-in-such-and-such-a-manner. Only now are we given any access to *properties* or the like. (200)

So it is when the hammer is broken, or when I cannot use it, that I become aware of the hammer as an object-in-itself, rather than as object, which refers beyond itself to an action that I intend to perform. So at this moment of "failure" the hammer is perceived as having properties; as being, for instance, "too heavy." The hammer ceases to be a means to do something (where the object is the action) and becomes the object that we attend to, or are concerned with. While this model does not designate the usefulness of objects, and their familiarity as functional things as "the natural attitude," which must be bracketed by phenomenology, it does distinguish between using something and perceiving something, although use is given its own kind of sight.

What is being revealed when technologies are no longer ready for action? For Heidegger, it is properties that are revealed. He suggests that when the hammer ceases to hammer, that is, we cease to be able to hammer with it, then we become aware of it as having a specific form: "The hammer is too heavy." In other words, we only feel the heaviness of the hammer at the moment in which we cannot use the hammer to perform the action: when the hammer does not hammer. But clearly this propositional statement about the hammer—"The hammer is too heavy"—is still a statement that "points" toward what the hammer "should" do. In other words, the heaviness of the hammer *still refers to the action that the hammer itself directs us toward.* The hammer is too heavy for what? It is too heavy to hammer "with," after all. The "too heavy" suggests that the hammer does not allow me to hammer. The judgment about the hammer, which gives it a property as being this or that kind of thing, still perceives the hammer in terms of what it can or should do, even in the moment of the failure of the hammer to perform its action.

So when something is no longer ready for action it does follow that we have access to its properties, as if they are independent of the histories of action that bring such objects forth, as the "what" that is near. This is not to say that it does not make a difference to how we perceive things when those things are and are not "put to use." Rather, it is to say that the failure of things to be put to use does not mean an access to properties of things that are independent of their use. Indeed, we might want to question the presumption that things have properties, which do not point toward their "assignment" in a familiar and social order.

So what does it mean to say that an object fails to do the work for which it was intended? This failure might not simply be a question of the object itself failing. For the hammer might be too heavy for you to use but perfectly adequate for me. A hammer might be broken and not enable me to do one thing, but it could still let me do something else. Failure, which is about the loss of the capacity to perform an action for which the object was intended is not a property of an object (though it tends to be attributed in this way and there is no doubt that *things can go wrong*), but rather of the failure of an object to extend a body, which we can define in terms of the extension of bodily capacities to perform actions. The body cannot extend itself through the object in a way that was intended, although of course "intention" should not then become a presumed property of things (a child who picks up the broken hammer and begins to play a game is still doing something). The experience of this "nonextension" might then lead to "the object" *being attributed* with properties, qualities and values. In other words, what is at stake in moments of failure is not so much access to properties but attributions of properties, which become a matter of how we *approach* the object. So if I state, "The hammer is too heavy," then I mean, "The hammer is too heavy for me to hammer with." The moment of "non-use" is the moment in which the object is attributed as having properties, and it is the same moment in which objects may be judged insofar as they are inadequate to a task, the moment when we "blame the tool."[19]

Let us return now to the table. The table has a certain form, as we know. It is made of something (perhaps wood). The matter and the form of the table are dependent on histories of labor, which are congealed in and as the very "thing" of the table. The table is an effect of work, and it also points to work in the very form that it takes. Different tables have different functions: we do things with them by performing actions upon them. If our object is a writing table, then our table is specifically adapted for convenience in writing or reading, perhaps something made with a sloping top and generally fitted drawer and compartments. The word table, we might note, is derived from the Latin *tabula*, which primarily means a "board," especially one used for games or for writing. In its earliest English usages, "table" meant a "surface," in particular a "surface for writing," before the "table" became the name of the familiar article of furniture that we could describe as an "object with a horizontal surface." The shape of the table depends at least to some extent on what it allows us to do: the horizontal surface should be at the height appropriate for its work. The writing table is higher than the coffee table, for instance, as a

difference determined in part by function, or by what each table is being asked to do. A coffee table at the height of my waist would amount to a failed orientation, as I could not extend myself through it, by using it as something on which to place my coffee cup while I am sitting down on the sofa. The table is both an effect of work and also what allows us to work: whether the table "works" depends upon whether we can do, when we make use of the table, the work we intend to do.

The failure of objects to work could be described as a question of fit: it would be the failure of subjects and objects to work together. So the appropriateness of the height of the table is itself dependent on the body that uses it: Husserl's table could be too high or too low for me, depending on our differences of height. Husserl's writing table would work for him only if it were placed in a way that enabled him to write. If this table does not work for me, I would "turn toward" it a different way. I might then attribute my failure to write to the table, such that it becomes the cause of the failure. Such a turning would be felt as a frustration, through which the table might be perceived as "too this or too that," or even as a bad object. The perception of the object as having qualities is not then a perception of what is proper to the object. The failure would be the failure of the object to enable the action with which it is identified. The table is "too high," which means I cannot write at the table: the "tooness" refers not to the table's presence for itself but to how it is or is not ready for me.

I am not suggesting here that the objects do not have properties that may be revealed when they are put into action (a "putting into" that can also involve the failure to act). Objects do have qualities that make them tangible in the present. But these characteristics are not simply "in" the objects but instead are about how the objects work and are worked on by others. The example of the hammer that is too heavy or the table that is too high shows us how the position of the object, and indeed the qualities perceived in an object as given, refer us to the relations between objects and the subjects that make use of them. This does not vacate or empty the object as "just" a vehicle for subjects. Those qualities only come to matter in terms of how the objects and subjects work together; they cannot be assigned to the subject or object, although in everyday experience such assignments do happen. Failure can of course be attributed to subjects as well as to objects: the subject can turn away from the object and toward itself. I could say, for example, I am too short for this table, as well as this table is too high for me. To orientate oneself can mean to adjust one's position, or another's position, such that we are "facing" the right direction: we know where we are through how we position ourselves in relation to others. Work also involves adjustments: we might move this way or that, so we can work with this or that object: work involves a direction toward the object, which then works for us. The failure of work is not, then, "in" the thing or "in" the person but rather is about whether the person and the thing face each other *in the right way*.

When things are orientated they are facing the right way: in other words, the objects around the body allow the body itself to be extended. When things are orientated, we are occupied and busy. The "point" of this occupation might even make the face of the object recede from view. Occupation is hence not just about "any body," for an object tends toward some bodies more than others, depending on "the tendencies" of bodies. Objects may even take the shape of the bodies for whom they are "intended," in what it is that they allow a body to do. The writing table thus "tends toward" the writer. An action is possible when the body and the object "fit." So it is not simply that some bodies and tools *happen* to generate specific actions. Objects, as well as spaces, are made for some kinds of bodies more than others. Objects are made to size as well as made to order: while they come in a range of sizes, the sizes also presume certain kinds of bodies as having "sizes" that will "match." In this way, bodies and their objects tend toward each other; they are orientated toward each other, and are shaped by this orientation. When orientation "works," we are occupied. The failure of something to work is a matter of a *failed orientation:* a tool is used by a body for which it was not intended, or a body uses a tool that does not extend its capacity for action.

Inhabiting Spaces

How do bodies "matter" in what objects do? To consider this question we can return to the table. We already know how Husserl's attention wanders: from the writing table and only then toward other spaces: the darkness of the unseen portions of the room. What he sees is shaped by a direction he has already taken, a direction that shapes what is available to him in the sense of what he faces and what he can reach. What he faces also shapes what is behind him, and what is available as the background to his vision. So his gaze might fall on

the paper, which is on the table, given that he is sitting at the desk, the writing table, and not at another kind of table, such as the kitchen table. Such other tables would not, perhaps, be the "right" kind of tables for the making of philosophy. The writing table might be the table "for him," the one that would provide the right kind of horizontal surface for the philosopher. Such a table in turn would face him; as the writing table it would face the one who writes. There are also objects that gather around the scene of writing, as "would be" tools of the philosopher, and these objects are "within sight" for the philosopher, and perhaps must be, if philosophy is to endure. So the philosopher faces these objects, more than others, in the labor of doing philosophy, even if the approach taken makes the objects disappear.

I have suggested that the orientation of objects is shaped by what objects allow me to do. In this way an object is what an action is directed toward. In this section, I want to consider how actions take place in space. Clearly, action depends on the object being near enough: "I see it only if it is within the radius of my action" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 7). At the same time, while objects have to be near enough to complete specific actions, such actions are what bring objects near to me. So, you can only write on the writing table if the table is within reach, but the reachability of the table might be an effect of what you already do for a living. It exists for you insofar as it is near. In other words, the nearness of certain objects is an effect of the work the body does, and the work the body does is what makes certain objects near. Action depends on how we reside in space with objects: what Husserl was to call in his later work, "the near sphere" and the "core sphere" as "the sphere of things which I can reach" (2002: 149).

The relation between action and space is hence crucial. It is not simply that we act in space; spatial relations between subjects and others are produced through actions, which make some things available to be reached. Or, as Lefebvre suggests: "Activity in space is restricted by that space; space 'decides' what actually may occur, but even this 'decision' has limits placed upon it" (1991: 143). So the space of the study is shaped by a decision (that this room is *for* this kind of work), which itself then "shapes" what actions "happen" in that space. The question of action is a question then of how we inhabit space. Given this, action involves the intimate co-dwelling of bodies and objects. This is not to say that bodies are simply objects alongside other objects. As Merleau-Ponty shows us, bodies are "not the same" as other kinds of objects precisely given their different relation to space. The body, he suggests, is "no longer merely an object in the world," rather "it is our point of view in the world" (1964: 5). Returning to Husserl's table, we can consider how the body moves around the object; and that very motility is remarkable in its difference from *that which it moves around.* As Merleau-Ponty suggests: "We grasp external spaces through our bodily situation. A 'corporeal' or postural schema gives us a global, practical and implicit notion of the relation between our body and things, and our hold on them. A system of possible movements, or 'motor projects' radiates from us to the environment. Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It implies itself to space like a hand to an instrument and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object" (5).

The language here implies that bodies provide us with a tool, as that through which we "hold" or "grasp" onto things, but elsewhere Merleau-Ponty suggests that the body is not itself an instrument but a form of expression, a making visible of our intentions (1964: 5). What makes bodies different is how they inhabit space: space is not a container for the body; it does not contain the body as if the body were "in it." Rather bodies are submerged, such that they become the space they inhabit; in taking up space, bodies move through space and are affected by the "where" of that movement. It is through this movement that the surface of spaces as well as bodies takes shape. Recalling Husserl, his encounter with the table involves moving around it. Of course, bodies are not the only kinds of objects that move. But when they move, we move. The table would become available to me, within my reach, only insofar as my bodily posture orientates me toward it and even spreads over it. The profile of the table is shaped by the profile of the body, even if that profile "disappears" from view.

Of course, when Husserl "grasps" his table from the series of impressions, as being more than what he sees at any point in time, it is his "eyes" that are doing the work: he "closes his eyes" and "opens his eyes" (1969: 130). The object's partiality is seen, even if the object is unavailable in a single sight. Interestingly, in the second volume of *Ideas* Husserl attends to the lived body (*Leib*) and to the intimacy of touch.[20] The table returns, as we would expect. And yet, what a different table we find if we reach for it differently. In this moment, it is the hands rather than the eyes that reach the table: "My hand is lying on the table. I experience the table as something solid, cold,

smooth" (1989: 153). Husserl conveys the proximity between bodies and objects as "things" that become more than "matter" insofar as they can be sensed and touched; insofar as they make impressions. Bodies are "something touching which is touched" (155). The locations of sensation on the skin surface shows that the sensation is not "in" the object or the body but instead takes shape as an effect of their encounter. As Rosalyn Diprose suggests, the world described by phenomenology is an "interworld," or an "open circuit" between the perceiving body and its world (2002: 102).

Phenomenology hence shows how objects and others have already left their impressions on the skin surface. The tactile object is what is near me, or what is within my reach. In being touched, the object does not "stand apart"; it is felt "by" the skin and even "on" the skin. In other words, we perceive the object as an object, as something that "has" integrity, and is "in" space, only by haunting that very space; that is, by co-inhabiting space such that the boundary between the co-inhabitants of space does not hold. The skin connects as well as contains. The nonopposition between the bodies that move around objects, and objects around which bodies move, shows us how orientations involve at least a two-way "approach," or the "more than one" of an encounter.[21] Orientations are tactile and they involve more than one skin surface: we, in approaching this or that table, are also approached by the table, which touches us when we touch it. As Husserl shows us, the table might be cold and smooth and the quality of its surface can only be felt once I have ceased to stand apart from it. This body with this table is a different body than it would be without it. And, the table is a different table when it is with me than it would be without me. Neither the object nor the body have integrity in the sense of being "the same thing" with and without others. Bodies as well as objects take shape through being orientated toward each other, as an orientation that may be experienced as the co-habitation or sharing of space.[22]

Bodies are hence shaped by contact with objects and with others, with "what" is near enough to be reached. Bodies may even take shape through such contact, or take the shape of that contact. What gets near is both shaped by what bodies do, which in turn affects what bodies can do. Paul Schilder's work on body image places an emphasis on how bodies are shaped by what is and is not brought near to them. As he suggests: "The space around the body-image may either bring the objects nearer to the body or the body nearer to the objects. The emotional configuration determines the distance of objects from the body" (1950: 216). Bringing objects near to bodies, which also brings bodies near to objects, involves acts of perception about "what" can be brought near to me. For instance, the nearness of the philosopher to his paper, his ink, and his table is not simply about "where" he does his work and the spaces he inhabits, as if the "where" could be separated from "what" he does. The nearness of such objects is required by his work, which is also "what" he does for a living. So the objects are near as the instruments of philosophy, which shape the kind of body that philosophy acquires as well as the body of the philosopher.

We can continue with the example of the table. As an object it also provides a space, which itself is the space for action, for certain kinds of work. As we know, Husserl's table in the first volume of *Ideas* is the writing table, and his orientation toward this table, and not others, shows the orientation of his philosophy, even at the very moment that "this" table disappears.[23] Around the table a horizon or fringe of perception is "dimly" apprehended. When Husserl writes, the writing table itself may only be dimly perceived. The horizon is what is "around" as the body does its work. As Don Ihde notes: "Horizons belong to the boundaries of the experienced environmental field. Like the 'edges' of the visual field, they situate what is explicitly present, while in phenomena itself, horizons recede" (1990: 114). The horizon is not an object that I apprehend: I do not see it. The horizon is what gives objects their contours, and it even allows such objects to be reached. Objects are objects insofar as they are within my horizon; it is in the act of reaching "toward them" that makes them available as objects for me. The bodily horizon shows what bodies can reach toward by establishing a line beyond which they cannot reach; the horizon marks the edge of what can be reached by the body. The body becomes present as a body, with surfaces and boundaries, in showing the "limits" of what it can do.

We might think that we reach for whatever comes into view. And yet, what "comes into" view, or what is within our horizon, is not a matter simply of what we find here or there, or even where we find ourselves as we move here or there. What is reachable is determined precisely by orientations that we have already taken. Some objects don't even become objects of perception, as the body does not move toward them: they are "beyond the horizon" of the body, and thus out of reach. The surfaces of bodies are shaped by what is reachable. Indeed, the history of bodies can be rewritten as the history of the reachable.

Orientations are about the direction we take that puts some things and not others in our reach. So the object, which is apprehending only by exceeding my gaze, can be apprehended only insofar as it has come to be available to me: its reachability is not simply a matter of its place or location (the white paper on the table, for instance), but instead is shaped by the orientations I have taken that mean I face some ways more than others (toward this kind of table, which marks out the space I tend to inhabit).

Phenomenology helps us to explore how bodies are shaped by histories, which they perform in their comportment, their posture, and their gestures. Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, after all, describe bodily horizons as "sedimented histories" (see Steinbock 1995: 36). This model of history as bodily sedimentation has been taken up by social theorists; for Pierre Bourdieu, for example, such histories are described as the habitus, as "systems of durable, transposable, dispositions" (1977: 72) which integrate past experiences through the very "*matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions*" that are necessary to accomplish "infinitely diversified tasks" (83).[24] For Judith Butler, it is precisely how phenomenology exposes the "sedimentation" of history in the repetition of bodily action, that makes it a useful resource for feminism (1997a: 406). What bodies "tend to do" are effects of histories rather than being originary.

We could say that history "happens" in the very repetition of gestures, which is what gives bodies their tendencies. We might note here that the labor of such repetition disappears through labor: if we work hard at something, then it seems "effortless." This paradox—with effort it becomes effortless—is precisely what makes history disappear in the moment of its enactment. The repetition of the work is what makes the work disappear. It is important that we think not only about *what* is repeated, but also about how the repetition of actions takes us in certain directions: we are also orientating ourselves toward some objects more than others, including not only physical objects (the different kinds of tables) but also objects of thought, feeling, and judgment, as well as objects in the sense of aims, aspirations, and objectives. I might "orientate" myself around writing, for instance, not simply as a certain kind of work (although it is that, and it requires certain objects for it to be possible), but also as a goal: writing becomes something that I aspire to, even as an identity (becoming a writer). So the object we aim for, *which we have in our view*, also comes into our view through being held in place as that we seek to be: the action searches for identity as the mark of attainment (the writer "becomes" a writer through the work of writing). We can ask what kinds of objects bodies "tend toward" in their tendencies, as well as how such tendencies shape what bodies tend toward.

Of course, I too am working on a table, though for me the kitchen table as much as the writing table provides the setting for action: for cooking, eating, as well as writing. I have a study space and I work on a table in that space. As I type this now, I am using a keyboard placed on a computer table that resides in the study, which as noted above is a space that has been set aside for this kind of work. This particular table is designed for the computer, and for working on the computer. I fit into this space in a certain way by sitting on the chair, which is before the table. Objects and bodies "work together" as spaces for action; so here I type as I face this object, and it is what I am working on. I am touching the object, as well as the keyboard, and I am aware of it, as a sensuous given that is available for me. In repeating the work of typing, my body also feels a certain way. My neck gets sore, and I stretch to ease the discomfort. I pull my shoulders back every now and then as the posture I assume (a bad posture I am sure) is a huddle: I huddle over the table as I repeat the action (the banging of keys with the tips of my fingers); the action shapes me and leaves its impression, through bodily sensations, prickly feelings on the skin surface, and the more intense experience of discomfort. I write, and in performing this work I might yet become my object—become a writer, with a writer's body, and a writer's tendencies (the sore neck, the sore shoulders, are sure signs of having done this kind of work).

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) can be understood as the effect of such repetition: we repeat some actions, sometimes over and over again, and this is partly about the nature of the work we might do. Our body takes the shape of this repetition; *we get stuck in certain alignments as an effect of this work*. For instance, my right ring finger has acquired the shape of its own work: the constant use of a pen, in writing, has created a lump, which is the shape that is shaped by the work of this repetition; my finger almost looks "as if" it has the shape of a pen as an impression upon it. The object on which and through which I work hence leaves its impression: the action, as intending, as well as tending toward the object, shapes my body in this way and that. The work of repetition is not neutral work; *it orients the body in some ways rather than others*. The lump on my finger is a sure sign of an orientation I have taken, not just toward the pen-object, or the keyboard, but also toward the world, as someone

who does a certain kind of work for a living. Husserl's writing also "shows" his orientation: the tables that appear first are the writing tables, as proper objects of philosophy, which itself is shaped by the orientations taken toward its objects, as objects of thought. Orientations shape what bodies do, while bodies are shaped by orientations they already have, as effects of the work that must take place for a body to arrive where it does.

Bodies hence acquire orientation through the repetitions of some actions over others, as actions that have certain "objects" in view, whether they are physical objects required to do the work (the writing table, the pen, the keyboard) or the ideal objects that one identifies with. The nearness of such objects, their availability within my bodily horizon, is not casual: *it is not just that I find them there, like that*. Rather, the nearness of such objects is a sign of an orientation I have already taken toward the world as an orientation that shapes what we call, inadequately, "character." Bodies tend toward some objects more than others given their tendencies. These tendencies are not originary but instead are effects of the repetition of the "tending toward." I will discuss in the next chapter the paradoxical temporality of such tendencies in relation to sexual orientation; here it will suffice to say that it makes sense to consider how bodies come to "have" certain orientations over time and that they come to be shaped by taking some directions rather than others and toward some objects rather than others.

The field of positive action, of what this or that body does do, also defines a field of inaction, of actions that are possible but that are not taken up, or even actions that are not possible because of what has been taken up. Such histories of action or "take up" shape the bodily horizon of bodies. Spaces are not only inhabited by bodies that "do things," but what bodies "do" leads them to inhabit some spaces more than others. If spaces extend bodies, then we could say that spaces also extend the shape of the bodies that "tend" to inhabit them. So, for instance, if the action of writing is associated with the masculine body, then it is this body that tends to inhabit the space for writing. The space for writing—say, the study—then tends to extend such bodies and may even take their shape. Gender becomes naturalized as a property of bodies, objects, and spaces partly through the "loop" of this repetition, which leads bodies in some directions more than others as if that direction came from within the body and explains which way it turns.

Here again we can return to the table—to the writing table, more specifically. In a way, the writing table waits for the body of the writer. In waiting for the writer the table waits for some bodies more than others. This waiting "orientates" the table to a specific kind of body, the body that would "take up" writing. I have already described such a body as a masculine body by evoking the gendered form of its occupation. Now, clearly, gender is not "in" the table or necessarily "in" the body that turns to the table. Gender is an effect of how bodies take up objects, which involves how they occupy space by being occupied in one way or another. We might note, for instance, in Heidegger's *Ontology* (1999) that the table as a thing on which we do things allows for different ways of being occupied. So Heidegger writes on the table, his wife sews, and his children play. What we do on the table is also about being given a place within a familiar order (as I explore in the next chapter). Bodies are shaped by the work they do on the table, where work involves gendered forms of occupation.

In light of this we can consider Charlotte Perkin Gilman's work on the "home," where she speaks of the shaping of women's bodies through how they inhabit domestic interiors. As she notes: "See it in furnishing. A stone or block of wood to sit on, a hide to lie on, a shelf to put the food on. See that block of wood change under your eyes and crawl up history on its forthcoming legs—a stool, a chair, a sofa, a settee, and now the endless ranks of sittable furniture wherewith we fill the home to keep ourselves from the floor withal . . . If you are confined at home you cannot walk much—therefore you must sit—especially if your task is a stationary one. So, to the home-bound woman came much sitting, and much sitting called for ever softer seats" (2002: 27–28). Gilman is writing here specifically about furnishings in the Orient, and she contrasts the soft bodies and chairs of this imagined interior with the domestic interiors in the West, which give women more mobility. I will take up the matter of orientalism in chapter 3; suffice to say here that Gilman shows us how orientations involve inhabiting certain bodily positions: sitting, walking, lying down, and so on. Such forms of occupation or of being occupied shape the furniture: the chairs become soft to provide seating for the body that sits. In turn, the body becomes soft as it occupies the soft seat, taking up the space made available by the seat. Such positions become habitual: they are repeated, and in being repeated they shape the body and what it can do. The more the body sits, the more it tends to be seated.

The point is simple: what we "do do" affects what we "can do." This is not

to argue that "doing" simply restricts capacities. In contrast, what we "do do" opens up and expands some capacities, as an "expansion" in certain directions that in turn might restrict what you can do in others. A case in point would be "handedness": the more we use one side of the body, the harder it is to use the other side. As Robert Hertz suggests, the cultural preference for the right side means that the "left hand is repressed and kept inactive" (1973: 5) and the right hand is given "more intensive work," which "favours its development" (4). We acquire our tendencies as an effect of the direction of energy to this or that side. The more we work certain parts of the body, such as this or that muscle, the more work they can do. At the same time, the less we work other muscles, then the less they can do. So if gender shapes what we "do do," then it shapes what we can do. Gender could thus be described as a bodily orientation, a way in which bodies get directed by their actions over time.

It is worth noting here that Iris Marion Young's phenomenological model of female embodiment places a key emphasis on the role of orientation. Indeed, Young argues that gender differences *are* differences in orientation. As she suggests, "even in the most simple body orientations of men and women as they sit, stand, and walk, we can observe a typical difference in body style and extension" (2005: 32). This is not to say that orientations are themselves simply given, or that they "cause" such differences. Rather, orientations are both an effect of such differences as well as a mechanism for their reproduction. Young suggests that women have an "inhibited intentionality" in part because they do not get behind their bodies, as women see their bodies as "objects" as well as "capacities" (35). So becoming a woman means "throwing like a girl." Women may throw objects, and are thrown by objects, in such a way that they take up less space. To put it simply, we acquire the shape of how we throw, as well as what we do. Or as Linda McDowell and Jo Sharpe suggest: "The body, its size, shape, gestures, the very space it takes up, those masculine and feminine norms which mean that men sprawl and women don't; the differences in physicality that construct and reflect gender norms create ways of being in space" (1997: 203).

Gender is an effect of the kinds of work that bodies do, which in turn "directs" those bodies, affecting what they "can do." At the same time, it is not always decided which bodies inhabit which spaces, even when spaces extend the form of some bodies and not others. Julia Wardhaugh argues that there is an increasing "recognition that rooms or spaces in the family home are not effectively gendered even when they are designed to meet the requirements of men or women (for example, the height of kitchen benches). Rather it is the activities that are performed in these spaces at given times and in given relationship contexts that reflect and/or subvert ideas about gender" (1999: 92). In other words, even if what we "do do" affects what we "can do," other things remain possible. For instance, bodies can take up spaces that do not extend their shape, which can in turn work to "reorientate" bodies and space. In the following two chapters I will discuss failed orientations as the "queer effect" of oblique or diagonal lines, created by bodies out of place. Here I wish simply to say that when women write, when they take up space as writers, their bodies in turn acquire new shapes, even if the effect is no longer quite so queer.

As Virginia Woolf shows us in *A Room of One's Own*, for women to claim a space to write is a political act. Of course, there are women who write. We know this. Women have taken up spaces orientated toward writing. And yet, the woman writer remains just that: the woman writer, deviating from the somatic norm of "the writer," as such. We know too that there are women philosophers, and how they still cause trouble as "bodies out of place" in the "home" of philosophy, which itself is shaped by taking some bodies and not others as its somatic norm (Alcoff 1999). So what happens when the woman philosopher takes up her pen? What happens when the study is not reproduced as a masculine domain by the collective repetition of such moments of deviation?

Tables might even appear differently if we follow such moments of deviation and the lines they create. For Virginia Woolf, the table appears with her writing on it, as a feminist message inscribed on paper: "I must ask you to imagine a room, like many thousands, with a window looking across people's hats and vans and motor-cars to other windows, and on the table inside the room a blank sheet of paper on which was written in large letters Women and Fiction and no more" (1991: 24). The table is not simply what Woolf faces but is also the "site" upon which she makes her feminist point: that we cannot address the question of women and fiction without asking the prior question of whether women have space to write. It is worth recalling here the feminist publisher named Kitchen Table press. We could say that the kitchen table provides the kind of surface on which women tend to work. To use the table that supports domestic work to do political work (including the work that makes explicit the politics of domestic work) is a reorientation device. The

kitchen table supports feminist writing, and feminist books appear under its name.

If making a feminist point returns us to the table, then the terms of its appearance will be different. It might be that quite a different table comes into view. In Iris Marion Young's *On Female Body Experience* the table arrives into her writing in the following way: "The nick on the table here happened during that argument with my daughter" (2005: 159). Here, the table records the intimacy of the relationship between mother and daughter; such intimacies, as the surfacing of conflict, are neither "put to one side" nor take place "on another side" of the table.[25] Tables for feminist philosophers might not bracket or put aside the intimacy of familial attachments; such intimacies are at the front; they are "on the table" rather than behind it. We might even say that feminist tables are shaped by such attachments; such attachments shape the surface of tables and how tables surface in feminist writing.

Of course, the woman philosopher still has to arrive, to get near enough to the writing table. It takes time, this arrival into the "scene" of writing, just as it takes time and work to keep one's attention on the writing table. Such an arrival is dependent on contact with others, and even *access* to the "occupation of writing," which itself is shaped by political economies as well as personal biographies. And yet, she arrives.[26] Having arrived, she might do a different kind of work given that she may not put these other attachments "behind" her.

So, yes, we can remember that some spaces are already occupied. They even take the shape of the bodies that occupy them. Bodies also take the shape of the spaces they occupy and of the work they do. And yet sometimes we reach what is not expected. A space, however occupied, is taken up by somebody else. When bodies take up spaces that they were not intended to inhabit, something other than the reproduction of the facts of the matter happens. The hope that reproduction fails is the hope for new impressions, for new lines to emerge, new objects, or even new bodies, which gather, in gathering around this table. The "new" would not involve the loss of the background. Indeed, for bodies to arrive in spaces where they are not already at home, where they are not "in place," involves hard work; indeed, it involves painstaking labor for bodies to inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape. Having arrived, such bodies in turn might acquire new shapes. And spaces in turn acquire new bodies. So, yes, we should celebrate such arrivals. The "new" is what is possible when what is behind us, our background, does not simply ground us or keep us in place, but allows us to move and allows us to follow something other than the lines that we have already taken. Yes, women philosophers do gather and have gathered, creating their impressions. Our task is to recall their histories of their arrival, and how this history opens up spaces for others that have yet to be cleared.

The background to the object, which allows it to be put to work, depends upon work that is repeated over time that is often "hidden from view." Perhaps where Husserl's gaze fails to wander is into other spaces, such as the space of the kitchen—that is, as spaces that are often associated with the "work" that tends toward the body in terms of caring for it and sustaining it. Does Husserl's gaze avoid wandering there insofar as those spaces are shaped by concealed labor; as the labor that gives him the capacity to "think" about the writing table? In a way, a queer phenomenology is involved in the project of "turning the tables" on phenomenology by turning toward other kinds of tables. Turning the tables would also allow us to return, a loving return we might even say, to the objects that already appear within phenomenology, such as Husserl's table, now so worn. Such tables, when turned, would come to life as something to think "with" as well as "on."

What lines, we might ask, will cover the page when the woman philosopher inhabits the space by the writing table and takes up her pen? And, yes, what happens when I take up my space, by writing on the table about the table, nestled in the corner of the room? What happens, when I write about writing, when I write about the tables that appear as objects within phenomenology? It is no accident that I am writing about how such objects matter. I turn back toward my table, and begin writing again.

CHAPTER 2 Sexual Orientation

> If we so contrive it that a subject sees the room in which he is, only through a mirror which reflects it at an angle at 45° to the vertical, the subject at first sees the room "slantwise." A man walking about in it seems to lean to one side as he goes. A piece of cardboard falling down the door-frame looks to be falling obliquely. The general effect is "queer."
>
> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

In Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, queer moments do happen. These are moments in the text where the world no longer appears "the right way up." By discussing a number of spatial experiments that "contrive" a situation so that a subject does not see straight, Merleau-Ponty asks how the subject's relation to space is reorientated: "After a few minutes a sudden change occurs: the walls, the man walking around the room, and the line in which the cardboard falls become vertical" (2002: 289). This reorientation, which we can describe as the "becoming vertical" of perception, means that the "queer effect" is overcome and objects in the world no longer appear as if they are "off center" or "slantwise." In other words, Merleau-Ponty considers how subjects "straighten" any queer effects and he asks what this tendency to "see straight" suggests about the relationship between bodies and space. He answers this question not with a model of space as determined by objective coordinates (such that "up" and "down" exist independently of one's bodily orientation), but as being shaped by the purposefulness of the body; the body does things, and space thus takes shape as a field of action: "What counts for the orientation of my spectacle is not my body as it in fact is, as a thing in

objective space, but as a system of possible actions, a virtual body with its phenomenal 'place' defined by its task and situation. My body is wherever there is something to be done" (291). By implication the queer moment, in which objects appear slantwise and the vertical and horizontal axes appear "out of line," must be overcome not because such moments contradict laws that govern objective space, but because they block bodily action: they inhibit the body such that it ceases to extend into phenomenal space. So although Merleau-Ponty is tempted to say that the "vertical is the direction represented by the symmetry of the axis of the body" (291), his phenomenology instead embraces a model of bodily space in which spatial lines "line up" only as effects of bodily actions on and in the world. In other words, the body "straightens" its view in order to extend into space.

One might be tempted, in light of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of such queer moments, to consider the relation between the normative and the vertical axis. The normative can be considered an effect of the repetition of bodily actions over time, which produces what we can call the bodily horizon, a space for action, *which puts some objects and not others in reach*. The normative dimension can be redescribed in terms of the straight body, a body that appears "in line." Things seems "straight" (on the vertical axis), when they are "in line," which means when they are aligned with other lines. Rather than presuming the vertical line is simply given, we would see the vertical line as an effect of this process of alignment. Think of tracing paper: when the lines on the tracing paper are aligned with the lines of the paper that has been traced, then the lines of the tracing paper disappear: you can simply see one set of lines. If lines are traces of other lines, then this alignment depends on straightening devices that keep things in line, in part by "holding" things in place. Lines disappear through such processes of alignment, so that when even one thing comes "out of line" with another thing, the "general effect," is "wonky" or even "queer."

The vertical axis is itself an effect of being "in line," when the line taken by the body corresponds with other lines that are already given. The vertical is hence normative; it is shaped by the repetition of bodily and social actions over time. The body that is "in line" is one that can extend into space, at the same time that such spaces are effects of retracing those lines, which is another way of describing "extension." Things as well as bodies appear "the right way up" when they are "in line," which makes any moment in which phenomenal space does "line up" seem rather "queer." Importantly, when one thing is "out of line," then it is not just that thing that appears oblique but the world itself might appear on a slant, which disorientates the picture and even unseats the body. If we consider how space appears along the lines of the vertical axis, then we can begin to see how orientations of the body shape not just what objects are reachable, but also the "angle" on which they are reached. Things look right when they approach us from the right angle.

Of course, when Merleau-Ponty discusses queer effects he is not considering "queer" as a sexual orientation—but we can. We can turn to the etymology of the word "queer," which comes from the Indo-European word "twist." Queer is, after all, a spatial term, which then gets translated into a sexual term, a term for a twisted sexuality that does not follow a "straight line," a sexuality that is bent and crooked (Cleto 2002: 13). The spatiality of this term is not incidental. Sexuality itself can be considered a spatial formation not only in the sense that bodies inhabit sexual spaces (Bell and Valentine 1995), but also in the sense that bodies are sexualized through how they inhabit space. The body orientates itself in space, for instance, by differentiating between "left" and "right," "up" and "down," and "near" and "far," *and this orientation is crucial to the sexualization of bodies.*[1] Phenomenology helps us to consider how sexuality involves ways of inhabiting and being inhabited by space.

It is important to note that Merleau-Ponty reflects on sexuality in *Phenomenology of Perception* by suggesting that sexuality is not a distinct domain that can be separated from bodily experience in general. As he states: "In so far as a man's sexual history provides a key to life, it is because in his sexuality is his projected manner of being toward the world, that is, toward time and other men" (183). For Merleau-Ponty, the sexual body is one that shows the orientation of the body as an "object that is *sensitive* to all the rest" (183), a body that feels the nearness of the objects with which it coexists. Judith Butler (1989) offers an important critique of Merleau-Ponty's model of sexuality by showing how it presumes a general or universal orientation toward the world. At the same time that we acknowledge this risk of universalism, we could queer Merleau-Ponty's "sensitive body," or even suggest that such a body is already queer in its sensitivity "to all the rest." Merleau-Ponty's model of sexuality as a form of bodily projection might help show how orientations "exceed" the objects they are directed toward, becoming ways of inhabiting and coexisting in the world. If we presume that sexuality is crucial to bodily orientation, to

how we inhabit spaces, then the differences between how we are orientated sexually are not only a matter of "which" objects we are orientated toward, but also how we extend through our bodies into the world. Sexuality would not be seen as determined only by object choice, but as involving differences in one's very relation to the world—that is, in how one "faces" the world or is directed toward it. Or rather, we could say that orientations toward sexual objects affect other things that we do, such that different orientations, different ways of directing one's desires, means inhabiting different worlds.

In this chapter, I want to formulate a "queer phenomenology" by rethinking the spatiality of sexual orientation. In the existing literature on sexuality, phenomenology has been adopted as a perspective mainly in order to bring into the theoretical frame the everyday experiences of sexual subjects. As Lisabeth During and Terri Fealy state: "To claim phenomenology for lesbian and gay theory we need to begin with the everyday experience of homosexual subjects, to consider their situation in the world and their relations to others" (1997: 121).[2] While this work is crucial, I also want to work with phenomenology in order to "queer" how we approach sexual orientation by rethinking the "orientation" in "sexual orientation." In other words, I want to offer a phenomenological approach to the very question of what it means to "orientate" oneself sexually toward some others and not other others. A queer phenomenology might offer an approach to sexual orientation by rethinking how the bodily direction "toward" objects shapes the surfaces of bodily and social space.

Between Lines

It is worth reflecting on the very term "sexual orientation." This term has its own genealogy within sexology, and has gradually replaced earlier terms, such as inversion and sexual preference. Sexual orientation is often described in terms of the sex of one's object choice: whether that sex is the "same sex" or "other sex," such that, according to Janis Bohan, "one's sexual orientation is defined by the sex (same or other) of the people to whom one is emotionally and sexually attracted" (1996: xvi). Here, sexuality is understood in terms of "having" an orientation, which itself is understood as being "directed" in one way or another. The "two sex" model quickly converts into a model of two orientations: straight or queer, whereby "queer" becomes an "umbrella" term for all nonstraight and nonnormative sexualities (Jagose 1996: 1).[3]

Importantly, sexual orientation comes to be understood as integral to the subject, as a matter of its identity. Historians of sex have shown us that the idea of "having" a sexual orientation, where "having" is translated into a form of being, is a modern idea (Foucault 1990; Weeks 1985; Halperin 1990). As Weeks describes: "the idea that there is such a person as *a* "homosexual" (or indeed *a* heterosexual) is a relatively recent phenomenon" (1985: 6). Week's positing of the figure of the homosexual alongside the bracketed figure of the heterosexual is crucial. The emergence of the idea of "sexual orientation" does not position the figures of the homosexual and heterosexual in a relation of equivalence. Rather, it is the homosexual who is constituted as having an "orientation": the heterosexual would be presumed to be neutral. The emergence of the term "sexual orientation" coincides with the production of "the homosexual" as a type of person who "deviates" from what is neutral. Or, as Foucault famously states in his work on the history of sexuality, modern sexology transforms so-called deviant sexual practices (such as sodomy) from a "temporary aberration" into a "species" (1990: 43).

If sexual orientation becomes a matter of being, then "being" itself becomes (sexually) orientated. What does it mean to think of "being orientated?" This question demands that we consider the "orientation" in "sexual orientation" as having its own history. As I showed in chapter 1, the term "orientation" is itself a spatial term: it points to how one is placed in relation to objects in the sense of "the direction" one has and takes toward objects. Within sexuality studies there has been surprisingly little discussion on the spatiality of the term "orientation," although the spatiality of other terms, such as queer, has been noted (see Cleto 2002: 13; Sedgwick 1993: xii; Probyn 1996: 14). One exception, however, is provided by the work of Rictor Norton, who discusses the term "orientation" at length. As he states: "Because the term 'orientation' is now common in legal and psychiatric discourses, we think of it as a scientific word. But of course it is merely a directional metaphor drawn from magnetism and navigation, which has gradually superseded the directional metaphors used prior to the 1970s: inclination, deviant, pervert, invert, taste, tendency, bent, drive. Sexual love is often expressed in terms of directional metaphors. For example, the direction of Cupid's arrow darts toward the object of desire" (2002: 1).

What difference does it make if we bring the "directionality" of sexual orientation into our view? The transformation of sexual orientation into "a species" involves the translation of "direction" into identity. If sexual orienta-

tion is understood as something one "has," such that one "is" what one "has," then what one "is" becomes defined in terms of the direction of one's desire, as an attraction that pulls one toward others. Or you could say that with sexual orientation, direction "follows" the line of desire, like the direction of arrows toward the loved object. So sexual desire orientates the subject toward some others (and by implication not other others) by establishing a line or direction. Sexual orientation involves following different lines insofar as the others that desire is directed toward are already constructed as the "same sex," or the "other sex." It is not simply the object that determines the "direction" of one's desire; rather the direction one takes makes some others available as objects to be desired. Being directed toward the same sex or the other sex becomes seen as moving along different lines.

In being straight, for example, one's desire follows a straight line, which is presumed to lead toward the "other sex," as if that is the "point" of the line. The queer orientation might not simply be directed toward the "same sex," but would be seen as not following the straight line. We can see this distinction operating in the early writings of the sexologist Havelock Ellis. His model of sexual inversion has been crucial, and was taken up by Freud, in his later work on sexuality. For Ellis, sexual inversion is certainly about the "direction" of what he calls the sexual instinct.[4] As he states: "When the sexual instinct is directed towards persons of the same sex we are in the presence of an aberration variously seen as 'sexual inversion' . . . as opposed to normal heterosexuality" (1940: 188). Here, the "direction" of instinct or desire toward "the same sex" is an "aberration." An aberration can refer to "the act of wandering from the usual way or normal course," or even to a "deviation from truth or moral rectitude." The same-sex orientation thus deviates or is off course: by following this orientation, we leave the "usual way or normal course." Conversely, heterosexual desire is understood as "on line," as not only straight, but also as right and normal, while other lines are drawn as simply "not following" this line and hence as being "off line" in the very direction of their desire.

The normalization of heterosexuality as an orientation toward "the other sex" can be redescribed in terms of the requirement to follow a straight line, whereby straightness gets attached to other values including decent, conventional, direct, and honest. The naturalization of heterosexuality involves the presumption that there is a straight line that leads each sex toward the other sex, *and that "this line of desire" is "in line" with one's sex*. The alignment of sex with orientation goes as follows: being a man would mean desiring a woman, and being a woman would mean desiring a man (Butler 1997b: 23). The line of straight orientation takes the subject toward what it "is not" and what it "is not" then confirms what it "is." For Ellis, the bodies of each sex are "directed" toward the other, *as if by design*. For instance, he describes vaginal fluid as "facilitating the entrance of the male organ" (1940: 17). We could recall the feminist critique of how women's bodies are perceived as "containers" or as vessels that are "ready" to be filled by men (Irigaray 1985; Dworkin 1987). The woman's body becomes the tool in which the man "extends himself." The naturalization of heterosexuality as a line that directs bodies depends on the construction of women's bodies as being "made" for men, such that women's sexuality is seen as directed toward men. In other words, the signs of women's desire, such as becoming wet, are read as "pointing" toward men and even toward "occupation" by men. I will return to this issue when considering what it means for heterosexuality to be a "compulsory orientation."

So queer or inverted desires are off the track of normal development, where one uses sex for different points by not following what is taken to be the "point" of sexual readiness. As Ellis notes, homosexuality "is the most clearly defined of all sexual deviations, for it presents an impulse which is completely and fundamentally transformed from the normal object to an object which is normally outside the sphere of sexual desire, and yet possesses all the attributes which in other respects appeal to human affection" (1940: 188). While same-sex desire has the attributes of heterosexual desire, it moves toward an object that is "normally outside the sphere" of that desire. In other words, it reaches objects that are not continuous with the line of normal sexual subjectivity.

The discontinuity of queer desires can be explained in terms of objects that are not points on the straight line: the subject has to go "off line" to reach such objects. To go "off line" is to turn toward "one's own sex" and away from "the other sex." To turn away from "the other sex" is also to leave the straight line. And yet turning toward one's sex is read as the act of threatening to put one's sex into question. Ellis's (1975: 94) own reading of inversion in women as produced by congenital masculinity is a way of bringing queer desire back in line: if the inverted woman is really a man, then she, of course, follows the straight line toward what she is not (the feminine woman). So the question is not only how queer desire is read as off line, but also how queer desire has been

read in order to bring such desire back into line, which is directed by desire for the "other sex," or for what we are "not." Such readings function as "straightening devices" that follow the straight line or even "can only see straight," given how they conflate this line with what is right, good, or normal.

The straight reading, in other words, "corrects" the slantwise direction of queer desire. In order to examine the significance of how we read the queer slant, I want to reread Freud's analysis of a case of homosexuality in a woman. This case has elsewhere been brilliantly described and critiqued in lesbian and queer criticism (Roof 1991; O'Connor and Ryan 1993; Merck 1993; Fuss 1993; de Lauretis 1994; Jagose 2002). However, I think reading this case for how it "directs" desire according to different lines will offer a different "angle" on Freud's methodology for reading homosexual desire. Freud's method of reading is, after all, about going backward: he looks *through* the case for earlier signs to explain the acquisition of the queer tendency; or, in his words, "We trace the development from its final outcome backwards" (1955: 167).[5] Indeed, psychoanalysis not only goes back, it is an approach that gives attention to what is "behind." This emphasis on the behind might be what makes psychoanalysis appealing for some queer readers. We can ask: What does going back do? Freud suggests that, from this "backward" perspective, "the chain of events appears continuous" (167). Such a backward reading presumes that the story of sexuality follows a line, even if Freud earlier admits to the limits of what he calls "a linear presentation" and can't help but to digress himself (1955: 160). We could, of course, read here for the "points" of digression, which is what Teresa de Lauretis does so powerfully in recuperating a Freudian model of perversion. At the same time, it remains important to read along the lines as a way of reading for what goes astray. In reading backward, Freud is not simply "finding a line" but also reading "for a line." But what if we read between his lines?

In "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," Freud begins with an exchange: the case itself arises from an exchange. The object of the exchange is the case: the case is "about" homosexuality in a woman, and it rests on reading the case of a homosexual woman. The woman enters the narrative as the object who belongs to a family, to whom her desire represents a problem or crisis that needs to be resolved: "A beautiful and clever girl of eighteen, belonging to a family of good standing, had aroused displeasure and concern in her parents by the devoted adoration with which she pursued a certain 'society lady' who was about ten years older than herself" (1955: 147). The entry of the case into the case tells us a lot. Immediately, the woman is "referred back" to her family by being seen as belonging to them, and she is represented as the source of displeasure. In other words, the case "assigns" the woman with a meaning by assigning her to the family. The displeasure that engenders the case is associated with the threat that her desire poses to the family's good standing: the case becomes a case as it brings the family's standing into disrepute. Rather than reading this case as being about an explanation of homosexuality in a woman, we could read it as a family case, as being "about" how family love requires "following" a certain direction, or even having a certain orientation. The trouble posed by this case would be readable, then, in terms of the threat that homosexuality poses to the continuation of the family line, as a line of descent. Rather than being a romantic love story, this would be a story about family love, a love that is elevated as an ideal that can only be "returned" by heterosexual love.

We can even say that the case of homosexuality challenges the "ego ideal" of the family. In *Group Psychology*, Freud offers a theory of how love is crucial to the formation of group identities. While maintaining that the aim of love is "sexual union," Freud argues that other loves, while diverted from this aim, share the same libidinal energy that pushes the subject toward the loved object (1922: 38). For Freud, the bond within a group relies on the transference of love to the leader, whereby the transference becomes the "common quality" of the group (66). Another way of saying this would be to claim that groups are formed through their shared orientation toward an object. More specifically, groups are formed when "*individuals . . . have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego*" (80). Freud does not quite consider the family as a group along these lines, however. Rather, the family is the primary and intimate space in which libidinal energies are shaped, through identification with or desire for the mother and father, which are then displaced onto other social forms.[6] Yet, we could consider the family as an artificial social group in the way described above: to become loyal to the family, one has identified one's ego ideal with an object, *or "the family" becomes the object that is put in the place of the ego ideal.* The imagined thing called "the family" is, of course, associated with the body of the father: his body is metonymically associated with the body of the family, just as the "leader" is associated with "society." So identification with the father (the wish for his love) becomes an allegiance to the form of the family in the sense of the desire to continue its "line," whereby such allegiance is also to

be aligned with others, or even to "side" with others, who have also taken "the family" as their ego ideal.

Homosexual desire in a woman becomes "a case" insofar as it challenges the family line and the image that the family has of itself—or what we would call its "reputation," which is at once an image that is directed toward others and dependent upon others, on the viewing point of "good society." In causing a scandal, the woman "aroused her father's suspicion and anger" (1955: 148). The scandal of the case is that the woman acts in a way that is "quite neglectful of her reputation" (148), which is to say that she does not put the family and its reputation in its rightful place, a failure that is primarily described *as an injury to the father*. To put this simply, the woman does not take the family's ego ideal as her own. It is this neglect that ensures the exchange: the woman is handed over by the father to "the physician" who is entrusted "with the task of bringing *their* daughter *back* to a normal state of mind" (149; emphasis added). The exchange of the woman between men is here set up in terms of bringing her around, or bringing her "back in line" with the family: taking the family as one's love object would be to have a life that "follows" the family line by living according to points that are continuous. In other words, to be "in line" is to direct one's desires toward marriage and reproduction; to direct one's desires toward the reproduction of the family line.

This is already a rather queer reading: the drama of identification and desire would conventionally be read in terms of the child's relation to the mother and father, as the "points" of sexual difference, rather than to the imagined entity of "the family." In my reading, identification would be with the family and with the father insofar as he embodies the family, rather than with the father or mother as subjects on either side of the imaginary line that divides the sexes. In other words, identification would not necessarily be determined by the axis of gender, but would be about values and qualities that are attributed to the figure of the father and, through him, the family form (the social good). To identify with the family would be to wish for its approval (to become a good subject) and thus to desire what "the family" desires: the reproduction of its line. Straight orientations for women in this reading would mean identifying with the family by taking men as objects of desire ("tending toward" men); rather than identifying with the mother and desiring the father, where other men are substitutes for him.

It is crucial that the woman who provides the case is presented as "happy" with her sexuality: "She did not try to deceive me by saying that she felt any urgent need to be freed from her homosexuality" (1955: 153). On the contrary, as Freud himself states, "she could not conceive of any other way of being in love" (153). The woman does, however, express to Freud a therapeutic desire: not a desire to redirect her sexual orientation but the desire not to be the cause of grief to her parents (153). In other words, for the daughter, being the source of injury is itself "painful." Such pain could be read as a bodily identification with the parents: the homosexual daughter might even take on the ego ideal of the family, insofar as her pain puts her affectively "in line" with the grief of the family, even though she simultaneously resists following that ideal in the direction of her desire. She both desires what is off the family line and feels pain for the way that desire becomes the origin of familial hurt. In other words, her pain is caused not by the failure to follow the family line (which would make her pain closer to shame), but by witnessing "the grief" that this queer departure causes for others. It is the intimacy of this pain and grief, as the "point" at which bad feelings meet, that reminds us how queer lives do not simply transcend the lines they do not follow, as such lines are also the accumulation of points of attachment.

Freud's own reading hence tries to "explain" this manifestation of queer desire in which even grief seems misdirected. Although he challenges the sexological model of the congenital invert by suggesting that psychical and physical hermaphroditism do not coincide (154), he reads the case as an example of inversion by noting "her facial features were sharp rather than soft and girlish"; her "acuteness of comprehension and her lucid objectivity," and her "preference for being the lover rather than the beloved" (154). All of these "attributes" are read as signs of masculinity. For Freud the lover is always masculine, as the figure that embodies the masculinity of the libido. We can recall Freud's initial description of the homosexual woman "pursuing" her beloved: this description immediately "sees" her *as* the masculine lover in pursuit of the feminine loved object. Here Freud again "straightens" queer desire by rereading that desire in terms of being directed toward "the other sex."[7]

Freud's explanation of homosexuality in the woman relies on directional metaphors. For example, consider the following description:

> The explanation is as follows. It was just when the girl was experiencing the revival of her infantile Oedipus complex at puberty that she suffered her great disappointment. She became keenly conscious of the wish to have a child, and a male one; that what she desired was her *father's* child as an image of *him*, her

> consciousness was not allowed to know. And what happened next? It was not *she* who bore the child, but her unconsciously hated rival, her mother. Furiously resentful and embittered, she turned away from her father and from men altogether. After this first great reverse she forswore her womanhood and sought another goal for her libido. (157)

We might be tempted to offer a different "slant" to Freud's reading here. For Freud, the girl's desire for the father's child is a displacement of her desire for the father: the child is already seen as "an image of *him*." This desire is thwarted and leads to an act of rebellion. Homosexual women are read as suffering from disappointment as well as rage; their desire to reproduce the father's line is disappointed, which creates anger and leads to the departure from the family line (or "turning away" from men). We might be tempted to read this account of the girl's original desire differently—that is, as the desire to give the father what he desires (his own image). Her desire, in other words, "follows the direction" of the father's desire. It is the father's desire that shapes the direction of the story. This story could be read as about the father's desire to reproduce his own image, which is the desire that in "turn" produces homosexual desire as a personal and social injury. Perhaps this "disappointment," which converts swiftly to rage, does not describe the experience of the queer daughter, but rather that of the straight father as well as the other straight subjects who occupy his place.

What is at stake in Freud's "explanation," in which lesbian desire is read as a rejection of men caused by disappointment, is partly Freud's own desire for truth, his own "pursuit" of the case. As the one who is in pursuit, Freud is in the position of the lover who searches for how "others" turn from "the straight and narrow," whereby that turning is seen as turning away from "the other sex." This metaphor of "turning away" suggests that queer desire becomes a form of "derailment," of making the wrong turn. If the "straight line" is the "right turn," then it might operate as a psychoanalytic wish rather than what is "discovered" as a truth within the reading. In Freud's interpretation, the woman's wish to have the father's child is disappointed, which leads her to turn away from the father and from men in general.[8] This reading places lesbian desire as a compensation for the failure of a heterosexual wish. As Judith Roof argues, "lesbian sexuality is defined as a male derivative, a product or an affirmation to of failed incestuous desire for the father" (1991: 203). Such desires, which are "off line," are therefore seen as caused by the failure of a wish. We could also read the narrative in terms of Freud's identification with the father and with the father's desire. Indeed, the story of the father's desire, and his feeling of injury at the failure of its return, could be reread as the story of psychoanalysis. If we see Freud's desire as the one that engenders the narrative, then we can offer a different reading of what is disappointing about the case. It is Freud's own wish for a straight line that leads to the disappointment of the narrative: in other words, the line marks the wish for heterosexuality rather than operating as a heterosexual wish. Freud wishes for the continuation of the father's line, for the reproduction of the family, which he projects onto the homosexual woman; it is his wish that she wishes for "an image of *him*," which means he reads her queer tendencies only as a confirmation of her wish (she "tends toward" women as an effect of disappointment). In other words, Freud wishes that this case will allow him to reproduce his own image. His reading of queer love as caused by the failure of the father to return her love (to have a child "in his image") could be read as a form of wish fulfillment, a wish that she "really" wished for him.

It is thus not surprising that Freud recovers from his disappointment by rereading the case in terms of homosexual desire as desire for "the other sex." If she has "turned away" from men, then she has also turned into one: "She changed into a man and took her mother in place of her father as the object of love" (158). The turning that "turns" the body away from the "other sex" is reread as a turning into "the other sex." The woman identifies with the father, and loves the mother, which means she threatens to turn into him, by taking his place. Despite his recuperation of the queer aberration, the wandering away from the straight line, Freud's own wish becomes a kind of death wish: in refusing to desire men, the woman also refuses his desire to reproduce the ideal image of the father: she does not wish to have "an image of *him*," and even threatens to take his place (Freud 1955: 157). The threat of queer is a "death threat": *queer desires threaten to discontinue the father's line.* To bring such queer desire in line is to continue the father's line, and indeed the line of psychoanalysis itself.

Of course, in Freud's work there are many different lines about sexuality. It is clear, for instance, in his later essays on sexuality that he explicitly rejects the idea that the sexual instinct is directed exclusively toward specific objects: he suggests that the sexual instinct has the "freedom to range equally over male and female objects" (1977: 57), and indeed he rejects the view that homosexuals can be separated off "from the rest of mankind as a group of a special charac-

ter" (56). As Teresa de Lauretis (1994) emphasises, Freud considers how heterosexual and homosexual orientations involve a restriction of object choice that requires explanation. At one level, the model of perversion offered in his work, with its spatial grounding, sustains a line between normal and deviant sexualities. Freud defines perversion as "relating to the sexual aim" that occurs when "there is an extension in an anatomical sense beyond the regions of the body that are displayed for sexual union" or "there is a lingering over intermediate relations to the sexual object," which "should normally travel rapidly on the path toward the final sexual aim" (1977: 62). Insofar as a point deviates from this straight line toward heterosexual union, then we are making a perverse point. This point makes the line itself rather perverse. For Freud, "every internal or external factor that hinders or postpones the attainment of the normal sexual aim . . . will evidently lend support to the tendency to linger over the preparatory activities" (68).

Perversion is also a spatial term, which can refer to the willful determination to counter or go against orthodoxy, but also to what is wayward and thus "*turned away* from what is right, good, and proper." For some queer theorists, this is what makes "the perverse" a useful starting point for thinking about the "disorientations" of queer, and how it can contest not only heteronormative assumptions, but also social conventions and orthodoxies in general.[9] As Mandy Merck has argued, perversion describes not just deviant sexuality but also a "broader opposition to what is expected or accepted" (1993: 2) or even a "defection from doctrine" (3). It is worth, then, rereading the "perverted" as that which "turns astray" or moves off the straight line. The straight line would be that which moves *without any deviation* toward the "point" of heterosexual union or sexual coupling: any acts that postpone the heterosexual union are perverse, which thus includes heterosexual practices that are not "aimed" toward penetration of the vagina by the penis. The postponement or "delay" threatens the line of heterosexuality, insofar as it risks "uncoupling" desire and reproduction; the point of the straight line, one might speculate, is the reproduction of "the father's image." Importantly, Freud differentiates neurosis from perversion, and he even suggests that neurosis is the negative of perversion (1977: 80). That is, neurosis is caused by blocking "abnormal sexual feelings," including "queer" feelings toward "the same sex." As a result, for Freud the "achievement" of heterosexuality is often at the cost of neurosis. The sexual aim might "naturally" tend toward heterosexual union in this model, but Freud also suggests that the tendency of desire *not* to be directed toward this aim cannot be negated without psychic loss: it is the heterosexual who blocks homosexual feeling, and other perverse forms of desire, who risks becoming neurotic.

Is it here that Freud is seeking to "unblock" his own wish for the straight line? As he puts it, "One of the tasks implicit in object choice is that it should *find its way* to the opposite sex. This, as we know, is not achieved without a certain amount of fumbling" (1977: 152; emphasis added). It is at this point of fumbling that things can happen. It is at the point when Freud himself "fumbles" and loses his way that we can begin to see that the "straight line" *is what shapes the very tendency to go astray.* What is astray does not lead us back to the straight line, but shows us what is lost by following that line.

Becoming Straight

I begin here by paraphrasing Simone de Beauvoir: "One is not born, but becomes straight." What does it mean to posit straightness as about becoming rather than being? We have already seen how Freud reads for the straight line by recuperating queer desire as the displacement of grief and rage about the failure of a heterosexual wish to be granted. To read queer desire in these terms is to bring what is "slantwise" back into line. The family line is reproduced at the moment it is threatened. Already we can see that the "straight line" is achieved through work, which rereads moments of deviation from the family line as signs of the failure of the homosexual subject to "find its way." The homosexual subject, in other words, gets read as having got lost on the way "toward" the "other sex."

That the subject "becomes straight" as an effect of work could be described as a social constructionist view of sexual orientation rather than an essentialist one (Jagose 1996: 8). However, I would not define my argument quite in these terms. This is partly because the debate has allowed the question of sexual orientation to be framed as either a matter of choice (we "choose" to be gay or straight) or biology (where the "biological" is read as a line that is already drawn, as a line of nature), mainly by opponents of queer theory (see LeVay 1996). Of course, social construction is not about choice,[10] and when it is defined in terms of choice it loses most of its rigor or explanatory force. But for me the word "construction," even when defined in nonvoluntaristic terms,

does not quite explain the ways in which sexual orientation can be felt as inherent and bodily or even as essential. It does not explain how orientations can feel "as if" they come from inside and move us out toward objects and others. For instance, Janis Bohan argues in favor of the term "sexual orientation" rather than "sexual preference" because "the usage is intended to convey that LGB [lesbian, gay, and bisexual] identity is not (simply) a preference but *is as much a given as handedness*" (1996: 4; emphasis added). She suggests that many people experience their sexuality "as intrinsic and as fixed and permanent" (229). So we need to produce explanations of how orientations can operate simultaneously as effects and be lived or experienced as if they are originary or a matter of how one's body inhabits the world, by being orientated toward one side, like being right or left handed. One might note here how "handedness" is also perceived to be about direction: to be left or right handed is to favor one side of the body or another.[11] Such directions are effects of how bodies get directed. Understanding the processes of "becoming straight" would be to appreciate how sexual orientations feel as if they are intrinsic to being in the world, and how bodies "extend" into space by being directed in this way or that, where "this" and "that" are felt as being on one side or another of a dividing line.

I want to consider the work of "becoming straight" by telling two anecdotes. Both involve tables. This time it is not the writing table that comes into view but the dining table. The dining table is a table around which a "we" gathers. Such tables function quite differently from the writing table: not only because they support a different kind of action, but also because they point toward collective gatherings; that is, they deviate from the solitary world of the writer. The dining table is a table around which bodies gather, cohering as a group through the "mediation" of its surface, sharing the food and drink that is "on" the table. This role of the table as mediating between bodies that gather around to form a "gathering" is described by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*: "To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it" (1958: 53).[12] What passes on the table establishes lines of connection between those that gather, while the table itself "supports" the act of passing things around.[13]

Janet Carsten, in her volume *After Kinship*, explores the table as a kinship object, focusing specifically on the kitchen table: "My own powerful 'house memories' focus on a large kitchen table at which not only cooking and eating but also most family discussions, communal homework, and many games took place" (2004: 31). The kitchen table "supports" the family gathering by providing a surface "on" which "we" can do things. The shared orientation toward the table allows the family to cohere as a group, even when we do different things "at" the table. It is interesting to note that Hannah Arendt suggests that the disappearance of the table would mean the loss of such sociality—when people do not gather or feel "part" of a gathering: "The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other would no longer be separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible" (1958: 54). The table here is something "tangible" that makes a sense of relatedness possible. Tables, when used in this way, are kinship objects: we relate to other relatives through the mediation of the table. We could even say that the table becomes a relative. The loss of the table would be the loss of a "tangible" connection. Arendt would clearly mourn the loss of the table, as such a loss would make social gathering impossible. And yet we must ask: What is the "point" of such gathering? The table in its very function as a kinship object might enable forms of gathering that direct us in specific ways or that make some things possible and not others. Gatherings, in other words, are not neutral but directive. In gathering, we may be required to follow specific lines. If families and other social groups gather "around" tables, what does this "gathering" do? What directions do we take when we gather in this way, by gathering "around" the table?

So, I am seated at a table. It is the dining table and the family gathers around it. The table provides the scene for this family gathering: we are eating and talking and doing the work of family, as the work of domesticity that tends toward bodies. My sister makes a comment, which pulls me out of this mode of domestic inhabitance. She says: "Look, there is a little John and a little Mark!" She laughs, pointing. John and Mark are the names of my sisters' partners and their children's fathers. We look, and we see the boys as small versions of their fathers.

Upon hearing her remark our eyes follow her hand, which points in the direction toward its object. So, by following the direction of her hand, we turn to face the object of her utterance: two little boys sitting side by side, near the

table, on the lawn. We are directed by gestures: if we follow the point, it means we give our attention to the same object. The point is also a gift, which makes the object "shared." Everyone laughs at the comment: we see the two sons as small versions of their fathers, and the effect is both serious and comical. One darker boy and one fairer; one darker partner and one fairer. The difference between the boys becomes a shared inheritance, as if the difference is established by following the paternal line. In such family gatherings, the event of shared laughter, which is often about returning laughter with laughter, involves "sharing a direction" or following a line. The repetition of such gestures makes a point, as a point that creates its impressions, for those who are seated at the table. The laughter is a "yes," even if it is uttered with discomfort in accepting the terms of this inheritance.

Another scene from another time: away from home, my partner and I are on holiday on a resort on an island. Mealtimes bring everyone together. We enter the dining room, where we face many tables placed alongside each other. Table after table ready for action, waiting for bodies who arrive to take up their space, to be seated. In taking up space, I am taken back. I face what seems like a shocking image. In front of me, on the tables, couples are seated. Table after table, couple after couple, taking the same form: one man sitting by one woman around a "round table," facing each other "over" the table. Of course, I "know" this image—it is a familiar one, after all. But I am shocked by the sheer force of the regularity of that which is familiar: how each table presents the same form of sociality as the form of the heterosexual couple. How is it possible, with all that is possible, that the same form is repeated again and again? How does the openness of the future get closed down into so little in the present?

We sit down. I look down, acutely aware of inhabiting a form that is not the same as that repeated along the line of the tables, although of course my partner and I remain in line insofar as we are a couple. The wrong kind of couple, however—it has to be said. Being out of line can be uncomfortable. We know this. This case of discomfort is enabled by a sense of wonder. Rather than just seeing the familiar, which of course means that it passes from view, I felt wonder and surprise at the regularity of its form, as the form of what arrived at the table, as forms that get repeated, again and again, until they are "forgotten" and simply become forms of life. To wonder is to remember the forgetting and to see the repetition of form as the "taking form" of the familiar.[14] It is hard to know why it is that we can be "shocked" by what passes by us as familiar.

These two examples from my experience encourage me to rethink the work of the "straight line." In these anecdotes we have a relation between two lines, the vertical and the horizontal lines of conventional genealogy. Consider the family tree, which is made out of the vertical lines that "show" the blood tie, the line of descent that connects parents and children, and the horizontal lines that "show" the tie between husband and wife, and between siblings.[15] The "hope" of the family tree, otherwise known as the "wish" for reproduction, is that the vertical line will produce a horizontal line, from which further vertical lines will be drawn.

The utterance, "Look, there is a little John and a little Mark!" expresses this hope as a wish by drawing a line from father to son. The boy "appears" in line by being seen as reproducing the father's image and is even imagined as a point in another line, one that has yet to be formed, insofar as he may "become a father" to future sons. Such a narrative of "becoming father" means the future for the boy is already imagined as following the direction of the father: such a direction requires forming a horizontal line (marriage) from which future vertical lines will follow. One can think of such an utterance as performing the work of alignment: the utterances position the child as the not-yet adult by aligning sex (the male body) and gender (the masculine character) with sexual orientation (the heterosexual future). Through the utterance, these not-yet-but-to-be subjects are "brought into line" by being "given" a future that is "in line" with the family line. What intrigues me here is not so much how sex, gender, and sexual orientation can "get out of line,"[16] which they certainly can and do "do," but how they are kept in line, often through force, such that any nonalignment produces a queer effect.

The scene at the resort transformed this temporal sequencing, this horizon of social reproduction, which we could also describe as the intergenerational work of family history, into a social form, frozen in the present, as bodies that simply "gather" around tables. In other words, the horizontal line just appears, as the "affinity" of the couple, by being cut off from the vertical line, which reproduces the very form of the couple as the "ground" for future coupling. The word "affinity," after all, does not just refer to "relationship by marriage," which by definition are the relationships that are not blood ties (consanguinity), but also to "resemblance or similarity," and even to "a natural or

chemical attraction," as "the force attracting atoms to each other and binding them together in a molecule." The affinity of the couple form is socially binding: premised as it is on resemblance and on the "naturalness" of the direction of desire, which produce the couple as an entity, as a "social one" (from two).[17] The image of couples as "twos" that become "ones," which flashes before us in the present, is an effect of the work that brings the future subject into line, and as another point on the vertical line. In other words, the heterosexual couples who gather around the table could be understood as "arrivants" in the terms I discussed in the previous chapter; it has taken time and work to achieve this form, even if that work disappears in the familiarity and "oneness" of the form itself. To see the couple form in its "sensuous certainty" (Marx and Engels 1975: 170) as an "object" that can be perceived, would be not to see how this form arrives as an effect of intergenerational work.[18]

It is crucial that we understand the historicity that is both concealed and revealed by the repetition of this couple form as that which gathers around the table. In order to do this, I would suggest that we consider heterosexuality as a compulsory orientation. Adrienne Rich's pathbreaking work on "compulsory heterosexuality" is useful here. Rich discusses heterosexuality as a set of institutional practices that require men and women to be heterosexual. As she comments: "A feminist critique of compulsory heterosexuality for women is long overdue" (1993: 229). For something to be required is, of course, "evidence" that it is not necessary or inevitable. Heterosexuality is compulsory precisely insofar as it is not prescribed by nature: the heterosexual couple is "instituted" as the form of sociality through force. As Rich argues: "Some of the forms by which male power manifests itself are more easily recognizable as enforcing heterosexuality on women than are others. Yet each one I have listed adds to the cluster of forces within which women have been convinced that marriage and sexual orientation toward men are inevitable—even if unsatisfying or oppressive—components of their lives" (234; see also Wittig 1992: xiii).

This enforcement does not mean that women are "victims" of heterosexuality (though they can be), rather it means that to become a subject under the law one is made subject to the law that decides what forms lives must take in order to count as lives "worth living." To be subjected is in this way to "become straight," to be brought under the rule of law. After all, the naturalization of heterosexuality involves the naturalization of heterosexuality as an orientation toward the "other sex." Rich shows this by quoting a scientist who states: "Biologically men only have one innate orientation—a sexual one that draws them to women—while women have two innate orientations, sexual one toward men and reproductive one toward their young" (cited in Rich 1993: 228). Indeed, orientation is a powerful technology insofar as it constructs desire as a magnetic field: it can imply that we were drawn to certain objects and others *as if* by a force of nature: so women are women insofar as they are orientated toward men and children. The fantasy of a natural orientation is an orientation device that organizes worlds around the form of the heterosexual couple, as if it were from this "point" that the world unfolds. Here I can return to my critique of Ellis in the previous section, where he reads women's sexual arousal as "pointing" to men in the sense of preparing the woman's body for penetration by the penis: he sees, in other words, women's bodies as directed toward heterosexual coupling. Here is a fantasy of the natural fit between men and women's bodies, as if "they were made for each other" in the sense of being directed toward the other, or even ready-to-hand, for each other. The very idea that bodies "have" a natural orientation is exposed as fantasy in the necessity of the enforcement of that orientation, or its maintenance as a social requirement for intelligible subjectivity.

We can reconsider how one "becomes straight" by reflecting on how an orientation, as a direction (taken) toward objects and others, is made compulsory. In other words, subjects are *required* to "tend toward" some objects and not others as a condition of familial as well as social love. For the boy to follow the family line he "must" orientate himself toward women as loved objects. For the girl to follow the family line she "must" take men as loved objects. It is the presumption that the child must inherit the life of the parent that requires the child to follow the heterosexual line. Inheritance is usually presented as a social good: we inherit our parent's assets, after all, and if we inherit their debts then this is a sign of bad parenting and a threat to the line of descent. When parents imagine the life they would like for their child, they are also imagining what they will "give" to the child as a gift that becomes socially binding. As Judith Halberstam suggests: "The time of inheritance refers to an overview of generational time within which values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family ties one generation to the next" (2005: 5).

We saw in Freud's narrative how heterosexuality can function as the most intimate and deadly of parental gifts. The gift, when given, demands a return. As Marcel Mauss shows, the gift is "in theory" voluntary, but in reality it is

"given and received under obligation" (1969: 1).[19] As he asks: "What force is there in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return?" (1). The force is not, certainly, "in" the thing; it is an effect of how the thing circulates and returns. The demand for return acquires force, while the return accumulates "the force" of the gift. We might note, however, that the demand to return the gift does not return to the not-yet subject, whose debt cannot be paid back. The failure of return extends the investment. So the gift, when given, produces the one who has received the gift as indebted and demands its endless return. Heterosexuality is imagined as the future of the child insofar as heterosexuality is idealized as a social gift and even as the gift of life itself. The gift becomes an inheritance: what is already given or even pregiven.[20] Heterosexuality becomes a social as well as familial inheritance through the endless requirement that the child repay the debt of life with its life. The child who refuses the gift thus becomes seen as a bad debt, as being ungrateful, as the origin of bad feeling.

Of course, when we inherit, we also inherit the proximity of certain objects, as that which is available to us, as given within the family home. These objects are not only material: they may be values, capital, aspirations, projects, and styles. Insofar as we inherit that which is near enough to be available at home, we also inherit orientations, that is, we inherit the nearness of certain objects more than others, which means we inherit ways of inhabiting and extending into space. The very requirement that the child follow a parental line puts some objects and not others in reach. So the child tends toward that which is near enough, whereby nearness or proximity is what already "resides" at home. Having tended toward what is within reach, the child acquires its tendencies, which in turn bring the child into line. The paradox of this temporality helps explain how orientations are effects of work, at the same time as they feel "as if" they were like "handedness," as a way of being in the body, by being directed in some ways more than others. Bodies become straight by tending toward straight objects, such that they acquire their "direction" and even their tendencies as an effect of this "tending toward." Sexual orientations are also performative: in directing one's desire toward certain others and not other others, bodies in turn acquire their shape.

The objects that are "near enough" can be described as heterosexual objects within the conventional family home. As Judith Butler argues, "Heterosexual genders form themselves through the renunciation of the *possibility* of homosexuality, as a foreclosure *which produces a field of heterosexual objects* at the same time as it produces a domain of those whom it would be impossible to love" (1997b: 21; emphasis added). We can see from this example that the "nearness" of love objects is not casual: we do not just find objects there, like that. The very requirement that the child follow a parental line puts some objects and not others in reach. Compulsory heterosexuality produces a "field of heterosexual objects," by the very requirement that the subject "give up" the possibility of other love objects.

It is interesting to speculate what Judith Butler might mean by "the field of heterosexual objects." How would such objects come into view through acts of foreclosure? We might consider the significance of the term "field." A field can be defined as an open or cleared ground. A field of objects would hence refer to how certain objects are made available by clearing, through the delimitation of space as a space for some things rather than others, where "things" might include actions ("doing things"). Heterosexuality in a way becomes a field, a space that gives ground to, or even grounds, heterosexual action through the renunciation of what it is not, and also by the production of what "it is." As Michel Foucault showed us so powerfully, "there is an incitement to discourse" where objects are spoken and made real through the very demand to give them a form, rather than through prohibition (1990: 17–35). Or we might say that both demands and prohibitions are generative; they create objects and worlds. Heterosexuality is not then simply "in" objects as if "it" could be a property of objects, and it is not simply about love objects or about the delimitation of "who" is available to love, although such objects do matter. And neither does "heterosexual objects" simply refer to objects that depict heterosexuality as a social and sexual good, although such objects also do matter. Rather, heterosexuality would be an effect of how objects gather to clear a ground, how objects are arranged to create a background. Following Husserl, we could say that heterosexuality functions as a background, as that which is behind actions that are repeated over time and with force, and that insofar as it is behind does not come into view.

So, again, we can return to Husserl and his table. Recall that Husserl turns toward his writing table as that which he faces, which is what makes other things behind him. In turning toward the writing table, other things—the inkwell, the pencil, and so forth—come into view as things in the background "around" the object.[21] These objects are "near" what Husserl faces, though

they do not have his attention. The nearness of such objects is a matter of "coincidence"—their arrival has to be timed in a certain way, although it is no "coincidence" that "they" are what he sees. The action (writing) is what brings things near other things at the same time that the action (writing) is dependent on the nearness of things. What is at stake here is not only the relation between the body and "what" is near, but also the relation between the things that are near. That the inkwell is "on" the table, for instance, has something to do with the fact that both it and the table point in the same direction. The nearness of the objects to each other is because they tend toward a shared action. Objects might be near other objects as signs of orientation, which shapes the arrangements of objects, thereby creating the shape of their gathering. Orientations are binding as they bind objects together. The move from object to object is shaped by perception—the gaze that turns to an object, brings other objects into view, even if they are only dimly perceived—as well as by how orientations make things near, which affects what can be perceived.[22] As I demonstrated in chapter 1, nearness is not then simply a matter of "what" is perceived. The nearness of objects to each other comes to be lived as what is already given, as a matter of how the domestic is arranged. What puts objects near depends on histories, on how "things" arrive, and on how they gather in their very availability as things to "do things" with.

The field of heterosexual objects is produced as an effect of the repetition of a certain direction, which takes shape as "the background" and which might be personalized as "my background" or as that which allows me to arrive and to do things. In reference to thinking about my family home, such acts of thinking do feel like a "going back," or like a "coming back" to the "going back." Such lines recede through memory. Certain objects stand out, even come out, and they have my attention. I think again of the kitchen and of the dining room. Each of these rooms contains a table around which the family gathers: one for casual eating, one for more formal occasions. The kitchen table is made of light-colored wood and is covered by a plastic cloth. Around it we gather every morning and evening. Each of us has our own place. Mine is the end of the table opposite my father. My sisters are both to my left, my mother to my right. Each time we gather in this way as if the arrangement is securing more than our place. For me, inhabiting the family is about taking up a place already given. I slide into my seat and take up this place. I feel out of place in this place, but these feelings are pushed to one side. We can consider how families are often about taking sides (one side of the table or another) and how this demand "to side" requires putting other things aside. A "side" refers to "surfaces or lines bounding a thing," or to "regions or directions with reference to a central line, space or point," as well as to the event of supporting or opposing an argument. It is interesting to note here that genealogy has been understood in terms of sides: the maternal and paternal are two "sides" in the line of descent.[23] A question that interests me is how certain directions, and by implication relations of proximity or nearness, are read as forms of social and political allegiance. How does the family require us to "take sides," to give allegiance to its form by taking up a side, and what is put aside when we take sides? We can only answer such a question by perceiving how family gatherings "direct" our attention.

The table in the formal room takes the form of the room. It is a formal table with dark and polished wood. A lace tablecloth covers the wood—but only barely so, and glimpses of the dark wood can be seen underneath. We use this table when we have guests. The table is shaped by what we do with it, and it takes shape through what we do: this table is less marked, as it is used less. Its polished surfaces reflect to us and to others the "reflection" of the family, the family as image and as imagined. The impression of the table shows us that the family is on show. The room always feels cold, dark, and empty; and yet, it is full of objects. When one faces the room from the door, behind the table is the sideboard. On it objects gather. One object, a fondue set, stands out. I don't ever remember using it, but it is an object that matters somehow. It was a wedding gift—a gift given to mark the occasion of marriage. The public event of marriage entails giving gifts to the heterosexual couple, giving the woman as a gift to the man, and even giving the couple as a gift to others, to those who act as witnesses to the gifts given.[24] This object acquires its force, through this relay of gifts given: it is not just that it arrives here, as a gift, but that in arriving it makes visible the other gifts that give the form of the couple its "sensuous certainty."

And then, covering the walls, are photographs. The wedding photograph. Underneath are the family pictures, some formal (taken by photographers) and others more casual. The photographs are objects on the wall. They turn the wall into an object, something to be apprehended; something other than the edge of the room. And yet the wall in its turn disappears as an edge insofar as we apprehend the objects on its surface. Everywhere I turn, even in the

failure of memory, reminds me of how the family home puts objects on display that measure sociality in terms of the heterosexual gift. That these objects are on display, that they make visible a fantasy of a good life, depends on returning such a direction with a "yes," or even with gestures of love, or witnessing these objects as one's own field of preferred intimacy. Such objects do not simply record or transmit a life; they demand a return. There is a demand that we return to them by embracing them as embodiments of our own history, as the gift of life. The nearness of such objects (tables, fondue sets, photographs) takes us back to the family background, as well as sideways, through the proximity each has to the other, as what the family takes place "around." They gather as family gatherings. They gather on tables and on other objects with horizontal surfaces, which clear the ground.

In the face of what appears, we must ask what disappears. In the conventional family home what appears requires following a certain line, the family line that directs our gaze. The heterosexual couple becomes a "point" along this line, which is given to the child as its inheritance or background. The background then *is not simply behind the child*: it is what the child is asked to aspire *toward*. The background, given in this way, can orientate us toward the future: it is where the child is asked to direct its desire by accepting the family line as its own inheritance. There is pressure to inherit this line, a pressure that can speak the language of love, happiness, and care, which pushes us along specific paths. We do not know what we could become without these points of pressure, which insist that happiness will follow if we do this or we do that. And yet, these places where we are under pressure don't always mean we stay on line; at certain points we can refuse the inheritance—at points that are often lived as "breaking points." We do not always know what breaks at these points.

Such a line, after all, does not tell us the whole story. We need to ask what gets put aside, or put to one side, in the telling of the family story. What gets put aside, or put to one side, does not come after the event but rather shapes the line, allowing it to acquire its force. The family pictures picture the family, often as happy (the bodies that gather smile, as if the smile were the point of the gathering). At the same time, the pictures put aside what does not follow this line, those feelings that do not cohere as a smile. This "not," as Judith Butler (1993) reminds us, also generates a line.

Heterosexuality is not then simply an orientation toward others, it is also something that we are orientated around,[25] even if it disappears from view. It is not that the heterosexual subject has to turn away from queer objects in accepting heterosexuality as a parental gift: compulsory heterosexuality makes such a turning unnecessary (although becoming straight *can be* lived as a "turning away.") Queer objects, which do not allow the subject to approximate the form of the heterosexual couple, may not even get near enough to "come into view" as possible objects to be directed toward. I think Judith Butler (1997b) is right to suggest that heteronormativity demands that the loss of queer love must not be grieved: such loss might not even be admitted as loss, as the possibility of such love is out of reach. Queer objects are not "close enough" to the family line in order to be seen as objects to be lost. The body acts upon what is nearby or at hand, and then gets shaped by its directions toward such objects, which keeps other objects beyond the bodily horizon of the straight subject.

We could even argue that compulsory heterosexuality is a form of RSI. Compulsory heterosexuality shapes what bodies can do. Bodies take the shape of norms that are repeated over time and with force. 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 the capacity for other kinds of action*. Compulsory heterosexuality diminishes the very capacity of bodies to reach what is off the straight line. It 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*. Hence, the failure to orient oneself "toward" the ideal sexual object affects how we live in the world; such a failure is read as a refusal to reproduce and therefore as a threat to the social ordering of life itself. The queer child can only, in this wish for the straight line, be read as the source of injury: a sign of the failure to repay the debt of life by becoming straight.

We can see that the "tending toward" certain objects and not others (though these are not necessarily rejected, they might not get near enough) produces what we could call "straight tendencies"—that is, a way of acting in the world that presumes the heterosexual couple as a social gift. Such tendencies enable action in the sense that they allow the straight body, and the heterosexual couple, to extend into space. The queer body becomes from this viewing point

a "failed orientation": the queer body does not extend into such space, as that space extends the form of the heterosexual couple. The queer couple in straight space hence look as if they are "slanting" or are oblique.[26] The queer bodies, which gather around the table, are out of line. This is not to say queer bodies are inactive; as I will argue in the next section, queer desire "acts" by bringing other objects closer, those that would not be allowed "near" by straight ways of orientating the body.

What we need to examine, then, is how heterosexual bodies "extend" into spaces, as those spaces *have taken form by taking on their form*. Spaces can hence extend into bodies, just as bodies extend into space. As Gill Valentine states: "Repetitive performances of hegemonic asymmetrical gender identities and heterosexual desires congeal over time to produce the appearance that the street is normally a heterosexual space" (1996: 150; see also Duncan 1996: 137). Spaces and bodies become straight as an effect of repetition. That is, the repetition of actions, which tends toward some objects, shapes the "surface" of spaces. Spaces become straight, which allow straight bodies to extend into them, such that the vertical axis appears in line with the axis of the body. As I pointed out in chapter 1, the repetition of actions (as a tending toward certain objects) shapes the contours of the body. Our body takes the shape of this repetition; *we get stuck in certain alignments as an effect of this work*. Given this, the work of ordinary perception, which straightens up anything queer or oblique, is not simply about correcting what is out of line. Rather, things might seem oblique in the first place only insofar as they do not follow the line of that which is already given, or that which has already extended in space by being directed in some ways rather than others. Spaces as well as bodies are the effects of such straightening devices.

Contingent Lesbians

I have suggested that Freud's case of homosexuality in a woman should be read as a family case, as being about the demand that the daughter return family love by reproducing the line of the father. Indeed, I have linked the compulsion to become straight to the work of genealogy, which connects the line of descent between parents and children with the affinity of the heterosexual couple, as the meeting point between the vertical and horizontal lines of the family tree. In redirecting our attention away from the "deviant figure" of the homosexual woman, it might seem that I have wandered off my own track. In this section, I want to explore "same sex" orientation between women and to reflect on the directionality of this desire, which was after all the desire that compelled my own desire to write about orientations in the first place.

In this section, I want to introduce the figure of the "contingent lesbian." By "contingent lesbian" I am alluding in part to one of Freud's categories, the "contingent invert," which is one of three categories of inversion, along with "the absolute invert" and "the amphigenic invert" (1977: 47). Freud describes the "contingent invert" as follows: "Under certain external conditions—of which inaccessibility of any normal sexual object and imitation are the chief—they are capable of taking as their sexual object someone of their own sex" (47) We can see from this description that the "contingent invert" is a deeply heterosexist formulation: this argument is premised on the presumption that the invert is "not really" inverted, and that she "turns" to "her own sex" only because of a failure to access a "normal sexual object." This model is close to the stereotype of the lesbian as the one who "can't get a man," and it recalls Ellis's description of the inverted feminine lesbian who is the absolute invert's beloved: "They are not usually attractive to the average man" (1975: 87). This familiar representation of the contingent lesbian as being "unattractive" to men again associates lesbianism with the disappointment of not being the object of men's desire.

I want to challenge the heteronormativity of the category "contingent invert/lesbian" by using this figure to do a different kind of work. What does it mean to posit the lesbian as contingent? Wouldn't she be a rather odd figure? We can draw on Judith Butler's rather humorous reflection on going "off to Yale to be a lesbian," even though she already "was one." Rather than seeing lesbianism as something that one already is, Butler shows how "naming" oneself as a lesbian is also to make oneself a lesbian "in some more thorough and totalizing way, at least for the time being" (1991: 18) So it is not that one is simply a lesbian before the very moment in which one speaks of oneself as "being" a lesbian, at the same time that it is not that one is "not" a lesbian before that act of naming. Naming oneself as a lesbian is thus an effect of being a lesbian (in a certain way), which itself produces the effect of being a lesbian (in another way). After all, declaring oneself to be a lesbian is not what makes one experience lesbian desire: tending toward women as objects of desire is what compels such a risky action of self-naming in the first place. If lesbianism

were generated by the word "lesbian," then a lesbian politics might be easier: it would just be a matter of spreading the word! If we *become* lesbians, then lesbian tendings and even tendencies not only preexist that act of becoming, they are also what would move women toward the very name "lesbian" in the first place. Such tendencies can be blocked as well as acted upon: compulsory heterosexuality could even be described as a block.

We know that (luckily) compulsory heterosexuality doesn't always work. We need to ask how lesbian tendencies shape and are shaped by how bodies extend into worlds; and how even if this desire does not simply reside within the lesbian body, how such desire comes to be felt "as if" it were a natural force, which is compelling enough to resist the force of compulsory heterosexuality. Why does feeling desire for a woman as a woman feel as if it happens to the body, as if this body and that body were "just" drawn to each other? Stories of lesbian desire are often about the pull of attraction: for instance, Joan Nestle talks about being drawn to butches: "I can spot a butch thirty feet away and still feel the thrill of her power" (1987: 100). Accounting for the "pull" of lesbian desire is important. I hope to show how the contingent lesbian is one who is shaped by the pull of her desire, which puts her in contact with others and with objects that are off the vertical line. We become lesbians in the proximity of what pulls.

This idea of "contact sexuality," or of becoming lesbian through contact with lesbians,[27] can be used to deauthenticate such orientations as "less real." For instance, in Ellis's account of contingent inverts, he suggests that "there is reason to believe that some event, or special environment, in early life had more or less influence in turning the sexual instinct into homosexual channels" (1975: 108). Looking for circumstances to explain such a "channel" implies that the channel is a deviation that would not *otherwise* have taken place, such that if this or that event had not happened we would have remained "on course."[28] In a way, I want to suggest that there is some "truth" to this idea: we might become lesbians because of the contact we have with others as well as objects, as a contact that shapes our orientations toward the world and gives them their shape.

This statement can only work to challenge heterosexism if we also recognize that heterosexuality is a form of "contact sexuality": straight orientations are shaped by contact with others who are constructed as reachable as love objects by the lines of social and familial inheritance. The "contingent heterosexual" disappears only when we forget that heterosexuality also needs to be explained and is also shaped by contact with others. Indeed, I have suggested that compulsory heterosexuality functions as a background to social action by delimiting who is available to love or "who" we come into contact "with." The contingency of heterosexuality is forgotten in the very "sensuous certainty" of the heterosexual couple.

And yet, it is not simply that the "lesbian couple" makes contact. It is also the case that "lesbian contact" is read in ways that realign the oblique lines of lesbian desire with the straight line. We have noted how this happens through examining Freud's reading of homosexual desire. It is important to extend my analysis to show how straight readings are "directed" toward lesbians in ways that affect how we inhabit space or how space impresses upon our bodies.

Another anecdote comes to mind here. I arrive home, park my car, and walk toward the front door. A neighbor calls out to me. I look up somewhat nervously because I have yet to establish "good relations" with the neighbors. I haven't lived in this place very long and the semipublic of the street does not yet feel easy. The neighbor mumbles some words, which I cannot hear, and then asks: "Is that your sister, or your husband?" I rush into the house without offering a response. The neighbor's utterance is quite extraordinary. There are two women, living together, a couple of people alone in a house. So what do you see?

The first question reads the two women as sisters, as placed alongside each other along a horizontal line. By seeing the relationship as one of siblings rather than as a sexual relation, the question constructs the women as "alike," as being like sisters. In this way, the reading both avoids the possibility of lesbianism and also stands in for it, insofar as it repeats, but in a different form, the construction of lesbian couples as siblings: lesbians are sometimes represented "as if" they could be sisters *because* of their "family resemblance." The fantasy of the "likeness" of sisters (which is a fantasy in the sense that we "search for" likeness as a "sign" of a biological tie) takes the place of another fantasy, that of the lesbian couple as being alike, and as "so" alike that they even threaten to merge into one body. I told this anecdote at a conference once, and another woman said: "But that is amazing, you're a different race!" While I wouldn't put it quite like that, the comment spoke to me. Seeing "us" as alike meant *"overlooking" signs of difference*, even if such differences are not something that bodies simply have in the form of possessions.

But the move from the first question to the second question, without any

pause or without waiting for an answer, is really quite extraordinary. If not sister, then husband. The second question rescues the speaker by positing the partner not as female (which even in the form of the sibling "risks" exposure of what does not get named) but as male. The figure of "my husband" operates as a legitimate sexual other, "the other half," a sexual partner with a public face. Of course, I could be making my own assumptions in offering this reading. The question could have been a more playful one, in which "husband" was not necessarily a reference to "male"—that is, "the husband" could refer to the butch lover. The butch lover would be visible in this address only insofar as she "took the place" of the husband. Either way, the utterance rereads the oblique form of the lesbian couple, in the way that straightens that form such that it appears straight. Indeed, it is not even that the utterance moves from a queer angle to a straight line. The sequence of the utterance offers two readings of the lesbian couple: both of which function as straightening devices: *if not sisters, then husband and wife*. The lesbian couple in effect disappears, and I of course make my exit. We can return to my opening quote from Merleau-Ponty: it is the ordinary work of perception that straightens the queer effect: *in a blink, the slant of lesbian desire is straightened up*.

This anecdote is a reminder that how lesbians are read often seeks to align their desire with the line of the heterosexual couple or even the family line. The disappearance of lesbian desire simultaneously involves the erasure of signs of difference. When lesbians are represented as desiring in a way that is out of line, such desire is often seen as inauthentic or lacking in the presumed absence of "difference." That lesbian desire is usually described as "same sex desire" (i.e., *homo*sexual) works in very specific ways. This association between homosexuality and sameness is crucial to the pathologizing of homosexuality as a perversion that leads the body astray. This idea—that lesbians desire "the same (sex)" by desiring women—needs to be contested. As Noreen O'Connor and Joanna Ryan argue: "Another way in which gender can be interpreted too literally is that it becomes the defining feature of lesbian relationships. The charge that homosexual relationships "deny difference" is a familiar one. Some psychoanalysts see the sameness of gender as in itself a barrier to 'real' sexual desire, as meaning that such relationships are inevitably narcissistic and deny difference" (1993: 190). In other words, women desiring women does not mean that they desire the same: sameness as well as difference is invented as fantasy (Phillips 1997: 159). The very idea of women desiring women because of "sameness" relies on a fantasy that women are "the same."

Such a fantasy is also played out in the psychoanalytic approaches to "lesbian merger"—in the idea that women, when they tend toward each other as objects of desire, tend to lose any sense of difference.[29] As Beverly Burch argues: "The traditional psychoanalytic explanation of merger in lesbian couples is based on assumptions of pathology: homosexuality is 'arrested development,' or a lack of personal boundaries, as a result of early childhood deficits" (1997: 93). We can see this in the work of Margaret Nichols, who describes the tendency "for female-to-female pairings to be close and intimate, sometimes to a pathological excess" (1995: 396–97). She further suggests that "in a merged relationship, only one entity exists, not two" (1995: 398). Such a fantasy of lesbian merger might even function as a case of countertransference: a desire to merge with the lesbian, to incorporate her force, to undo the threat she poses to the line that is assumed both to divide the sexes and to lead each to the other. The threat of merger is attributed to the same-sex couple rather than to the heterosexual couple in part as a response to the presumption that "difference," described in terms of opposition, keeps each sex in line. Furthermore, the idea that without men women would merge, constructs women as lacking only insofar as it elevates the concepts of separation and autonomy that secure the masculine and heteronormative subject as a social and bodily ideal.

The fantasy that shapes this line of argument is that heterosexuality involves love for difference, and that such love is ethical in its opening to difference and even the other (see Warner 1990: 19; Ahmed 2004a). The heterosexual subject "lines up" by being one sex (identification) and having the other (desire). I have already contested this assumption by suggesting that compulsion toward heterosexual intimacy produces social and familial resemblance. We can question the assumption that desire requires "signs" of difference, as something that each body must "have" in relation to "another." Some have argued that we should eroticize sameness "on different lines" as a way of contesting the equation of desire and difference (Bersani 1995). I would suggest that the very distinction of same/difference can be questioned, especially insofar as the distinction rests on differences that are presumed to be inherent to bodily form and to how bodies have already cohered.

Within sexology the idea that desire requires signs of difference has been taken for granted. For example, Ellis argues that "even in inversion the imperative need for a certain sexual opposition—the longing for something which the lover *does not himself possess*—still rules on full force" (1975: 120, emphasis added). We could note, first, that difference becomes desirable only given a

fantasy of possession: that there are things we possess and other things we do not, such that those that are "not" can be possessed to complete one's possessions. In a way, the desire for the "not" sustains this fantasy of possession, of sexual orientation as a relation of "having," even if one "has" what one is "not," this "has" extends what one "is."

It is within this context that Ellis interprets what we now call butch-femme as an attempt to create differences through the adoption of masculine and feminine roles (1940: 120). It is useful to recall his insistence on sexual difference as the origin of desire. For the notion of butch-femme has been the site of an intergenerational conflict within lesbian feminism as well as between lesbian feminist and queer politics (see Nestle 1987: 543–45; Munt 1998b: 2; Roof 1991: 249; Case 1993; Grosz 1995: 152; Newton 2000: 64). The lesbian feminist critique of butch-femme (as assimilating to the model of heterosexuality as male-female) has been interpreted by queer theorists as "antisex" and as a form of class prejudice against working-class lesbians, for whom "butch-femme" bar culture was and is a meaningful lived reality (see Nestle 1987). And yet if we recall the sexological model, which sees the necessity of butch-femme in the "absence" of (sexual) difference between women, we can see the basis of the lesbian feminist critique. The critique of butch-femme was a critique of the ideological position that assumes lesbians have to create a line that they do not "naturally" have, in order to create difference and experience desire.

In light of this history, I would argue that lesbian feminists were right to make the critique, but they *misrecognized the object of their critique* in the bodies of butch and femme lesbians. The critique should be framed as a critique of the assumption that butch-femme is *necessary* for lesbian desire. One would imagine from reading Joan Nestle's work that lesbian feminists invented the idea that butch-femme were "phony heterosexual replicas" (1997: 100).[30] However, they did not: this reading of butch-femme (problematically defined in terms of the congenital/absolute and the contingent invert) was part of the sexological tradition that lesbian feminists took the risk to engage with. To critique the sexological model of butch-femme as necessary for lesbian desire was a generous act. Of course, the queer reading of butch-femme as not being a copy of masculine-feminine—as not following how the straight line divides bodies—is vital (Butler 1991: 22). Butch-femme is not a copy of a real thing that resides elsewhere, but rather is a serious space for erotic play and performance. I would like to imagine that the lesbian feminist critique and the queer reading can share the same sexual and political horizon, and to do so I suggest that butch and femme are for lesbians erotic possibilities that can generate new lines of desire only when they are just that: possibilities rather than requirements.

After all, the idea that lesbian desire requires a line between butch and femme was the subject of internal critique within butch-femme cultures. Within novels and other accounts of lesbian bar culture in the United States, for instance, butch-femme couplings not only provide "complex erotic and social statements" (Nestle 1987: 100), they are also depicted as potentially restrictive social and sexual forms. In Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*, the transgender butch hero Jess reacts with a bodily horror when her butch friend comes out as having a butch lover: "The more I thought about the two of them being lovers, the more it upset me. It was like two guys. Well, two gay gays would be all right. But two butches? Who was the femme in bed?" (2003: 202). In Lee Lynch's *The Swashbuckler*, the butch hero Frenchy cannot deal with her desire for another butch, Mercedes: "Maybe this Mercedes could change her tune, because she, Frenchy, couldn't be attracted to a butch" (1985: 45). That butch-to-butch desire can feel so impossible, as if it would leave the butch body with nothing to do, nearly severs friendships, relationships, and community within these novels. This is not to critique butch-femme as an illegitimate form of erotic coupling (though it might serve as a caution to avoid any idealization of one form of sexual contact over another), but to show how drawing "a dividing line," can *in its turn* make other forms of sexual desire unlivable, even if that line does not follow the straight line.

Significantly, Ellis also mentions "race" as another sign of difference "used" by lesbians to generate desire.[31] In one footnote, he states that he has been told that "in American prisons, lesbian relationships between white and black women are common" (1975: 120). He uses this example to support the thesis that lesbians have to invent difference in order to desire each other. We can, of course, point to the invented nature of all differences, including the differences that are created by the line that divides the sexes. But what is needed is an even more fundamental critique of the idea that difference only takes a morphological form (race/sex) and that such morphology is, as it were, given to the world. A phenomenology of race and sex shows us how bodies become racialized and sexualized in how they "extend" into space: differences are shaped in how we take up space, or how we orient ourselves toward objects and others

(see also chapter 3). As such, lesbian desire, the contact between lesbian bodies, involves differences, which take shape through contact and are shaped by past contact with others. Lesbians also have different points of arrival, different ways of inhabiting the world. Lesbian desire is directed toward other women, and it is "given" this direction that such desire encounters difference. Other women, whatever our differences, are other than oneself; in directing one's desire toward another woman, one is directing one's desire toward a body that is other than one's body. Indeed, as Luce Irigaray's work (1985) shows us, the idea of sexes as "opposites" is what makes heterosexuality as it is conventionally described—itself the negation of the alterity of (other) women. Lesbian contact opens up erotic possibilities for women by this refusal to follow the straight line, which requires that we "take sides" by being on one side or another of a dividing line.

We can turn to Teresa de Lauretis's (1994: xlv) distinction between lesbians who "were always that way," and those who "become lesbians." This does not mean that those who "were always that way" don't have to "become lesbians": they might just become lesbians in a different way. While lesbians might have different temporal relations to "becoming lesbians," even lesbians who feel they were "always that way," still have to "become lesbians," which means *gathering such tendencies into specific social and sexual forms*. Such a gathering requires a "habit-change," to borrow a term from Teresa de Lauretis (1994: 300): it requires a reorientation of one's body such that other objects, those that are not reachable on the vertical and horizontal lines of straight culture, can be reached.[32] The work of reorientation needs to be made visible as a form of work.

Or we could say that orientations too involve work, as a work that is hidden until orientations no longer work. Some critics have suggested that we replace the term "sexual orientation" with the term "sexuality" because the former is too centered on the relation between desire and its object. As Baden Offord and Leon Cantrell note: "The term sexuality is used here rather than orientation because it implies autonomy and fluidity rather than being oriented toward one sex" (1999: 218).[33] I would say that being orientated in different ways matters precisely insofar as such orientations shape what bodies do: it is not that the "object" causes desire, but that in desiring certain objects *other things follow*, given how the familial and the social are already arranged. It does "make a difference" for women to be sexually orientated toward women in a way that is not just about one's relation to an object of desire. In other words, the choice of one's object of desire makes a difference to other things that we do. In a way I am suggesting that the object in sexual object choice is sticky: other things "stick" when we orientate ourselves toward objects, especially if such orientations do not follow the family or social line.

It matters, then, how one is orientated sexually; being queer matters, too, even if being queer is not reducible to objects or bad object choices. One queer academic once suggested that the idea that the sex of the love object makes a difference is as "silly" as the idea that it makes a difference what kind of commodity one buys from the supermarket. She further implied that "changing the sex" of one's love object will not make a difference as one's own psychic histories do not, as it were, depend on that sex. Such an argument relies on a weak analogy, as if people "switch" orientations like they might switch brands. As I have suggested, it can take a lot of work to shift one's orientation, whether sexual or otherwise. Such work is necessary precisely given how some orientations become socially given by being repeated over time, as a repetition that is often hidden from view. To move one's sexual orientation from straight to lesbian, for example, requires reinhabiting one's body, given that one's body no longer extends the space or even the skin of the social. Given this, the sex of one's object choice is not simply *about* the object even when desire is "directed" toward that object: it affects what we can do, where we can go, how we are perceived, and so on. These differences in how one directs desire, as well as how one is faced by others, can "move" us and hence affect even the most deeply ingrained patterns of relating to others.

One example that comes to mind returns us to the ease with which heterosexual bodies can inhabit public space. When I inhabited a heterosexual world (by coinhabiting with another body, which meant inhabiting the social form of a good couple) and had accepted my inheritance through what I did with that body, my relation to public space was in some ways at least quite easy.[34] I would kiss and hold hands with a lover without thinking, without hesitation. I would not notice other forms of intimacy, even when on display. Such intimacies were in the background as it were, as a mode of facing and being faced. In a lesbian relationship I have had to reinhabit space, in part by learning how to be more cautious and by seeing what before was in the background, *as bodies and things gathered in specific ways*. For me, this has felt like inhabiting a new body, as it puts some things "out of reach" that I didn't even notice when

they were in reach. In a way, my body now extends less easily into space. I hesitate, as I notice what is in front of me. The hesitation does not "stop" there but has redirected my bodily relation to the world, and has even given the world a new shape.

This is not to say that moving one's sexual orientation means that we "transcend" or break with our histories: it is to say that a shift in sexual orientation is not livable simply as a continuation of an old line, as such orientations affect other things that bodies do. After all, if heterosexuality is compulsory, then even the positive movement of lesbian desire remains shaped by this compulsion, which reads the expression of such desire as social and familial injury, or even as the misdirection of grief and loss. Dealing with homophobia, as well as the orientation of the world "around" heterosexuality, shapes the forms of lesbian contact as a contact that is often concealed within public culture. To act on lesbian desire is a way of reorientating one's relation not just toward sexual others, but also to a world that has already "decided" how bodies should be orientated in the first place.

So, it takes time and work to inhabit a lesbian body; the act of tending toward other women has to be repeated, often in the face of hostility and discrimination, to gather such tendencies into a sustainable form. As such, lesbian tendencies do not have an origin that can be identified as "outside" the contact we have with others, as a contact that both shapes our tendencies and gives them their shape. Lesbian tendencies are affected by a combination of elements or happenings that are impossible to represent in the present and that enable us in "becoming lesbians" to get off line and be open to possibilities that are not available, or are even made impossible, by the very line that divides the sexes and orients each toward "the other." In order to think about lesbian tendencies—and how lesbians "tend toward" other lesbians in what could be described as the pleasures of repetition—we can explore the way in which lesbian desire is shaped by contact with others, and the way that desire enables points of connection that are discontinuous with the straight line.

Lesbian desire can be rethought as a space for action, a way of extending differently into space through tending toward "other women." This makes "becoming lesbian" a very social experience and allows us to rethink desire as a form of action that shapes bodies and worlds. Sally Munt, for instance, suggests that "desire is implicated in all aspects of living a lesbian life: it is the fuel of our existence, a movement of promise" (1998a: 10). Elspeth Probyn describes desire as "productive, it is what oils the lines of the social" (1996: 13). Desire is, after all, what moves us closer to bodies. To state the obvious: lesbian desire puts women into closer "contact" with women. As Elizabeth Grosz suggests, "Sexual relations are contiguous with and a part of other relations—the relations of the writer to pen and paper, the body-builder to weights, the bureaucrat to files" (1995: 181). The intimacy of contact shapes bodies as they orientate toward each other doing different kinds of work. In being orientated toward other women, lesbian desires also bring certain objects near, including sexual objects as well as other kinds of objects, *that might not have otherwise been reachable within the body horizon of the social.*

Lesbian contact slides between forms of social and sexual proximity. The argument that lesbian contact is "more than sexual" can be seen to imply an "antisex" or "antierotic" stance, or a return to the notion of "woman-identification" or even the lesbian continuum.[35] I agree with Teresa de Lauretis (1994:190–98) that these ideas, which are beautifully formulated in Adrienne Rich's work, underplay the sexual aspects of lesbianism insofar as they presume that women identifying with each other, without sexual contact, can be points on the same (oblique or diagonal) line of lesbian desire. At the same time, however, we don't have to take the "sex" out of lesbianism to argue that lesbian sociality tends toward other women in ways that are more than sexual, or even more than solely about desire. Lesbian bonds can involve orientations that are about shared struggles, common grounds, and mutual aspirations, as bonds that are created through the lived experiences of being "off line" and "out of line." To be orientated sexually toward women as women affects other things that we do.

It is in this sense that I am arguing that lesbian desire is contingent as a way of reflecting on the relation between sexual and social contact. It is useful to recall that the word "contingent" has the same root in Latin as the word "contact" (*contingere: com-*, with, *tangere*, to touch). Contingency is linked in this way to the sociality of being "with" others, to getting close enough to touch. To begin to think of lesbianism as contingent is to suggest not only that we become lesbians but also that such becoming is not lonely; it is always directed toward others, however imagined.

Lesbian contact hence involves social and bodily action (see Hart 1990); it involves a different way of extending the body in the world through reorientating one's relation to others. The figure of the lesbian reader might be useful

here. Again, it is a familiar story, but familiarity is worth telling. When I "became a lesbian" I began reading avidly. I read all the novels I could get my hands on. When I first read *The Well of Loneliness*, which I read after having read much-later works, I was surprised by how much it moved me; this book is alluded to in many of the later novels not only as "the lesbian bible" (as a novel that acquires its sociality by being passed around, by *changing hands*), but also as a rather depressing story. The novel tells the story of Stephen Gordon, who is described throughout the novel as an invert, whose life hurtles towards the "tragic and miserable ending" that seems to be the only available plot for inversion (Hall 1982: 411). As we know from reading Ellis and Freud, inversion was used as a way of interpreting lesbian sexuality (if she desires women, she must be a man). Given this, the invert both stands for and stands in for the figure of the lesbian, a way of presenting her that also erases her, which is not to say that we should assume the invert can only signify in this way.[36] Throughout the novel, Stephen has a series of tragic and doomed love affairs, ending with her relationship with Mary Lewellyn, described as "the child, the friend, the belovéd" (303). The novel does not give us a happy ending, and this seems partly its point: Stephen gives up Mary as a way of relieving her from the burden of their love. Stephen imagines saying to Mary: "I am one of those whom God marked on the forehead. Like Cain, I am marked and blemished. If you come to me, Mary, the world will abhor you, will persecute you, will call you unclean. Our love may be faithful even unto death and beyond—yet the world will call it unclean." (303)

It is a story of doomed love, unhappiness, and shame. I was very struck by the title. It seems to "point" to the loneliness of the lesbian life, where the lesbian is "on her own," cut off from the family, and where her body is lived as an injury to others, which is "conscious of feeling all wrong." (17) And yet, what is compelling about this book is how loneliness allows the body to extend differently into the world, a body that is alone in this cramped space of the family, which puts some objects and not others in reach, is also a body that reaches out towards others that can be glimpsed as just about on the horizon. When Stephen and Mary arrive at a party, this is just what they find: it is a queer gathering, with others who share the signs of inversion, a "very strange company" (356). It is not that such gatherings are happy: indeed, the novel describes one bar as "that meeting-place of the most miserable of all those who comprised the miserable army" (393). And yet this sharing of misery does something, and it is contrasted to the "happiness" of those in the straight world, who do not think to think about those who are "deprived of all sympathy" (395). Happiness for some involves persecution for others; it is not simply that this happiness produces a social wrong, but it might even be dependent upon it. The unhappiness of the deviant performs its own claim for justice. While we should take care not to create a romance out of such unhappiness, we can note that not only does it expose injustice, but it can also allow those who deviate to find each other, as bodies who do not or cannot follow the lines that are assumed to lead to happy endings. So although the novel seems to point to the burden of being inverted, perverted or simply led astray, it also shows how the "negated" life stills gets us somewhere, through the very turn towards others who are also seen as outside the contours of a good life.

You might search for others who share your points of deviation, or you might simply arrive in spaces (clubs, bars, houses, streets, rooms) where welcome shadows fall and linger, indicating that others too have arrived. You might wonder at the coincidence of these arrivals, of how it is that you find yourself inhabiting such spaces. As Judith Schuyf puts it, "yet here we find already a sense of the social: the company of like others—not just a 'special friend'—was essential to a lesbian's life." (1992: 53) It is the very social and existential experience of loneliness that compels the lesbian body to extend into other kinds of space, where there are others who return one's desire. What is compelling, then, is how this story of the loneliness of lesbian desire searches for a different form of sociality, a space in which the lesbian body can extend itself, as a body that gets near other bodies, which tends towards others who are alike only insofar as they also deviate and pervert the lines of desire.

The sociality of lesbian desire is shaped by contact with the heteronormative, even if this contact does not "explain" such desire. We could think of this "contact zone" of lesbian desire not as a fantasy of likeness (of finding others who are "like me"), but as opening up lines of connection between bodies that are drawn to each other in the repetition of this tendency to deviate from the straight line. Lesbian desires enact the "coming out" story as a story of "coming to," of arriving near other bodies, as a contact that makes a story and opens up other ways of facing the world. Lesbian desires move us sideways: one object might put another in reach, as we come into contact with different bodies and worlds. This contact involves following rather different lines of connection, association, and even exchange, as lines that are often invisible to

others. Lesbian desires create spaces, often temporary spaces that come and go with the coming and going of the bodies that inhabit them. The points of this existence don't easily accumulate as lines, or if they do, they might leave different impressions on the ground.

There is something already queer about the fleeting points of lesbian existence. Indeed, we can think here about the alternative forms of world-making within queer cultures. As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner suggest, the "queer world is a space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projecting horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies" (2005: 198). It is important that we do not idealize queer worlds or simply locate them in an alternative space. After all, if the spaces we occupy are fleeting, if they follow us when we come and go, then this is as much a sign of how heterosexuality shapes the contours of inhabitable or livable space as it is about the promise of queer. It is given that the straight world is already in place and that queer moments, where things come out of line, are fleeting. Our response need not be to search for permanence, as Berlant and Warner show us in their work, but to listen to the sound of "the what" that fleets.

I have shown how ordinary perception corrects that which does not "line up," including the fleeting signs of lesbian desire. This is why lesbian desires are already queer before, as it were, queer happens: given the orientation of the world around heterosexuality, and given the homosociality of this world (see Sedgwick 1985), women desiring women can be one of the most oblique and queer forms of social and sexual contact. Such queer contact might take us back to what is queer about Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and the "sensitivity" of the body of his work and in his work. What is queer is never, after all, exterior to its object. If Merleau-Ponty accounts for how things get straightened up, then he also accounts for how things become queer, or how "the straight" might even depend on "queer slants" to appear as straight. Indeed, in Merleau-Ponty's writing bodies are already rather queer. In *The Visible and Invisible*, he offers us a reflection on touch and on forms of contact between bodies as well as between bodies and the world. As he states: "My hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches" (1968: 133) What touches is touched, and yet "the toucher" and "the touched" do not ever reach each other; they do not merge to become one.

This model of touch shows how bodies reach other bodies, and how this "reaching" is already felt on the surface of the skin. And yet, I have suggested that not all bodies are within reach. Touch also involves an economy: a differentiation between those who can and cannot be reached.[37] Touch then opens bodies to some bodies and not others. Queer orientations are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable by the lines of conventional genealogy. Queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world "slantwise" allow other objects to come into view. A queer orientation might be one that does not overcome what is "off line," and hence *acts out of line with others*. It is no accident that queer orientations have been described by Foucault and others as orientations that follow a diagonal line, which cut across "slantwise" the vertical and horizontal lines of conventional genealogy (Bell and Binnie 2000: 133), perhaps even challenging the "becoming vertical" of ordinary perception.

For lesbians, inhabiting the queer slant may be a matter of everyday negotiation. This is not about the romance of being off line or the joy of radical politics (though it can be), but rather the everyday work of dealing with the perceptions of others, with the "straightening devices" and the violence that might follow when such perceptions congeal into social forms. In such loving and living we learn to feel the oblique in the slant of its slant as another kind of gift. We would not aim to overcome the disorientation of the queer moment, but instead inhabit the intensity of its moment. Yes, we are hailed; we are straightened as we direct our desires as women toward women. For a lesbian queer politics, the hope is to reinhabit the moment after such hailing: such a politics would not overcome the force of the vertical, or ask us to live our lives as if such lines do not open and close spaces for action. Instead, we hear the hail, and even feel its force on the surface of the skin, but we do not turn around, even when those words are directed toward us. Having not turned around, who knows where we might turn. Not turning also affects what we can do. The contingency of lesbian desire makes things happen.

CHAPTER 3 The Orient and Other Others

> And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not out of habit, but out of implicit knowledge.
>
> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Frantz Fanon offers an account of a casual scene that takes us back to the table. By speculating on what he would have to do if he wants to smoke, Fanon describes his body as ready for action. The feeling of desire, in this case the desire to smoke, leads the body to reach toward "the other end of the table" in order to grasp an object. The body moves, and moves toward objects, in order to perform such actions. Such a performance is an orientation toward the future, insofar as the action is also the expression of a wish or intention. As Fanon suggests, bodies do this work, or they have this capacity to work, only given the familiarity of the world they inhabit: to put it simply, they know where to find things. "Doing things" depends not so much on intrinsic capacity or even on dispositions or habits, but on the ways in which the world is available as a space for action, a space where things "have a certain place" or are

"in place." Bodies inhabit space by how they reach for objects, just as objects in turn extend what we can reach. We do not have to think where to find such objects; our knowledge is implicit and we reach toward them without hesitation. Losing things, for this reason, can lead to moments of existential crisis: we expect to find "it" there, as an expectation that directs an action, and if "it" is not there, we might even worry that we are losing our minds along with our possessions. Objects extend bodies, certainly, but they also seem to measure the competence of bodies and their capacity to "find their way."

And yet, Fanon implies that this scene is far from casual. Although he might find the cigarettes, and the matches, he does not simply happen upon them. This example is not really about a happening. It follows, after all, an extraordinary claim. The claim takes the form of an argument with phenomenology. As Fanon further states: "Below the corporeal schema I had sketched out a historic-racial schema. The elements that I used had been provided for me not by 'residual sensations and perceptions primarily of a tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, and visual character,' but by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (111).[1]

In other words, Fanon is suggesting that attending to the corporeal schema is not sufficient as it is not made up of the right kind of elements. Where phenomenology attends to the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, and visual character of embodied reality, Fanon asks us to think of the "historic-racial" scheme, which is, importantly, "below it." In other words, the racial and historical dimensions are beneath the surface of the body described by phenomenology, which becomes, by virtue of its own orientation, a way of thinking the body that has surface appeal.

For the black man, Fanon implies, we have to look beyond the surface. We can return for a moment to Fanon's account of what he would do if he wanted to smoke. We should note that Fanon's own example, despite its speculative mode, is describing a successful action. Later on, Fanon describes the lived experience of being the object of the hostile white gaze (the child that exclaims, "Look, a Negro"). The shift from one example to another involves a shift from an active body, which extends itself through objects, to one that is negated or "stopped" in its tracks. He writes: "I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all *historicity*, which I had learnt about from Jaspers. Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, *its place taken by the racial epidermal schema*" (112; second emphasis is mine, see also Weate 2001). Clearly, then, Fanon's example of what he would do if he wanted to smoke, which is an example of being orientated toward an object, is a description of a body-at-home in its world, a body that extends into space through how it reaches toward objects that are already "in place." Being in place, or having a place, involves the intimacy of coinhabiting spaces with other things. We could even say Fanon's example shows the body *before* it is racialized or made black by becoming the object of the hostile white gaze. It is this kind of orientation that racism makes impossible. For Fanon, racism "stops" black bodies inhabiting space by extending through objects and others; the familiarity of "the white world," as a world we know implicitly, "disorients" black bodies such that they cease to know where to find things—reduced as they are to things among things. Racism ensures that the black gaze returns to the black body, which is not a loving return but rather follows the line of the hostile white gaze. The disorientation affected by racism diminishes capacities for action.

For Fanon, racism "interrupts" the corporeal schema. Or we could say that "the corporeal schema" is already racialized; in other words, race does not just interrupt such a schema but structures its mode of operation. The corporeal schema is of a "body at home." If the world is made white, then the body at home is one that can inhabit whiteness. As Fanon's work shows, after all, bodies are shaped by histories of colonialism, which makes the world "white" as a world that is inherited or already given. This is the familiar world, the world of whiteness, as a world we know implicitly. Colonialism makes the world "white," which is of course a world "ready" for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach. Bodies remember such histories, even when we forget them. Such histories, we might say, surface on the body, or even shape how bodies surface (see Ahmed 2004a). In a way, then, race does become a social as well as bodily given, or what we *receive* from others as an inheritance of this history.

In this chapter I want to reflect on such processes of racialization. I want to consider racism as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they "take up" space. Such forms of orientation are crucial to how bodies inhabit space, and to the racialization of bodily as well as social space. In formulating my argument, I follow from the work of Frantz Fanon as well as the philosophers who have sought to offer a "phenomenology of race," such as David Macey (1999), Linda Martín Alcoff (1999),

and Lewis R. Gordon (1995, 1999).[2] Within this literature, a starting point is the refutation of nominalism and the idea that race does not exist or is not real. Such philosophers would certainly accept that race is "invented" by science *as if it were* a property of bodies, or of groups, and would hence participate in a critique of the reification of race. But they also show that it does not follow from such a critique that race does not exist. Phenomenology helps us to show how race is an effect of racialization, and to investigate how the invention of race as if it were "in" bodies shapes what bodies "can do."

In order to address my concern with how racism operates through orientation I begin with an analysis of the spatial formations of orientalism and the ways in which geographic space is *phenomenal or orientated*. My point here is to show how "proximity" and "distance" come to be lived by being associated with specific bodies as well as places. I will then examine how whiteness is reproduced in domestic and public spaces by first considering ways in which we inherit the proximities that allow white bodies to extend their reach, and then considering how such inheritances shape those who do not or cannot "possess" such whiteness. My task is also to describe the effects of racism on bodies that are identified as "not white," or as even being "not quite" white. More specifically, I examine how mixed orientations might allow us to reinvestigate the "alignments" between body, place, nation, and world that allow racial lines to be given. The "matter" of race is very much about embodied reality; seeing oneself or being seen as white or black or mixed does affect what one "can do," or even where one can go, which can be redescribed in terms of *what is and is not within reach*. If we begin to consider what is affective about the "unreachable," we might even begin the task of making "race" a rather queer matter.

Orientalism and Phenomenal Space

We can recall the different meanings of the word "orient." The word refers us not just to space or to directionality, but also takes us in a specific direction. The word can mean: to place so as to face the east; to place in any definite position with reference to the points of the compass or other points; to adjust in relation to new circumstances or surroundings; to turn a map so that the direction on the map is parallel the direction on the ground; to turn toward the east or in specified direction. The range of these meanings is instructive. It shows us how the concept of orientation "points" toward some directions more than others, even as it evokes the general logic of "directionality": "toward the east *or* a specified direction." We could even say that the east becomes the direction that does not need to be specified, insofar as the east would be the direction we face unless we face another direction. In other words, even if orientations allow us to establish which direction we face, the concept "points" us in one direction more than others: it "points" toward "the east." It is time for us to consider the significance of "the orient" in orientation, or even "the oriental": what relates to, or is characteristic of the Orient *or* East, including "natives" or inhabitants of the East.

It is not incidental that the word "orientate" refers both to the practices of finding one's way, by establishing one's direction (according to the axes of north, south, east, and west) and to the east itself as one direction privileged over others. We must remember in pointing to this non-incidentality that the etymology of the word "orientation" is from "the Orient" and, indeed, the East as "the horizon" over which the sun rises. Everyone, one might say, has an east; it is on the horizon, a visible line that marks the beginning of a new day. There are multiple horizons depending on one's point of view. There might be what is east of you, but also the east side of the city where you live, or the eastern side of the country. But somebody's "east" becomes "the East," as one side of the globe. The cartographic imperative to make maps as technologies for navigation shows how normalization involves the normalization not only of certain kinds of bodies, but also specific directions: "What is east (of me/us)" becomes "the East" by taking some points of view as given. In other words, it is drawing the line (the prime meridian) in one location, through Greenwich, that "east" becomes "the East," as if the East were a property of certain places and people. Cartographic space is, of course, "flat space" that conventionally describes locations as determined by axes of coordination that are independent of one's bodily location. Cartographic space, as the space we have inherited from Euclidean geometry, would not from this point of view be directed or orientated. But it would not be a radical—or new—claim to say that such "flatness" is itself "orientated," in the sense that it still depends upon a point of view, as a point that is lost on the horizon, or that is concealed in the very mode of its operation (see Lefebvre 1991). To orientate oneself by facing a direction is to participate in a longer history in which certain "directions" are "given to" certain places: they become *the* East, *the* West, and so on.

Edward Said, after all, reminds us that geographies are "man-made" (1978:

5). If we turn to Said's classic *Orientalism* we can begin to trace the significance of the "making" of geographical distinctions and how they relate to the directedness or intentionality of phenomenal space. As Said suggests, the Orient does not simply refer to a specific place, even if we can find it on the map. As he notes, "The Orient was almost a European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1).[3] The Orient is the "not Europe" through which the boundaries between Europe and what is "not Europe" are established as a way of "locating" a distinction between self and other (Chuh and Shimakawa 2001: 7). As the "constitutive outside" of the Occident, the Orient allows what is "inside" to become given. Most important, the making of "the Orient" is an exercise of power: the Orient is made oriental as a submission to the authority of the Occident. To become oriental is both to be given an orientation and to be shaped by the orientation of that gift.

The Orient is not an empty place; it is full, and it is full of all that which is "not Europe" or not Occidental, and which in its "not-ness" seems to point to another way of being in the world—to a world of romance, sexuality, and sensuality. In a way, orientalism involves the transformation of "farness" as a spatial marker of distance into a property of people and places. "They" embody what is far away. Thus "farness" takes the direction of a wish, or even follows the line of a wish. The "far" often slides into the exotic, after all. The exotic is not only where we are not, but it is also future orientated, as a place we long for and might yet inhabit. As feminist postcolonial scholars have shown us, the Orient is sexualized, although how it is sexualized involves the contingency of "the who" that encounters it (see Yegenoglu 1998; Lewis 1996, 2004). The Orient is not only full of signs of desire in how it is represented and "known" within the West (for example, through the image of the harem), it is also desired by the West, as having things that "the West" itself is assumed to be lacking. This fantasy of lack, of what is "not here," shapes the desire for what is "there," such that "there" becomes visible on the horizon as "supplying" what is lacking. The Orient becomes what we could call a "supply point." Lines of desire take us in a certain direction, after all. Desire directs bodies toward its object; in desire, we face the desired and seek to get closer. Desire confirms that which we are not (the object of desire), while it pushes us toward that "not," which appears as an object on the horizon, at the edge of our gaze, always getting closer even when it is not quite here. If the Orient is desired, it is both far away and also that which the Occident wishes to bring closer, as a wish that points to the future or even *to a future occupation*. The directness toward this other reminds us that desire involves a political economy in the sense that it is distributed: the desire to possess, and to occupy, constitutes others not only as objects of desire, but also as resources for world making.

From the example of orientalism we can begin to formulate a distinction in the very "orientation" of "orientation." The distinction I want to suggest here is between "toward" and "around." We say that we are orientated *toward* something. In such a saying, the thing we are orientated toward is what we face, or what is available to us within our field of vision. What we are orientated toward is determined by our location; it is a question of the phenomenality of space. Husserl, we would remember, in his very concern with consciousness, is orientated toward his writing table, even if that table ceases to "matter" as a specific kind of thing. We are orientated, then, toward objects, and those objects are "other" than us. They are other than us and must be so if they are to be available within our field of vision. As Edward Casey puts it, "To orient, after all, is to orientate to something *other than* that which does the orientating itself" (1997: 234). "Towardness" is a mode of directionality; it is about the direction I face when facing an other, as a direction that can refer to motion and position. If the direction is about the position I take toward something, then I am still facing that thing: it is in front of me insofar as it has my attention. One faces where one is not, but a "not" that is reachable or available from where I am, and indeed in being so always reflects back or shows where one is located.[4]

It is the fact that what I am orientated toward is "not me" that allows me to do this or to do that. The otherness of things is what allows me to do things "with" them. What is other than me is also what allows me to extend the reach of my body. Rather than othering being simply a form of negation, it can also be described *as a form of extension*. The body extends its reach by taking in that which is "not" it, where the "not" involves the acquisition of new capacities and directions—becoming, in other words, "not" simply what I am "not" but what I can "have" and "do." The "not me" is incorporated into the body, extending its reach.

So what, then, does it mean to be orientated *around* something. I do not want to make too fine a distinction here or imply that such a distinction will always hold. And yet the "around" might return us to the question of how

bodies "cohere." To be orientated around something is not so much to take up that thing, as to be taken up by something, such that one might even become what it is that is "around." To be orientated around something means to make that thing central, or as being at the center of one's being or action. I might be orientated *around* writing, for instance, which will orientate me *toward* certain kinds of objects (the pen, the table, the keyboard). Indeed, "around" refers us to "round" and suggests a circling movement. Perhaps to be orientated around something is what allows us to "hold the center," or even to constitute ourselves as at the center of other things. Insofar as we are at the center of things, then we not only face those things, but those things face us. In other words, to be orientated around something is to make "that thing" binding, or to constitute oneself as that thing.[5]

Let us return to the example of orientalism. The Orient here would be the object toward which we are directed, as an object of desire. By being directed toward the Orient, we are orientated "around" the Occident. Or, to be more precise, *the Occident coheres as that which we are organized around through the very direction of our gaze toward the Orient*. Going back to the table, we would say that the philosopher's gaze is orientated toward the table (even when the table recedes into the background), as an orientation that "reveals" what the philosopher is orientated around: namely, the labor of writing and the discipline of philosophy. Perhaps in the cartographic imagination the Orient is the table, the "matter" out of which knowledge is made and toward which attention is directed. The Orient provides the object, as well as the instrument, that allows the Occident to take shape, to become a subject, as that which "we" are around. The Occident would be what we are orientated around. Or we could even say that "the world" comes to be seen as orientated "around" the Occident, through the very orientation of the gaze toward the Orient, the East, as the exotic other that can just be seen on the horizon.

Of course, the fact that we can see the Orient on the horizon emphasizes that the Orient is reachable, or indeed that despite its "farness" it has already been reached. Said's model shows us that the Orient is both strange and familiar, or even that orientalism makes the stranger familiar. As he states, "as early as Aeschylus's play *The Persians*, the Orient is transformed from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar" (1978: 21). Another way of considering this process would be to think of the politics of domestication: the other is reachable, as it has already been "brought home." The reachability of the other, whether the Orient or other others, does not mean that they become "like me/us." Rather they are brought closer to home, but the action of "bringing" is what sustains the difference: the subject, who is orientated toward the object, is the one who apparently does the work, whose agency is "behind" the action. If we rethink domestic space as an effect of the histories of domestication, we can begin to understand how "the home" depends on the appropriation of matter as a way of making what is not already here familiar or reachable. In other words, the familiar is "extended" by differentiating itself from the strange, by making what seems strange "just about" familiar, or by transforming "what is strange" into an instrument. One might wonder, foolishly perhaps, whether Husserl's table was oriental—if the Orient provided the style or even the matter.

The Orient is reachable, after all. It is already on the horizon; it has already been perceived *as* the Orient. The Orient is not only reachable, but "it" has already been reached if "it" is to be available as an object of perception in the first place. We might assume that we reach for what comes into view. But, as I argued in chapter 1, what is reachable is determined precisely by orientations that have already been taken and that have been repeated over time. If history in some sense is about the reachable (as things must be reached to "enter" the records), then history can also be described as a process of domestication—of *making some objects and not others available as what we "can" reach*. The object function of the Orient, then, is not simply a sign of the presence of the West—of where it "finds its way"—but also a measure how the West has "directed" its time, energy, and resources.

Acts of domestication are not private; they involve the shaping of collective bodies, which allows some objects and not others to be within reach. After all, if the direction toward objects such as the Orient is shared, then the West as well as the Orient takes shape as an effect of this repetition of the "orientation toward." Indeed, we can begin here to rethink how groups are formed out of shared direction. To put this in simple terms, a "we" emerges as an effect of a shared direction toward an object.

So we might say, for example, that the nation "faces this" or "faces that"; or we might even say "the whole world was watching." In a way this is a nontruth, as the nation (let alone the world) is not available as somebody that can have a face. And yet, at another level, it speaks a certain truth: it is through the repetition of a shared direction that collectives are made. Take, for example,

the following quote from Hegel: "India as *Land of Desire* forms an essential element in General History. From the ancient time downwards, *all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to the treasures of this land of marvels*" (Hegel cited in Prashard 2000: 1; emphasis added). Here the "direction" of the social wish is for access, and this "direction" also makes others accessible. I would reformulate this point as follows: it is not that nations have simply directed their wishes and longings toward the Orient but rather that the nation "coheres" an effect of the repetition of this direction.

What Hegel's model shows us is that such repetition is not innocent but strategic: the direction of such wishes and longings makes others available as resources to be used, as the materials out of which collectives might "write" themselves into existence. Orientalism is, after all, an archive or a field of writing: the Orient might be both what that writing is "about" and also provide the materials upon which that writing is written. Archives are made up of paper and other things that "matter," and they take "form" insofar as they are intended for action. And we can recall here, following Derrida, that archives are "homes," ways of gathering material, around which worlds gather: "It is thus, in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they reside permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public" (1995: 2; see also Blunt 2005). If archives allow documents to dwell, then they, too, are orientation devices, which in gathering things around are not neutral but directive.

We could even say that Orientalism involves a form of "world facing"; that is, a way of gathering things around so they "face" a certain direction. By thinking of orientalism as a form of world facing, I want to suggest that orientalism also involves phenomenal space: it is a matter of how bodies inhabit spaces through shared orientations. As I suggested in chapter 2, collectives such as the family as well as the nation involve shared orientations toward and around objects. The collective would be an effect of the repetition of this direction over time, a repetition that coheres "around" certain bodies and that creates the very effect of bodily coherence. Freud argues, for example, that the bond within a group relies on the transference of love to the leader, whereby the transference becomes the "common quality" of the group (1922: 66). It is not just "the leader" who can be the object of transference. If a shared act of transference is what creates "the common quality," then in a way "what" or "who" is the object does not matter: it is the fact that transference is directed toward "the same object" (real or imagined) that produces the effect of a group. Groups are formed through their shared orientation toward an object. Of course, a paradox is already evident here in that to have "something" that can be recognized as "the same object" is an effect of the repetition of the orientation toward "it," just as the orientation seems directed toward the object that exists "before" us. In a way, "what" is faced by a collective is also what brings it into existence. As such, the object "in front" of the "we" might be better described as "behind" it, as what allows the "we" to emerge.

We can redescribe this process in terms of the sociality of lines, which I discussed in the introduction to this book. Collectives come to have "lines" in the sense of being modes of following: to inhabit a collective might be to follow a line, as a line that is already given in advance. Lines also mark out boundaries, which clear spaces as well as delimit them by marking their edges. Such lines would establish who is and is not in a given collective: the spatial function of lines marks the edges of belonging, even when they allow bodies through. We can also think about lines as an effect of how energy, time, and resources are "directed" toward an object. Such lines are both worldly and social; they are not only accumulations of points, but also of modes of following. It might be the very act of attention—of attending to or facing this or that direction, or toward this or that object—that produces "a sense" of a collective or social group.

We might consider, for instance, Benedict Anderson's model of the nation as imagined community, in which he stresses the significance of the emergence of print capitalism (1991). Anderson's argument shows us how shared orientations can be produced without physical copresence: the circulation of print is what creates common lines or even ties that bind. When citizens read a given paper, they are not necessarily reading the same thing (there are different copies of the paper, and while some might read certain pages, those pages might be overlooked by others), let alone reading the same thing in the same way. Yet the very act of reading means that citizens are directing their attention toward a shared object, even if they have a different view upon that object, or even if that object brings different worlds into view. So we might face the same direction. We could even say our faces "face" the same way, creating a collective force. Yet, it is not that the collective has a face, in the sense of a personality and agency. The collective takes shape through the repetition of the act of "facing." The direction of one's attention puts one in line with others, as a line

that depends on how objects move around, which in turn creates horizontal lines of communication. Michael Warner considers the role of attention in his analysis of publics and counterpublics. As he notes, "The direction of our glance can constitute our social world" (2005: 89).[6] For Warner, directing one's attention to a shared object is enough to create the public, which then exists by virtue of being addressed.

The lines that bind are also ones that are created by the movement of the objects that circulate as common goods. Public culture then gets generated *around* certain terms as well as objects. Returning to orientalism, we can see that lines are created by the very "routes" of circulation of oriental texts, which is what renders orientalism a social field with its own edges. As I suggested in the previous chapter, a field can be defined as an open or cleared ground. By directing attention toward the Orient, by facing "it" through the very objects that circulate as if they "have it," the ground is then cleared for action.

How does this help us retheorize the "orientation" of orientalism? To direct one's gaze and attention toward the other, as an object of desire, is not indifferent, neutral, or casual: we can redescribe "towardness" as energetic. In being directed toward others, one acts, or is committed to specific actions, which point toward the future. When bodies share an object of desire, one could say they have an "affinity" or they are going in "the same direction." Furthermore, the affinity of such bodies involves identification: in being directed *toward* a shared object, as a direction that is repeated over time, they are also orientated *around* a shared object. So, for instance, in being directed toward the oriental object or other, they may be orientated around "the West," as what the world coheres around. Orientalism, in other words, would involve not just making imaginary distinctions between the West and the Orient, but would also shape how bodies cohere, by facing the same direction. Objects become objects only as an effect of the repetition of this tending "toward" them, which produces the subject as that which the world is "around." The orient is then "orientated;" it is reachable as an object given how the world takes shape "around" certain bodies.

Reproducing Whiteness

My analysis of orientalism suggests that spaces become racialized by how they are directed or orientated, as a direction that follows a specific line of desire. It shows us how the Orient is not only imagined as "being" distant, as another side of the globe, but also is "brought home" or domesticated as "something" that extends the reach of the West. I now want to turn to the spatialization of race by considering how "homes" and families become racialized in the very "direction" they take. As David Theo Goldberg puts it: "Just as spatial distinctions like 'West' and 'East' are racialized in their conception and application, so racial categories have been variously spatialized more or less since their inception" (1993: 185). The alignment of race and space is crucial to how they materialize as givens, as if each "extends" the other. In other words, while "the other side of the world" is associated with "racial otherness," racial others become associated with the "other side of the world." They come to *embody distance*. This embodiment of distance is what makes whiteness "proximate," as the "starting point" for orientation. Whiteness becomes what is "here," a line from which the world unfolds, which also makes what is "there" on "the other side."

We can consider how whiteness takes shape through orientations toward others. Whiteness may even be orientated "around" itself, whereby the "itself" only emerges as an effect of the "around." As many have argued, whiteness is invisible and unmarked, as the absent center against which others appear only as deviants or as lines of deviation (Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993). When I refer to whiteness, I am talking precisely about the production of whiteness as a straight line rather than whiteness as a characteristic of bodies. Indeed, we can talk of how whiteness is "attributed" to bodies *as if* it were a property of bodies; one way of describing this process is to describe whiteness as a straightening device. We can ask how whiteness gets reproduced through acts of alignment, which are forgotten when we receive its line.

We can do this by thinking about whiteness as form of bodily inheritance. It should, of course, be difficult to think of race and inheritance together, partly because the concept of inheritance has been so central to biological models of race, where racial hierarchy is seen as a natural product of a difference in kind. In this model, race would be about reproduction: race would be a series of attributes that are reproduced through sexual reproduction and that are passed down through generations as the gift of its line. Alys Weinbaum (2004: 5) calls this the "race/reproduction" bind, where "sexual reproduction" and "species reproduction" are conflated. It might be useful to detach these terms, including reproduction, inheritance, and generation, from the history of such binds.

We can return, then, to the question of straight lines. In one model, race

would follow the vertical line of the conventional family tree. Genealogy itself could be understood as a straightening device, which creates the illusion of descent as a line. As Sarah Franklin suggests, "For Darwin, life itself is vertically propriocentric: its progressive orientation is always in forward gear, and its ontological constitution as a force or principle of animate vitality is always composed through descent lines, criss-crossed at the point of reproduction" (2000: 218). The point that lines meet is the "point" of reproduction. As feminist anthropologists have shown us, reproduction involves not only the reproduction of life itself, but also of the very "attributes" that are seen to pass along the line (see Franklin and Ragone 1997; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995). It is in this moment of "passing" that the familial and the racial become aligned. In the family tree, the line of descent is crossed by other lines, which together form the family line or the "genealogical grid" (Povinelli 2002). This family line establishes what we could call a racial line, which "directs" reproduction toward the continuation of that line. Such a direction means that the family line coheres "around" a racial group, which becomes a boundary line: to marry someone of a different race is to marry "out."

It is hence no accident that race has been understood through familial metaphors in the sense that "races" come to be seen as having "shared ancestry" (Fenton 2003: 2). Race in this model "extends" the family form; other members of the race are "like a family," just as the family is defined in racial terms. The analogy works powerfully to produce a particular version of race *and* a particular version of family predicated on "likeness," where likeness becomes a matter of "shared attributes." The primary trace of a familial connection is, after all, resemblance: we assume that resemblance is a sign of a connection—in whatever way that connection is described or explained. So we might say, "She looks like her sister," "She has her father's nose," and so on: the desire for likeness imagines bodies as having the same features, as if the gift of life is the giving of an attribute. The desire for connection generates likeness, at the same time that likeness is read as the sign of connection. As Steve Fenton states, "People or places do not just possess cultures of shared ancestry; they elaborate these into the idea of a community founded upon these attributes" (2003: 3). We can make an even stronger claim: it is the idea of community as "being in common" that generates "shared attributes," which are then *retrospectively* taken up as evidence of community.

Our task is not only to think about the generation of attributes, but also to reconsider the politics of sharing. While sharing is often described as participation in something (we share this or that thing, or we have this or that thing in common), and even as the joy of taking part, sharing also involves division, or the ownership of *parts*. To have a share in something is to be invested in the value of that thing. The word itself, we might note, comes from the Old English word *scearu*, which refers to cutting or division. So the word "share," which seems to point to commonality, depends on both cutting and on division, where things are cut up and distributed among others. If we share in the family, and the family is an effect of sharing, then the family comes to be shared only by dividing between those who have shares in it. So the gift of life is often a gift of parts, which are unevenly distributed (the child has my nose, or your mouth, and so on). Otherwise, the family would become a cloning device: the clone is a social pathology insofar as it inherits too much; it inherits everything such that it ceases to be a new thing. The clone hence threatens the very demand for individuality, which after all refers to that which "cannot be divided." There is a connection between the demand for individuality and the concept of generation not only in the sense that the individual is generated as something new, but also in the sense that the generation becomes perceived as "like" an individual, as the sum of its parts. A new generation is created given the partiality of its inheritance from past generations. In light of this, while reproduction is "reproductive" it depends on moments of deviation, where what deviates does not take us off line but creates instead "small differences" that approximate the qualities that are assumed to pass along the line.

In everyday talk about such family connections, likeness is a sign of inheritance: *to look like a family is to "look alike."* I want to suggest another way of thinking about the relationship between inheritance and likeness: we inherit proximities (and hence orientations) as our point of entry into a familial space, as "a part" of a new generation. Such an inheritance in turn generates "likeness." This argument builds upon my claim in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004a), where I suggest that likeness is an *effect* of proximity or contact, which is then "taken up" as a sign of inheritance. I would also argue here that likeness is an effect of proximity rather than its cause, with the additional claim that we inherit proximities—although this is an inheritance that can be refused and that does not fully determine a course of action. To suggest that we inherit proximities is also to point to how that past that is "behind" our arrival restricts as well as enables human action: if we are shaped by "what" we come into

contact with, then we are also shaped by what we inherit, which delimits the objects that we might come into contact with.

My task is not to dismiss the discourse of "family resemblance," but to offer a different account of its powerful function as a legislative device. A saying that has always intrigued me is "like two peas in a pod." To be like two peas in a pod is to be alike. Anyone who has shelled peas knows that peas are not all alike and that seeing them as being alike is already to overlook some important differences. But it is the pod and not the peas that interests me here. This saying suggests for me that likeness is as an effect of *the proximity of shared residence*. This is not just an argument about nurture over nature (that the pod is a nurturing device), as this way of thinking relies on an overly simple logic of causality (the pod causes the peas). Rather, the very proximity of pea to pea, as well the intimacy of the dwelling that surrounds them like a skin, shapes the very form of the peas. Likeness is thus not "in" the peas, let alone "in" the pod, but rather is an effect of their contiguity, of how they are touched by each other and envelop each other. Or if we say that the peas "share" the pod, then we can immediately see how the "pod" does not simply generate what is "shared" in the sense of what is in common, but also what gets divided or distributed into parts. Rather than thinking about the question of inheritance in terms of nature versus nurture, or biology versus culture, we would be thinking in terms of contingency or contact (touch); things are shaped by their proximity to other things, whereby this proximity itself is inherited in the sense that it is the condition of our arrival into the world. Biological as well as social processes involve the drama and contingency of such proximities.

In the case of race, we would say that bodies come to be seen as "alike"—for instance, "sharing whiteness" as a "characteristic," as an effect of such proximities, where certain "things" are already "in place." The familial is thus in a way like the "pod," a shared space of dwelling in which things emerge. "The familial" is, after all, about "the familiar": this is the world we implicitly know as a world that is organized in specific ways. It is the world Fanon speaks of when he describes the "implicit knowledge" we might have of "where things are," as a knowledge that is exercised by orientations toward objects. Objects are familiar, for sure, but familiarity is also about our capacity to use objects and how they are within reach as objects we do things with. To think of this implicit knowledge as inherited is to think about how we inherit a relation to place and to placement: at home, "things" are not only done a certain way, but the domestic "puts things" in their place. "The family" itself becomes what we implicitly know, as well as what surrounds us, a dwelling place.

We might even say that we "inherit" the family as a form, as an inheritance that is shaped through intergenerational work: the "nuclear family" only appears as a "fetish," available in its "sensuous certainty," when we forget this history of work that allows the family form to be given (see chapter 1). Not only do we inherit "things" down the line of the family (the "assets" that might be passed on from parents to children), but we also inherit the family as a line that is given. Such a line can also be described as the family line: after all, one's arrival is already narrated as another line that extends the line of the family tree. When given this line we are asked to follow the line, which we can redescribe as the social "pressure" for reproduction, which "presses" the surface of bodies in specific ways. To inherit whiteness is to become invested in the line of whiteness: it is both to participate in it and to transform the body into a "part" of it, as if each body is another "point" that accumulates to extend the line. Whiteness becomes a social inheritance; in receiving whiteness as a gift, white bodies—or those bodies that can be recognized as white bodies—come to "possess" whiteness *as if it were a shared attribute*.

Inheritance can be understood as both bodily and historical; we inherit what we receive as the condition of our arrival into the world, as an arrival that leaves and makes an impression. It is useful to recall that inheritance is crucial to the Marxist conception of history. For Marx, although we "make history" this making is shaped by inheritance: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please in circumstances they choose for themselves; rather they make it in a present given and inherited from the past" (1996: 32).[7] If the conditions in which we live are inherited from the past, then they are "passed down" not only in blood or in genes, *but also through the work or labor of generations*. The "passing" of history is a social as well as a material way of organizing the world that shapes the materials out of which life is made as well as the very "matter" of bodies.[8] If history is made "out of" what is passed down, as the conditions in which we live, then history is made out of what is given not only in the sense of that which is "always already" there, *before our own arrival*, but in the active sense of the gift: history is a gift given that, when given, is received. I want to suggest that inheritance can be rethought in terms of what we receive from others, as our "point of arrival" into the familial and social order. Reception is not about choice, although neither is it simply pas-

sive. Indeed, the word inheritance includes two meanings: to receive and to possess. In a way, we convert what we receive into possessions, a conversion that often "hides" the conditions of having received, as if the possession is too simply "already there." So we receive material possessions, or other kinds of objects, such as a shared belief or even a shared love for the ego ideal of the family, which reproduces the family as that which we wish to reproduce (see chapter 2).

Such an inheritance can be rethought in terms of orientations: *we inherit the reachability of some objects*, those that are "given" to us or at least are made available to us within the family home. I am not suggesting here that "whiteness" is one such "reachable object" but rather that whiteness is an orientation that puts certain things within reach. By objects, we would include not just physical objects, but also styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, even worlds. In putting certain things in reach, a world acquires it shape; the white world is a world orientated "around" whiteness. This world, too, is "inherited" as a dwelling: it is a world shaped by colonial histories, which affect not simply how maps are drawn, but the kinds of orientations we have toward objects and others. Race becomes, in this model, a question of what is within reach, what is available to perceive and to do "things" with.

Returning to orientalism, for example, we can see how making "the strange" familiar, or the "distant" proximate, is what allows "the West" to extend its reach. Orientalism, too, gathers objects around. It also differentiates between objects: between those that are near and far, familiar and strange, even if this differentiation simultaneously makes the far near and the strange familiar. Such differentiation takes shape as a matter of direction. At a simple level, we could say that we tend toward that which is near, just as what is near shows our tendencies. Paul Schilder suggests that proximity and distance are crucial to the permeability of bodily space. Bodies that are "distant" are less likely to be incorporated into the body image (1950: 235–36). Or we might say that the distant is also incorporated (becoming part of our bodily horizon), as an incorporation that places "them" at the edge of our skin: "distance" is also an effect of an orientation we have already taken, which makes what is "near" closer to us in more than a spatial sense. If we inherit proximities rather than attributes, then we also inherit "who" can and cannot be "brought home." This means that we also inherit forms of bodily and social distance: those that are "at home" (they must be near enough), but who are marked as "further" away even in the face of this proximity. As Husserl reminds us, within the realm of the reachable, we can differentiate near things from far things, where the latter are "up to the outermost border of the horizon" (2002: 150) and are often experienced as "coming closer."

We can consider here how orientations are reproduced through the very ways in which "others" are available as objects for love. To bring a lover home, for instance, is to show one's parents one's choice of a love object. It is to wait for social approval, which when given repays the debt to the parent. As I discussed in the previous chapter, heterosexuality as a field, as a background of action, delimits who is available for love. Such delimitation is not simply about the reproduction of heterosexuality (the requirement that we bring home the "other sex"), but also the reproduction of culture as a "shared attribute" through the very demand that heterosexual love returns to the family in the sense of reflecting back its image (the requirement that we bring home the "same race"). The demand is that such love is directed back toward the family by producing "offspring" that can inherit its form by having a "good likeness," as a likeness, in other words, *that gets read as a family possession*. It is interesting to observe, for instance, that when a child is born who is unexpectedly dark, a story often emerges to account for that darkness, as if to protect the family line from the stain of its color: a story that we can describe as the familial investment in the "black sheep" as the one who "stands apart." While some points of deviation might be necessary for the continuation of a line, other points threaten that line by not receiving the "qualities" that are assumed to pass along it. The black sheep and other family deviants could even be considered to offer an alternative line of descent: indeed, the family deviant gets easily read as a stranger, or even a foreigner, whose proximity threatens the family line. Of course, such proximity is also "required," as it is what allows the line to be defended. One way of defending the line is to make the deviant "an end point."[9] A mixed and queer genealogy might even unfold from such points.

We can see that compulsory heterosexuality is the ground for the reproduction of such normative whiteness (see Stokes 2001). The prohibition of miscegenation and homosexuality belong, as it were, in the same register, although the relation between such prohibitions is complex and contingent (Somerville 2005: 336). This register takes the form of family love, expressed as the demand to return such love through how one loves: in other words, the

love that you receive, narrated as the gift of life, converts quickly into a pressure to continue the "good lines" of the family. At home a white body might be barred from access to nonwhite bodies given the "reachability" of such bodies: a prohibition only makes sense when something can be reached. Such a prohibition is organized by the fantasy that white bodies must be sexually orientated toward white bodies in order to maintain their whiteness. Too much proximity with others, we might say, could threaten the reproduction of whiteness as a bodily or social attribute. The existence of such a threat is required to enforce proximity as an ethical duty: we defend that which is at risk. In this way, whiteness is sustained as a demand to return to a line, where the return takes the form of a defense. It is not that whiteness simply exists as a possession, but that it becomes a possession through this demand to return, which takes the form of *a defense against an imagined loss of a future line.*[10]

This is not to say that the "returns" of whiteness require that white bodies are orientated toward white bodies. Not only is the whiteness of the white body endangered by some of the proximities it inherits, but some forms of proximity with bodies that are marked by difference are permitted: proximity to such others can even "confirm" the whiteness of the body. "Others" might then become resources for extending the reach of the white body—that is, they may function as "orientation devices." In some fantasies of interracial intimacy, the white body becomes all the more white in its very orientation *toward* racial others as objects of desire. In her work, bell hooks (1992) examines how the white body's desire for racial others is a technology for the reproduction of whiteness, which she describes as "eating the other." If the white body "eats" such others, or takes them in, then it does not lose itself: the white body acquires color through such acts of incorporation; it gets reproduced by becoming other than itself. To *become* black through proximity to others is *not* to *be* black; it is to be "not black" by the very extension of the body toward blackness. Becoming confirms nonbeing through how it extends the very surface of being toward that which is not it.[11] As an orientation toward others, whiteness gets reproduced even in the moment it acquires some color.

Another way of describing the reproduction of whiteness would be to consider whiteness as a politics of return. Whiteness becomes a form of currency, which gives a return through being returned. Elisabeth Spelman suggests that whiteness is an investment "both in the archaic sense of a garment or outer layer and in the sense of something that promises return" (1999: 214). Whiteness involves both political and affective economies: it is distributed between bodies and things without itself being something, as a distribution that gives bodies and things "affect" and "value." The more whiteness circulates, the greater the return, or the more points accumulate along its line.

Habit Spaces

I have suggested that whiteness is a social and bodily orientation that extends what is within reach. Fanon, as noted earlier, talks about the "white world" and how it feels to inhabit a white world with a black body. We might say, then, that the world extends the form of some bodies more than others, and such bodies in turn feel at home in this world. We can now consider how whiteness is worldly, by rethinking the intimacy between habits and space. We might be used to thinking of bodies as "having" habits, usually bad ones. We could even describe whiteness as a bad habit: as a series of actions that are repeated, forgotten, and that allow some bodies to take up space by restricting the mobility of others. I want to explore here how public spaces take shape through the habitual actions of bodies, such that the contours of space could be described as habitual. I turn to the concept of habits to theorize not so much how bodies acquire their shape, but how spaces acquire the shape of the bodies that "inhabit" them. We could think about the "habit" in the "inhabit."

We need to examine not only how bodies become white, or fail to do so, but also how spaces can take on the very "qualities" that are given to such bodies. In a way, we can think about the habitual as a form of inheritance. It is not so much that we inherit habits, although we can do so: rather the habitual can be thought of as a bodily and spatial form of inheritance.[12] In this book I have argued that bodies are shaped by what they tend toward, and that the repetition of that "tending toward" produces certain tendencies. We can redescribe this process in the following terms: the repetition of the tending *toward* is what identity "coheres" *around* (= tendencies). We do not, then, inherit our tendencies; instead, we *acquire* our tendencies from what we inherit.

In the previous chapter I discussed heterosexuality as a form of RSI. I now want to discuss whiteness as a bad habit. As Bourdieu (1977) shows us in his model of *habitus* (drawn at least in part from Husserl's earlier work), we can link habits to what is unconscious and routine, or what becomes "second nature."[13] To describe whiteness as a habit, as second nature, is to suggest that

whiteness is what bodies do, where the body takes the shape of the action. Such habits are not "exterior" to bodies, as things can be "put on" or "taken off." If habits are about what bodies do, in ways that are repeated, then they might also shape what bodies *can do*. When Deleuze (1992: 627) suggests that we do not yet know what the body can do, he certainly has a point. And yet, as I suggested in chapter 1, bodies also take the shape of what they "do do," where the "do do" does not simply keep the future open, but also *restricts possibilities for action in the present*.

The word "habits" refers to dispositions, and tendencies, acquired by the frequent repetition of an act. I have already discussed the paradoxical temporality of tendencies: they are produced as an effect of the repetition of "tending toward" at the same time as they come to shape what bodies tend toward (if I am a writer, I "tend toward" the writing table, and yet I only become a writer by virtue of the repetition of this "tending toward"). We can now rethink the concept of "habit" to rearticulate this paradox by reflecting on Merleau-Ponty's model of the habitual body. For Merleau-Ponty, the habitual body is a body that acts in the world, where actions bring other things near. As he states: "My body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task. And indeed its spatiality is not, like that of external objects or like that of "spatial sensations," a *spatiality of position*, but a *spatiality of situation*. If I stand in front of my desk and lean on it with both hands, only my hands are stressed and the whole of the body trails behind them like the tail of a comet. It is not that I am unaware of the whereabouts of my shoulder or back, but these are simply swallowed up in the position of my hands, and my whole posture can be read so to speak in the pressure they exert on the table (2002: 114–15)."

Again, we come back to the table. Here, the directedness of the body toward an action (which we have discovered also means an orientation toward certain kinds of objects) is how the body "appears."[14] The body is "habitual" not only in the sense that it performs actions repeatedly, but also in the sense that when it performs such actions *it does not command attention*, apart from at the "surface" where it "encounters" an external object (such as the hands that lean on the desk or table, which feel the "stress" of the action). In other words, the body is habitual insofar as it "trails behind" in the performing of an action; insofar as it does not pose "a problem" or an obstacle to the action, or it is not "stressed" by "what" the action encounters. The postural body for Merleau-Ponty is the habitual body: the body that "does not get in the way of an action," which is, as it were, *behind the action*.

Race might be understood as a matter of the "behind." As Linda Alcoff suggests, race constitutes the "necessary background from which I know myself" (1999: 20). In other words, race becomes given insofar as it does not have our attention. If race is behind what we do, then it is what we do. We can explore the relation between what is behind social action and the promise of social mobility. Merleau-Ponty uses as his example objects that enable bodies to extend their motility, such as "the blind man's stick."[15] When the stick is incorporated into the body, then it becomes part of the habitual: "The blind man's stick has ceased to be an object for him, and is no longer perceived for itself" (2002: 165). We must note here that the extension of motility through objects means that the object is no longer perceived as something apart from the body. The object, as with the rest of the body, trails behind the action, even when it is literally "in front" of the body. When I am writing I might not then notice the pen, even if it is before me, as it has to be, for me to write. When something becomes part of the habitual, it ceases to be an object of perception: it is simply put to work. Such objects are incorporated into the body, extending the motility of the body, or extending what is within reach: "The position of things is immediately given through the extent of the reach which carries him to it, which comprises besides the arm's own reach the stick's range of action. If I want to get used to a stick, I try it by touching a few things with it, and eventually I have it 'well in hand,' *I can see what things are within reach or out of reach of my stick*" (2002: 166, emphasis added). Habits, in other words, do not just involve the repetition of "tending toward," but also involve the incorporation of that which is "tended toward" into the body. These objects extend the body by extending what it can reach. Reachability is hence an effect of the habitual, in the sense that what is reachable depends on what bodies "take in" as objects that extend their bodily motility, becoming like a second skin.

As I suggested in the above section on the topic of orientalism, "othering" can be redescribed as a form of extension, which extends bodily reach through acts of incorporation. Such processes of othering can now be described as habitual. Objects that we "tend toward" become habitual insofar as they are taken into the body, reshaping its surface. As Merleau-Ponty describes, "Habit expresses our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our exis-

tence by appropriating fresh instruments" (2002: 166). The process of incorporation is certainly about what is familiar, but it is also a relationship to the familiar. The familiar is that which is "at home," but also how the body feels at home in the world: "Once the stick has become *a familiar instrument*, the world of feelable things recedes and now begins, not at the outer skin of the hand, but at the end of the stick" (176). When bodies are orientated toward objects, those objects may cease to be apprehended as objects, and instead become extensions of bodily skin.

We can thus establish a link between such forms of bodily appropriation and the extension of body motility. White bodies are habitual insofar as they "trail behind" actions: they do not get "stressed" in their encounters with objects or others, as their whiteness "goes unnoticed." Whiteness lags behind such bodies. White bodies do not have to face their whiteness; they are not orientated "toward" it, and this "not" is what allows whiteness to cohere, as that which bodies are orientated around. By not having to encounter being white as an obstacle, given that whiteness is "in line" with what is already given, bodies that pass as white move easily, and this motility is extended by what they move toward. The white body in this way expands; objects, tools, instruments, and even "others" allow that body to inhabit space by extending that body and what it can reach. Whiteness becomes habitual in the sense that white bodies extend their reach by incorporating objects that are within reach. To make this point simply: what is "within reach" also "extends the reach" of such bodies.

It is hence possible to talk about the whiteness of space given the very accumulation of such "points" of extension. Spaces acquire the "skin" of the bodies that inhabit them. What is important to note here is that it is not just bodies that acquire their tendencies. As I argued in chapter 1, spaces and tools also take shape by being orientated around some bodies more than others. We can also consider "institutions" as orientation devices, which take the shape of "what" resides within them. After all, institutions provide collective or public spaces. When we describe an institution as "being" white, we are pointing to how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather and cohere to form the edges of such spaces. When I walk into academic meetings that is just what I encounter. Sometimes I get used to it. At one conference I helped to organize, four black feminists all happened to walk into the room at the same time. We notice such arrivals. The fact that we notice such arrivals tells us more about what is already in place than it does about "the who" that arrives. Someone says: "It's like walking into a sea of whiteness." This phrase comes up and it hangs in the air like an object waiting to fall. The speech act becomes an object, which gathers us around.

So, these black feminists walk into the room and I notice that they were not there before, as a retrospective reoccupation of a space that I already inhabited. I look around and reencounter the sea of whiteness. Whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it, or for those who get so used to its inhabitance that they learn not to see it, even when they are not it. As Nirmal Puwar notes in *Space Invaders*, white bodies are somatic norms that make nonwhite bodies feel "out of place," like strangers, within certain spaces (2004: 8; see also Ahmed 2000: 38–54). Of course, spaces are orientated "around" whiteness, which means whiteness is not "what" we are orientated "toward." We do not face whiteness; it "trails behind" bodies as what is assumed to be given. The effect of this "around whiteness" is the institutionalization of a certain "likeness," which makes nonwhite bodies uncomfortable and feel exposed, visible, and different when they take up this space.

The institutionalization of whiteness involves work: the institution comes to have a body as an effect of this work. It is important that we do not reify institutions by presuming they are simply given and that they decide what we do. Rather, institutions become given as an effect of the repetition of decisions made over time, which shapes the surface of institutional spaces. Institutions involve lines, which are the accumulation of past decisions about "how" to allocate resources, as well as "who" to recruit. Recruitment functions as a technology for the reproduction of whiteness. We can recall that Althusser's model of ideology is based on recruitment: "Ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey you there'" (1971: 163).

As I suggested in the introduction to this book, the subject is recruited by turning around, which immediately associates recruitment with following a direction, as the direction that takes the line of an address. To recruit can suggest both to renew and restore. The act of recruitment, of bringing new

bodies in, restores the body of the institution, which depends on gathering bodies to cohere as a body. Becoming a "part" of an institution, which we can consider as the demand to share in it, or even have a share of it, hence requires not only that we inhabit its buildings, but also that we follow its line: we might start by saying "we"; by mourning its failures and rejoicing in its successes; by reading the documents that circulate within it, creating lines of communication; and by the chance encounters we have with those who share its grounds. Even when we are involved in critique, complaint, and opposition, or when we say "no" rather than "yes," we keep "it" at the center of attention, which aligns us with "it" and with others who share that alignment. To be recruited is not only to join but to sign up to a specific institution: to inhabit it *by turning around as a return of its address.*

Furthermore, recruitment creates the very ego ideal of the institution, what it imagines as the ideal that working "at" the institution means working toward, or even what it imagines expresses its "character."[16] When we begin to think about the institutionalization of whiteness, we are asking how whiteness becomes the ego ideal of an organization.[17] As scholars in critical management studies have shown us, organizations "tend to recruit in their own image" (Singh 2002). The "hey you" is not just addressed to anybody: some bodies more than others are recruited, those who can inherit the "character" of the organization by returning its image with a reflection that reflects back that image, providing what we could call a "good likeness." It is not just that there is a desire for whiteness that leads to white bodies getting in; rather, whiteness is what the institution is orientated "around," so that even bodies that might not appear white still have to inhabit "whiteness" if they are to get "in."

Institutions also involve orientation devices that keep things in place. The affect of such placement could be described as a form of comfort. To be orientated, or to be at home in the world, is also to feel a certain comfort: we might only notice comfort as an affect when we lose it—when we become uncomfortable. The word "comfort" suggests well-being and satisfaction, but it also suggests an ease and an easiness. Comfort is about an encounter between more than one body, which is the promise of a "sinking" feeling. 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 in the act of fitting, the surfaces of bodies disappear from view. White bodies are comfortable *as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape.* The bodies and spaces "point" toward each other, as a "point" that is not seen as it is also "the point" from which we see.

In other words, whiteness may function as a form of public comfort *by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape.* Those spaces are lived as being comfortable as they allow bodies to fit in; the surfaces of social space are already impressed upon by the shape of such bodies. We can think of the chair beside the table. It might acquire its shape by the repetition of some bodies inhabiting it: we can almost see the shape of bodies as "impressions" on the surface. So spaces extend bodies and bodies extend spaces; the impressions acquired by surfaces function as traces of such extensions. The surfaces of social as well as bodily space "record" the repetition of acts, and the "passing by" of some and not others.

It can be problematic to describe whiteness as something we "pass through": such an argument could make whiteness into something substantive, as if whiteness has an ontological force of its own that compels us and even "drives" action. We might, in other words, reify the very category we wish to critique. It is important to remember that whiteness is not reducible to white skin or even to "something" we can have or be, even if we pass through whiteness. When we refer to a "sea of whiteness" or to "white space" we are talking about the repetition of the passing by of some bodies and not others. And yet, nonwhite bodies do inhabit white spaces. Such bodies are made invisible when we see spaces as being white, at the same time that they become hypervisible when they do not pass, which means they "stand out" and "stand apart" like the black sheep in the family. You learn to fade into the background, but sometimes you cannot. The moments when the body appears "out of place" are moments of political and personal trouble. As Puwar shows us, when bodies arrive that seem "out of place," it involves *disorientation*: people blink and then look again. The proximity of such bodies makes familiar spaces seem strange: "People are 'thrown' because a whole world view is jolted" (2004: 43). Such proximity has, in other words, a queer effect: things are no longer "in line." Or, as Roderick Ferguson suggests, the presence of minorities and racialized others has an "eccentric" effect, given that such bodies are placed outside the logic of normative whiteness (2004: 26; see also Muñoz 2000: 68).[18] When bodies "arrive" that don't extend the lines already extended by spaces, then those spaces might even appear "slantwise" or oblique.

Bodies stand out when they are out of place. Such standing reconfirms the

whiteness of the space. Whiteness is an effect of what coheres rather than the origin of coherence. The effect of repetition is not, then, simply about a body count: it is not simply a matter of how many bodies are "in." Rather, what is repeated is the very style of embodiment, a way of inhabiting space, which claims space *by the accumulation of gestures of "sinking" into that space.* If whiteness allows bodies to move with comfort through space, and to inhabit the world as if it were home, then those bodies take up more space. Such physical motility becomes the ground for social mobility. This extension of white motility should not be confused with freedom. To move easily is not to move freely, and it is still a way of constraining what bodies do "do." Bodies that are not restricted by racism, or by other technologies used to ensure that space is given to some rather than others, are bodies that don't have to come up against the limitations of this fantasy of motility. Such bodies are both shaped by motility, *and they may even take the shape of that motility.*

It is here that we can begin to complicate the relationship between motility and institutional lines. Some bodies, even those that pass as white, might still be "out of line" with the institutions they inhabit. After all, institutions are meeting points, and they are also where different "lines" intersect and where lines cross with other lines to create and divide spaces. We can recall here the importance of "intersectionality" to black feminist theory. Given that relationships of power "intersect," how we inhabit a given category depends on how we inhabit others (Lorde 1984: 114–23; Brewer 1993; Collins 1998; Smith 1998). There are "points" in such intersections, as the "points" where lines meet. A body is such a meeting point. To follow one line (say whiteness) will not necessarily get you too many points if one does not or cannot follow others. How one moves along institutional lines is affected by the other lines that one follows.

This is why even bodies that "appear" with a white surface, or a surface that has perhaps only a little color, still have to pass in order to pass into white space: the white body must also be a respectable and clean body. Such a body is therefore also middle class and straight: it is a body that is "in line" with the "lines" that accumulate as signs of history to become institutional givens. So a white body that deviates from the straight line, one might speculate, would perhaps find it more "stressful" to pass along other institutional lines. At the same time, bodies that pass as white, even if they are queer or have other points of deviation, still have access to what follows from certain lines; being white as a queer would still make some things reachable that would not be reachable for those of us who are of color. What happens in these "points" of intersection—whether we are knocked off course if we do not follow a given line—might not be determined before we arrive at that point, and might also depend on what else is "behind" us.

In a way, whiteness itself is a straightening device: bodies disappear into the "sea of whiteness" when they "line up" with the vertical and horizontal lines of social reproduction, which allows bodies to extend their reach. Bodies might even "move up" if they line up, which requires leaving one's body behind, which is more possible for some than for others. The relationship between mobility and privilege involves not just movement "across" (systems of cultural transportation and transmission), but also movement "upward": it is no accident that discourses of social gain are always imagined in terms of "going up," while social loss is imagined as a "downward turn." So in lining up the body also moves up. We can think here of vertical and horizontal forms of segregation in the labor market: the way in which bodies are distributed involves hierarchy. Within and between different institutions some bodies are overrepresented in the spaces that are "above" and others in the spaces "below." In a way, if whiteness becomes what is "above," then whiteness is what allows some bodies to move "upward." This is not to make "the fit" between bodies and spaces "natural": white bodies "line up" with the vertical and horizontal lines that divide institutional spaces only if they can follow the lines that they inherit. Such following requires passing; to pass we have to follow the line of whiteness.

To say that all bodies have to pass is not to neutralize the difference between bodies: whiteness is also a matter of what is behind bodies: their genealogy, which allows them to enter different spaces and worlds. *We accumulate "behinds," just as what is "behind" is an effect of past accumulations.* Some of us have more behind us than others at the very moment in which we arrive into the world. This is another way of describing how social class involves the temporality of "the background," as what shapes the conditions of arrival: if you inherit class privilege, then you have more resources "behind" you, which can be converted into capital that can "propel" you forward and up. Becoming white as an institutional line is closely related to the vertical promise of class mobility: you can move up only by approximating the habitus of the white

bourgeois body (see Skeggs 2003).[19] Moving "up" requires inhabiting such a body, or at least approximating its style, while your capacity to inhabit such a body depends upon what is behind you. Pointing to this loop between the "behind" and the "up" is another way of describing how hierarchies are reproduced over time. Of course, reproduction does fail. Bodies move up that do not have so much behind them, which requires the stress of "passing" along specific lines. What you have behind you does not always "decide" the lines you follow, even when it shapes what you do.

We could say that bodies "move up" when their whiteness is not in dispute. And yet, whiteness does not always lag behind in the temporality of a life course. When someone's whiteness is in dispute they come under "stress," which in turn threatens bodily motility or what the body "can do." We could consider, for instance, how Husserl's phenomenology seems to involve an ease of movement, of being able to occupy the space around the table. Perhaps we could also see this mobile body as one that "can do" things in terms of whiteness. This is not, however, to locate such whiteness *in* the body of the philosopher. Here Husserl's biography might be of help. For when Husserl's whiteness came into dispute, when he was read as being Jewish, he actually lost his chair, and with it, temporarily, the public recognition of his place as a philosopher.[20] It is no accident that such recognition is symbolically given through an item of furniture: to take up space is to be given an object, which allows the body to be occupied in a certain way. The philosopher must have his seat, after all. So if we say that phenomenology is about whiteness, in the sense that it has been written from this "point of view," then what phenomenology describes is not so much white bodies, but the ways in which bodies come to feel at home in spaces by being orientated in this way and that, where such bodies are not "points" of stress or what we can call stress points.

We can hence redescribe the phenomenology of the "I can" as a phenomenology of whiteness. Such a phenomenology, in other words, *describes the ease with which the white body extends itself in the world through how it is orientated toward objects and others*. To make this point very simply: whiteness becomes a social and bodily orientation given that some bodies will be more at home in a world that is orientated around whiteness. If we began instead with disorientation, *with the body that loses its chair*, then the descriptions we offer will be quite different.[21]

We could take as an alternative Fanon's work, which by beginning with the experiences of a black man in a white world begins with the loss of orientation, as the body becomes an object alongside others. The experience is one of nausea, and the crisis of losing one's place in the world, as a loss of something that one has yet to be given. For the black man, consciousness of the body is "third person consciousness" and the feeling is one of negation (1986: 110). To feel negated is to feel pressure upon one's bodily surface, where the body feels the pressure point as a restriction in what it can do. As Lewis Gordon suggests in his critique of Hegel, "White people are universal, it is said and Black people are not" (1999: 34). If to be human is to be white, then to be not white is to inhabit the negative: it is to be "not." The pressure of this "not" is another way of describing the social and existential realities of racism.

If Merleau-Ponty's model of the body in *Phenomenology of Perception* is about "motility," expressed in the hopefulness of the utterance, "I can," Fanon's phenomenology of the black body could be described in terms of the bodily and social experience of restriction, uncertainty, and blockage, or perhaps even in terms of the despair of the utterance "I cannot." The black man in becoming an object no longer acts or extends himself; instead, he is amputated and loses his body (Fanon 1986: 112). In a way, Merleau-Ponty describes the body as "successful," as being "able" to extend itself (through objects) in order to act on and in the world. Fanon helps us to expose this "success" not as a measure of competence but as the bodily form of privilege: the ability to move through the world without losing one's way. To be black or not white in "the white world" is to turn back toward oneself, to become an object, which means not only not being extended by the contours of the world, but being diminished as an effect of the bodily extensions of others.

For bodies that are not extended by the skin of the social, bodily movement is not so easy. Such bodies are stopped, where the stopping is an action that creates its own impressions. Who are you? Why are you here? What are you doing? Each question, when asked, is a kind of *stopping device*: you are stopped by being asked the question, just as asking the question requires you to be stopped. A phenomenology of "being stopped" might take us in a different direction than one that begins with motility, with a body that "can do" by flowing into space.

To stop involves many meanings: to cease, to end, and also to cut off, to arrest, to check, to prevent, to block, to obstruct, or to close. Black activism has shown us how policing involves a differential economy of stopping: some bodies more than others are "stopped" by being the subject of the policeman's address. The "hey you" is not here addressed to the body that can inherit the

ego ideal of an organization, or who can be recruited to follow a given line, but to the body that cannot be recruited, to the body that is "out of place" in this place. In other words, the "unrecruitable" body must still be "recruited" into this place, in part through the very repetition of the action of "being stopped" as a mode of address. The "stop and search" is a technology of racism, as we know too well. The stop and search does not always end at that point: the search itself can be extended by practices of indefinite detention. Stopping is therefore a political economy that is distributed unevenly between others, and it is also an affective economy that leaves its impressions, affecting the bodies that are subject to its address.

How does it feel to be stopped? Being stopped is not only stressful, but also makes the "body" itself the "site" of social stress. Let me use a recent personal example of being stopped:

> I arrive in New York, clutching my British passport. I hand it over. The airport official looks at me, and then looks at my passport. I know what questions will follow. "Where are you from?" My passport indicates my place of birth. "Britain," I say. I feel like adding, "Can't you read. I was born in Salford," but I stop myself. He looks down at my passport, not at me. "Where is your father from?" It was the same last time I arrived in New York. It is the question I get asked now, which seems to locate what is suspect not in my body but as that which has been passed down the family line, almost like a bad inheritance. "Pakistan," I say, slowly. He asks, "Do you have a Pakistani passport?" "No," I say. Eventually, he lets me through. The name "Ahmed," a Muslim name, slows me down. It blocks my passage, even if only temporarily. I get stuck, and then move on. When I fly out of New York later that week, I am held up again. This time it is a friendlier encounter. I find out I am now on the "no fly list," and they have to ring to get permission to let me through. It takes time, of course. "Don't worry," the officer says, "my mother is on it too." I feel some strange comradeship with his mother. I know what he is saying: he means "anyone" could be on this list, almost as if to say "even my mother," whose innocence of course would be beyond doubt. I know it is a way of saying, "It's not about you. Don't take it personally." It isn't about me, of course. And yet it involves me. My name names me after all. It might not be personal but neither is it about "anyone." It is my name that slows me down.

For some, the "passport" is an object that extends motility and allows them to pass through borders. For others, such "passports" do not work in this way. Instead, the document turns the gaze onto its owner as a suspicious body—even a "could be terrorist" (see Ahmed 2004a). Movement for some involves blocking movement for others.[22] If the nationality of the passport does not seem to follow the line of the name, and such judgments exercise histories of normative thinking, then the body is suspect. We can see here that the experience of being "held up" is not simply a delay or postponement followed by starting up or moving on. Rather, "being held up" shifts one's orientation; it turns one's attention back to the oneself, as one's body does not "trail behind" but catches you out.

In the encounter I describe above I become a stranger again, made strange by the name I have been given. In everyday language, a "stranger" would be someone we do not know. When we don't recognize people, then they are strangers. In *Strange Encounters*, I offer an alternative model that suggests we recognize some people *as* strangers, and that "some bodies" more than others are recognizable as strangers, as bodies that are "out of place" (Ahmed 2000). If we go back to Husserl's first volume of *Ideas* we see that he includes "strangers" as well as "friends" as part of the world of values and practicalities, as the world I implicitly know or that is already given to me, "irrespective of my turning or not turning to consider them or indeed any other objects" (1969: 103). Of course, this might simply mean that we know that "other people" (including those whom we don't know) exist in the world "alongside" us, so that we are hardly surprised when they pass by. The inclusion of the stranger within the field of practical knowledge might also make a stronger point: that we know the stranger, that the stranger is part of the familiar world, that the stranger is already "at home" and is familiar in its "strangerness." The stranger has a place by being "out of place" at home. The technologies for telling the difference between friends and strangers suggest that this distinction is not only practical but is transformed into an ethics, whereby the proximity of the stranger is seen to risk the very "life" of the family/community and nation. Such proximity is required to institute the right to defense.

Not all those at the borders, such as tourists, migrants, or foreign nationals, are recognized as strangers; some will seem more "at home" than others, someone will pass through with their passports extending physical motility into social mobility. There is no question posed about their origin. The stranger's genealogy is always suspect. The stranger becomes a stranger because of some *trace* of a dubious origin. Having the "right" passport makes no difference if you have the wrong body or name: and, indeed, the stranger with the

"right" passport might cause particular trouble as the one who risks passing through, or passing by. The discourse of "stranger danger" reminds us that "danger" is often posited as originating from what is outside the community, or as coming from outsiders, those people who are not "at home" and who themselves have come from "somewhere elsewhere" (the "where" of this "elsewhere" always makes a difference). Strangers always get asked the question, "Where are you from?" and if this question does not lead to an answer that explains what is suspicious, then they are asked where their parents are from, or even asked questions that go further "back" until "the what" that is suspicious is revealed. While the stranger may not be "at home," the stranger only becomes a stranger by coming too close to home. The politics of mobility, of who gets to move with ease across the lines that divide spaces, can be redescribed as the politics of who gets to be at home and who gets to extend their bodies into inhabitable spaces, as spaces that are inhabitable as they extend the surfaces of such bodies.

Those who get stopped are, perhaps, *moved in a different way*. I have suggested that my name slows me down. A Muslim name. We might note that the name itself becomes a "bad inheritance." Names are passed down, we know, in different ways. I was given my father's name, as a name that extends the paternal line. But it is also a name that connects me to my Pakistani side. We can see from this example that if we do inherit habits we can also inherit what fails to become habitual: to inherit a Muslim name in the West is to inherit the impossibility of a body that can "trail behind," or even to inherit the impossibility of extending the body's reach. For the body recognized as "could be Muslim" the experience begins with discomfort: spaces we occupy do not "extend" the surfaces of our bodies. But our actions anticipate more. Having been singled out in the line, at the borders, we become defensive and thus assume a defensive posture as we "wait" for the line of racism to take our rights of passage away. *If we inherit the failure of things to be habitual, then we might also acquire a tendency to look behind us.*

Mixed Orientations

Beginning with the lived experiences of those who fail to inherit whiteness returns us to the question of arrival, as we face what is behind us. We turn around, we go back. If racial differences are an effect of how bodies gather in the present, we must still ask what is "behind" the gatherings. A phenomenology that can account for racial differences, then, would return us to the temporality of "the background" (see chapter 1): to how one's racial dwelling is shaped by the conditions of one's arrival. To offer such a phenomenology might require that we begin with a "mixed genealogy." Such a genealogy would be mixed, as it would attend to how things do not stay apart from other things; a mixed genealogy is one that gets "away" from the lines of conventional genealogy. One way of offering a mixed genealogy would be to start from the multiple horizons of the mixed-race body. This is not to say that only mixed-race bodies have mixed genealogies, or that there are bodies that are pure or "not mixed." Rather, it is to suggest that describing the experiential world that unfolds for those whose parents have different racial "backgrounds"—who arrive from different worlds and are imagined as coming from "different sides" (an imaging that has real and material effects on the way things are arranged)—might help us to show how genealogy itself is mixed. When genealogy straightens up, when it establishes its line, we have simply lost sight of this mix.

When considering mixed genealogies, we need to reflect on the different histories of racialization that already read the mixed body by bringing that body into line. As Naomi Zack's (1993) important work on the philosophy of mixed "raceness" shows us, the mixed-race body does not historically exist: if someone has a nonwhite ancestor, then they are not mixed but black. Under this logic it is impossible to inherit more than one racial line: one is either white or not white. As Zack describes, the racial scheme "logically precludes the possibility of mixedrace because cases of mixedrace, in which individuals have both black and white forebears, are automatically designated as cases of black race" (5). Increasingly, mixed raceness has become a category under its own right, though how that category has become legible depends on different national contexts.[23] In the United Kingdom, the most recent census was marked by a proliferation of mixed-race categories, although the "common denominator" is "white." To be mixed one must be white "plus" something other where the "something other" varies but always provides some sort of "color."

We need to pay attention to the ways in which the mixed-race body increasingly enters public culture as a spectacle. There are two common ways in which the mixed-race body is imagined. In the first, the mixed-race body is

idealized as the new hybridity: as the meeting point between races, which creates a line between them (see Ahmed 2004a: 136–37). Such "races" are already spatialized and are even identifiable as two "sides," as we know from the discourses of orientalism. It is almost as if the "mixed-race" child becomes a meeting point between two sides of the globe. As many have observed, such a discourse preserves the presumption that racial purity is originary (see Ifekwunigwe 2004: 2). The origin of the hybrid would then be the mixing of pure lines. Furthermore, this version also underestimates the unfinished social anxiety about interracial mixing; the mixed-race body becomes a site of pleasure, or a good object that supports the fantasy of "multiculturalism" as a "cultural mix," only when it is cut off from signs of interracial sexual intimacy (see Wiegman 2002: 873). An older version of the "place" of the mixed-race body is less celebratory and would see that body in terms of the logic of the double negative: as "not" being white, or black, and as being haunted by all that it is not. This second version of mixed raceness sustains a belief that entry into a pure identity is the only way of securing a place in the world. The mixed-race subject would be doomed to a life of depression in such a worldview. In the first version, a mixed-race child inherits both lines or even both sides of its genealogy and brings them together. In the second version, the mixed-race child does not inherit either line and has "nothing" to follow.

For me, the failure of inheritance does not mean that we have nothing to follow, but rather it can open up worlds by providing a different angle on "what" is inherited. I remember the affects of being mixed, as an affective experience of being between my parents and yet not quite reaching both sides.

> I walk between you. Both of you are connected with me. I walk between you but I want to be on one side. I close my eyes and wish he would disappear. How would I appear without him? Would I be white like my mother? I feel guilt at my murderous fantasy, but the thought of her white body made me tremble with hope. Maybe I would seem like her, if only he would go away.

What does it mean to "not be white" by inhabiting a mixed-race body "at home"?[24] My point of entry here is my own experiences of "being-at-home" with a white mother and a brown father, and hence having "at home" a visible display of interracial intimacy. If we consider that family ties are most often confirmed through signs of resemblance, then it becomes interesting to ask how such ties are established in the case of mixed-race families. Is it the case that the hybrid body of the child remains "seen" as being "like" both parents, in the sense of an approximation of the parents? Approximation would exercise a fantasy of "betweenness." Does the mixed-race child's inheritance take the form of an approximate body, as a body that looks "as if" it could be the child of a black parent and a white parent, insofar as it mixes their colors? How does the idealization of the white body affect the mixed-race child? Or does the "mixed family" become posited as a social ideal?

I want to suggest here that the mixed family is not easily incorporated as a social ideal, precisely because the two sides do not necessarily create a new line. In my experience of having a white English mother and a Pakistani father, my early points of identification were with my mother and were bound up with whiteness and the desire to be seen as white and as "part" of a white community (see Ahmed 1997). This desire can be rearticulated as the desire to "share" whiteness or even to have a share "in it." Of course, such an image of whiteness was fantastic. The fantasy becomes binding as an effect of the identification. When I remember walking down the street between my parents, *I did not always feel between them.* I felt on one side more than the other. I wanted to be on the side of my mother; indeed, my desire *put me on her side.* This was not a moment of gender identification in the sense that it was not about wanting to be a girl. Rather, it was about wanting to be seen as white and not have the father present, insofar as "his body" threatened my desire for whiteness. I remember thinking that if my father were not there I might be able to look white. Such disidentification involves the desire to give up proximity to that which is given through the background. I remember wishing he would disappear so I could be by my mother's side, on her side, with her. What does it mean to want to be white by being orientated in this way?

The relationship between identification—wanting to be "like"—and alliance formation—who one sides with—is crucial. For me, a question that remains to be asked is: How does what I take to be "mine" make "me" in relation to "you"? I have already considered how families are about taking sides and how this demand "to side" requires putting other things aside. One of the questions that interests me here is how certain directions, as relations of proximity or nearness, become forms of social and political allegiance. The family requires us to "take sides," to give allegiance to its form by taking up a side, which is "its side." When we consider orientalism as a case of world making,

which creates two sides and aligns them with bodies, then we can show how "siding" matters. To take my mother's side was also to "side" with whiteness and thus to make what was "brown" be on the "other side."

Wanting to be white for the mixed-race child is about the lived experience of not being white even when whiteness is "at home." For the mixed-race child, whose inheritance seems to cross the line of conventional genealogy, the desire for whiteness, as a desire that confirms its "unreachability," is expressed as a murderous rage against part of one's inheritance or genealogy. In my own body memory, that wish for disappearance took the form of a desire to give up my proximity to my father's body: my desire to walk *at a distance from him*. His body even came to embody distance *for me*. In this desire, it is the proximity of such distance that is seen as a bad inheritance; such a proximity is what "explains" an inability to reach whiteness. One has already failed the ideal that one wishes to approximate because of what is at home.

And yet the ideal is also "at home," even if it can't be reached; it seems to be embodied by the body of the mother, whose body also promises care and protection. The desire to be white for a mixed race child is melancholic; it involves a murderous impulse turned against oneself, as the body that has received an inheritance that it does not wish to possess. This desire to be with the white mother, to be like her by being by her side, does not put whiteness within reach. It is not a successful action, which allows the body to extend its reach, but rather it turns the body back toward itself as the object that the action is orientated toward. The mixed-race body here does not "lag behind" but instead becomes the object of attention: the body is not white enough and does not look "as if" it follows a white line of descent. If the mixed-race body wishes to be white (in the sense of being orientated "around" whiteness), it is also orientated *toward* whiteness as the object of desire. The "towardness" makes the "aroundness" impossible, and it blocks the action by bringing the white body to the surface. Mixed raceness becomes, in this dynamic, about a failed inheritance, or even a failed orientation, where the body inhabits a category that does not extend its reach.

But when orientations fail, something happens. Things move. The double negative (which of course is not lived as a double, if your desires align you with one side rather than another) does not necessarily lead to depression. It can make other impressions. For not being white can also reorientate your relation to whiteness even if the "not" might at first generate a negative impression. Failed orientations, when bodies inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape, means that something happens other than the reproduction of matter.

Here I can return to my own experience of arrival. As we know, it is not just bodies that arrive. Objects also arrive; they become reachable only if their arrival coincides with our arrival, or even extends our arrival. For me, the daughter of a white English mother and a Pakistani father, who was born in England and who was brought up in a white neighborhood in a city in Australia, whiteness was certainly "at home," even if I did not possess it. We could say that whiteness was part of my background, and not just in the background. Whiteness also moved around, gathering as parts without a whole: from the very matter of my mother's skin, to objects, spaces, and imagined nations, as "points" that "point" to multiple horizons. As Katherine Tyler suggests, for an "interracial genealogical imagination" inheritance itself involves different substances and processes, or different signs of relatedness, when we move "across the colour-lines" (2005: 491–92).

So whiteness was around me in the neighborhood in which I lived, but it also pointed to an "elsewhere," to the "there" that was England. England was certainly within my horizon, and it was there, insofar as I did not live there. Objects pointed me there. My mother's body was a proximate whiteness, and her proximity meant other objects were available: the Christmas cards from England with white snow; English names and friends; the body memories of cold white days; the grandparents, aunt, and cousins with their white faces and red hair. What objects gather, in our homes? We should take care to remember how such objects arrive. Whiteness is not in these objects, as a form of positive residence; rather, it is an effect of how they gather, to create an edge or even a wall "in" which we dwell. For me, if the things that gathered were "around" whiteness, then they also pointed me to England, to somewhere that I did not quite inhabit, a point beyond my dwelling and yet also a point within that dwelling. Objects also have their own horizons: worlds from which they emerge, and which surround them. The horizon is about how objects surface, how they emerge, which shapes their surface and the direction they face, or what direction we face, when we face them. So if we follow such objects, we enter different worlds.

As I discussed in chapter 2, most of the objects in my family home were gifts that my parent's received for their wedding, or gifts given when we left England for Australia. I remember a fondue set, for some reason, maybe

because it sat in the center of the sideboard. I remember the dining table, which I think was brought over from England; dark and polished, it was reserved for "special occasions." I remember photos taken, happy family scenes that conceal so much from view. Most of the gifts were from the family left behind in England. At least that was the story. My Pakistani family, it was said, could not accept their son marrying a white English girl, so we did not receive anything from them, at least not until my sister was born (reproduction is often binding, or is the occasion for family reconciliation). They say my mother's family was more accepting. I think this was probably because she was marrying "up" as well as "out," a nurse marrying a doctor. The vertical promise of class mobility matters here.

And later, my father brought more things back from Pakistan. Rugs, I remember: Persian carpets, beautifully handwoven, covered over the beige carpet underneath. Oriental rugs. White spaces are shaped by the very domestication of such objects. It feels different, I suspect, if objects arrive as "foreign" or "familial" objects, or "strange" and "familiar" ones, where this strangeness or familiarity is not a property of such objects, but a matter of how we come into contact with them.

At the same time, most homes involve what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) has called a "contact zone," a space of contact between cultures that is also where bodies encounter other bodies (see also Ballantyne and Burton 2005). The contact between objects puts more than objects near, insofar as objects reside or dwell within cultures as embodiments of their history, and even take the shape of this dwelling. Such contact may be asymmetrical and yet it affects both "sides," creating cultural forms that are not simply one or the other. It is important here that we don't consider "cultures" as objects that are already given and that come into contact to create a hybrid from the mixture of pure forms. Rather, "cultures" come to be lived as having a certain shape, or even a skin, as an effect of such contact. If we recall my argument that we inherit proximities (that is, we inherit "what" is available to come into contact "with"), then we can see that the story of cultural contact also involves the reproduction of culture: contact is ongoing but is "restricted" by the very restriction of what it is that we come into contact with. Such restrictions are not imposed from the outside but are an effect of orientations already taken, which means we follow some lines and not others. This is not to say that such restrictions are always legislative: after all, queer happens precisely when such legislation fails, when bodies meet that would be kept apart if we followed the lines given to us. What we need to avoid is the presumption that "contact" itself provides a common ground; or if we share this ground, then we are also divided, both by what we "do" and "do not" come into contact with.

Some forms of cultural contact are crucial to the reproduction of cultural identity, and even to the "apartness" of specific bodies. We can return here to the domestication of the Orient. I was struck by Diana Fuss's description of the interior of Freud's office—that it was adorned with oriental carpets as well as Egyptian urns, including the urn that would hold Freud's own ashes as his final dwelling place (2004: 89–105). Fuss quotes from the American poet H.D.'s reflections on her experience of Freud's office: "Today, lying on the famous psychoanalytic couch, . . . wherever my fantasies may take me now, I have a center, security, aim. I am centralized or reoriented here in this mysterious lion's den or Aladdin's cave of treasures" (2004: 89). The proximity of such objects are orientation devices, which bring the Orient home by providing a dwelling that secures the place of a body. The orient becomes an "oriental interior" (Fuss 2004: 90). The couch, which is surrounded by such exotic or even foreign objects, from "other" times (antiquities) and other places (oriental), becomes the point from which the world of psychoanalysis unfolds. As I argued in my discussion on orientalism, such contact might involve histories of appropriation, even if that appropriation speaks the language of love, curiosity, and care. The agency of specific bodies is "behind" such gatherings: the bodies of collectors, travelers, explorers. The arrival of such objects is a matter of their acquisition (we might speculate about the gifts, thefts, purchases, and payments). Of course, having arriving there, as objects that adorn the interior of Freud's room, the objects themselves are cut off from the history of past arrivals and of dwelling places that are not simply reachable through the objects being placed within reach. Having arrived, though, we still don't know what the objects will do, or what we will do with them. Appropriations are violent, and they can also create the background in which other things do happen.

Diasporic spaces are also shaped by object histories. The gathering of objects at home takes a different form; objects scatter "along with" the scattering of bodies into spaces, as a scattering that makes an impression. When bodies and objects resurface they acquire new shapes. For diasporic communities, objects gather as lines of connection to spaces that are lived as homes but are

no longer inhabited. Objects come to embody such lost homes. As Divya Tolia-Kelly describes in her work on British Asian homes, this "refraction of connection to past places, stories and genealogies through material cultures collectively signifies the absence of other people, places and environments" (2004: 322). As her work shows, it is crucial that we do not assume that such objects simply take us "back" toward a past that is no longer. The proximity of objects is not a sign of nostalgia, of being sick for a home that is lost. Rather, as Tolia-Kelly suggests, such objects make new identities possible in the "textures" of the everyday. Or we could say that such objects keep the "impressions" of the past alive, and in so doing they make new impressions in the very weave or fabric of the present. By being placed alongside other objects acquired in the space of residence (home as "where one is") a hybridity of the home is created. Such a hybridity is premised not on the "reach" of a certain body, one that is "behind" the gathering of objects in time and space (bringing what is strange "home"), but on the comings and goings of different bodies as they remake homes in what at first might feel like rather strange worlds.

Mixed-race homes also gather objects around, as objects that emerge from different worlds and seem to face different directions. They may be experienced as somewhere "between" the diasporic home and the orientalist home: the contact with objects resides at some "point" between strange and familiar, as both within and without the familial. Objects that gather come from different sides: from one side the same object may be encountered as strange, and from the other side encountered as familiar. Given that sides are not simply available as points of view, this makes the "object" itself as a hybrid mixture of strange and familiar at any moment of time. At the same time, of course, such differences in forms of cultural contact, which I have described in terms of orientalist, diasporic, and mixed race, do not always hold. While it is important to track the different modes of cultural contact (especially if we are to avoid creating a cultural ideal out of the contact zone), it is equally important to track how "contact" itself can reshape the ground on which it occurs. Objects also change hands: they are passed around as well as down; they are inherited. Objects can move "in" and "out" depending on the terms of this inheritance. Objects arrive from other worlds, as worlds that are "other" insofar as we do not inhabit them in the present. This "other worldliness" of objects does matter; and it gives objects more than one face, more than one angle from which they can be viewed, even if they don't take us there. The question is not only how objects face us, but how we face them in the moment we see them as facing different worlds.

In my own home there were objects that arrived through our Pakistani connection: spices, food, photos of colorful weddings, *salwar kamises* that we didn't want to wear. How I loved the wedding photos: the red bright colors compared to the white dresses of the photos from England—cold white dresses, cold white days. The whiteness of my home is perhaps revealed by the very way in which Pakistan was experienced as color. In many ways it was a white home, where its whiteness was shaped by the proximity of certain objects and how those objects gathered over time and in space to create a point for dwelling. It was about white words spoken; we did not speak Urdu or Punjabi at home. The only time I heard those words at home was when my father was on the phone to Pakistan.

And yet maybe those other words, even if I could not return their address, were enough for me to hear another side. The contours of mixed-race spaces are not so smooth in the face of how things arrive. Already there are arrivals that are unexpected, creating rough edges in the contours of this world. It is like the creases can be seen, which means that the cover fails to cover or that it fails in the act of providing a covering. So "objects" and "bodies" disturb this picture, creating disorientation in how things are arranged. Comments that were made about "our complexion;" letters that described unknown cousins whose names became familiar; visits to Pakistan that opened up new worlds, new tastes, sounds, and sensations on the skin; the excitement of the arrival of my aunt from Islamabad, who they said I was "so alike"; all these experiences of being at home and away were lived, at least sometimes, as wrinkles in the whiteness of the objects that gathered. They gathered, but they did not always gather us around. It is not that the disturbances meant that things no longer had their place; it is just that the objects did not stay still as they came into contact with other objects whose "color" created different impressions. Color wasn't just something added, like a tan on white skin, as it redirected my attention to the skin, to how the surfaces of bodies as well as objects are shaped by histories of contact.

Ironically enough, the object from Pakistan that made the greatest impression on me was an old, battered set of Shakespeare's plays. How I loved those books, with their ripped covers and failed bindings. My love came in part from the story around them. During partition my family left India to become

citizens of the newly formed Pakistan. It was an imperial journey, and a hard and painful one. How I liked to hear about this journey, as if I could follow the line, as if my life did follow the line they took. After their arrival in Model Town, Lahore, they found the books—left in the house by those who had left in a hurry. The books were given to my father by his father, who found them in the house that received him, which had taken him in. How odd that these objects, reachable at home for me as the objects that arrived from Pakistan, should be the works of Shakespeare. They pointed to England, and one could say that I followed the point. Back to English words, English culture, English history.

And yet, even if the books seemed to direct me to England and to another space, they also always took me back to another time, a time in which my family made the long journey to Lahore. Although the books of Shakespeare might have seemed to lead me to England, in some ways they took me to Lahore. After all, I never developed an interest in Shakespeare. What captured my imagination was how my family acquired the books. I wondered about the "secret" of their arrival in Lahore. How did they get to be there? Who owned the books originally? If a mixed genealogy takes us back to a time before our arrival, then it reminds us how orientations involve secrets: what we cannot uncover or recover about the histories that allow objects to gather in the way that they do.

Such secrecy does not only take us back, it also points toward the future. We don't always know where objects take us: as they change hands, they move. They acquire new forms as they register different proximities. The magic of unanticipated arrivals points not just to the future but to the past, which also cannot simply be reached in the present. Objects that "lie around" keep histories alive that cannot be reached, even if the "point" of the objects is that they can be reached. A mixed home also leaves objects lying around, even if the direction they face depends on which direction one faces, which is not necessarily the direction one follows. This mixing of objects does not mean that all sides of the objects are available, which is another way of describing what Husserlian phenomenology teaches us: that we can only "intend" the object by conjuring up its missing sides (see chapter 1). Such acts of conjuring involve not only what we perceive in the present, but also the histories out of which objects emerge. We might even conjure what is behind them. Such histories are spectral in the sense that the objects that we perceive are traces of such histories, and even keep those histories alive, but the histories cannot simply be perceived. Indeed, such histories may be alive insofar as they resist being converted into something that is available, like the side that is revealed by our viewing point.

A mixed orientation would not simply take each side and bring them together to create a new line. A mixed orientation might even preserve the secrecy of the other side, as the "side" that is behind what we face, even at the very moment we turn around to face what is behind us. At the same time, being mixed offers more than one side from which to have an "angle" on the world. Inheritance does not always hold things in place but instead keeps open the space for new arrivals, for new objects, which have their own horizons. If inheritance means to receive and to possess, then it might also open up a gap between reception and possession. The experience of having more than one side available at home did give me a certain direction, precisely given that what was received at home, the proximate signs of whiteness, could not be converted into possessions. The objects from Pakistan may have not taken me there, at least not directly, but they provided lines of connection that redirected how I apprehended what was before me. It was not that I simply looked in both directions, toward England and Pakistan at the same time, as worldly horizons that were somehow "given." The objects that seemed to contain whiteness moved around. They slipped away, as I got closer. What held my attention was behind them—it was the histories that made them out of reach. The unreachability of some things can be affective; it can even put other worlds within reach.

Mixed orientations might cross the line not so much by virtue of what we receive (the proximate objects that are given to us as if they were different sides of our inheritance) but rather in how we receive the histories that are behind our arrival. It is no accident that when I left home I felt that the other side of my history became more available to me. I reinhabited the world by going to Pakistan after I left home. This time in Pakistan reoriented me, allowing me to embrace Pakistan as part of my own genealogy, giving me a feeling of having more than one side to draw from, or even more than one family history "behind" me. In my own story, this connection to my Pakistani side was mediated not through my father but through my connection to my eldest aunt, who did not marry and who was deeply involved in women's activism. When we are redirected we often have people behind us, those who offer us lifelines

without any expectation of return, helping to pull us into another world. Becoming close to my aunt, with her passion for feminism and for what in our family biography she calls "woman power," was what helped me find a different political orientation, a different way of thinking about my place in the world.[25] In a way, this reorientation was made possible because of not being what I had (been given) at home. We could describe such a reorientation as a mixed orientation; *an orientation that unfolds from the gap between reception and possession*.

There is something already rather queer about such an orientation. I am not sure that being mixed race is what makes me queer, though other mixed race queers have made this connection and it is one that could be explored.[26] Instead, I would say that the experience of having a mixed genealogy is a rather queer way of beginning, insofar as it provides a different "angle" on how whiteness itself gets reproduced. Whiteness is proximate; it is a "part" of your background. And yet, you do not inherit whiteness, you do not inherit what, at least in part, is behind you. You can feel the categories that you fail to inhabit: they are sources of discomfort. Comfort is a feeling that tends not to be consciously felt, as I suggest above. Instead, you sink. When you don't sink, when you fidget and move around, then what is in the background becomes in front of you, as a world that is gathered in a specific way. Discomfort, in other words, allows things to move. Every experience I have had of pleasure and excitement about a world opening up has begun with such ordinary feelings of discomfort; of not quite fitting in a chair, of becoming unseated, of being left holding onto the ground. So yes, if we start with the body that loses its chair, the world we describe will be quite different.

A genealogy of being mixed hence allows us to see the mixtures that are concealed in the lines of the conventional family tree; as we become unseated from our dwelling places, we might notice how objects can take us to other places. Perhaps then genealogy itself becomes a rather queer as well as mixed thing. David Eng suggests that we can reconsider diaspora "not in conventional terms of ethnic dispersion, filiation, and biological traceability, but rather in terms of queerness, affiliation, and social contingency" (2003: 4).[27] Just as diaspora can be rather queer, so too can genealogy. Queer genealogy would not be about making another family tree, which would turn queer connections into new lines, nor would it be about creating a line that connects two sides. A queer genealogy would take the very "affects" of mixing, or coming into contact with things that reside on different lines, as opening up new kinds of connection. As we know, things are kept apart by such lines: they make some proximities not impossible, but dangerous. And yet, mixing does happen, and lines do not always direct us. A queer genealogy would be full of such ordinary proximities. This would not be about the meeting point between two lines that would simply create new lines (which is, after all, a conventional reading of the mixed-race child), but rather about the "crossing" of existing lines in the very failure to return to them. After all, the gap between what one receives and what one becomes is opened up as an effect of how things arrive and of the "mixtures" of any arrival. This is not to say that some bodies necessarily acquire such orientations as effects of their own arrival. Rather it is to say that the unsettling effect of such arrivals is what allows that which has been received to be noticeable. We don't always know what might be unsettling; what might make the lines that direct us more noticeable as lines in one moment or another. But once unsettled it might be impossible to return, which of course means that we turn somewhere else, as a turning that might open up different horizons. Oddly enough, it is the backward glance that confirms the impossibility of this return, as we face what is behind us. You go back, to move on.

For as we know, the experience of negation, of being stopped or feeling out of place, of feeling uncomfortable at home, does not "stop" there. It is around such experiences that bodies gather, getting together, acting, refusing this inheritance of whiteness, refusing even the desire to follow that line. We learn this from Fanon's phenomenology of being black. By accounting for the "I cannot," for the body that is stopped or held up, we also attend to the condition of possibility for the emergence of a collective form of activism. We act by collecting together such moments of being held up and being held back. Audre Lorde's reflections on the uses of anger by black women also shows us the importance of regathering. In feeling angry about racism, and for how we have been diminished by it, we create new spaces—we expand the very space occupied by our bodies, as an expansion that involves political energy and collective work (1984: 145–53). In other words, collective anger about the orientation of the world around whiteness might reorientate our relation to whiteness.

For me, working in Britain, I receive an alternative inheritance from this history of collective action, and I receive it every day simply by inhabiting the

spaces that I do, by walking on the ground that has been cleared by such action. The arrival of black bodies at British universities was only possible given the history of black activism, both in the United Kingdom and transnationally, which has cleared some ground by the repetition of the collective refusal to follow the line of whiteness. This is why I love the use of the word "black" as a reorientation device, as a political orientation, despite the ways in which it can risk concealing the differences between bodies that are of different colors and the different histories "behind" us.[28] Such a word becomes an object, which gathers us around as a regathering and helps ground the work that we do, in part by redescribing the ground as the ground of whiteness. Such a word, claimed in this way, points toward the future and toward a world that we have yet to inhabit: a world that is not orientated around whiteness. We don't know, as yet, what shape such a world might take, or what mixtures might be possible, when we no longer reproduce the lines we follow.

CONCLUSION Disorientation and Queer Objects

> The instability of levels produces not only the intellectual experience of disorder, but the vital experience of giddiness and nausea, which is the awareness of our own contingency and the horror with which it fills us.
>
> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

Moments of disorientation are vital. They are bodily experiences that throw the world up, or throw the body from its ground. Disorientation as a bodily feeling can be unsettling, and it can shatter one's sense of confidence in the ground or one's belief that the ground on which we reside can support the actions that make a life feel livable. Such a feeling of shattering, or of being shattered, might persist and become a crisis. Or the feeling itself might pass as the ground returns or as we return to the ground. The body might be reoriented if the hand that reaches out finds something to steady an action. Or the hand might reach out and find nothing, and might grasp instead the indeterminacy of air. The body in losing its support might then be lost, undone, thrown.

Sometimes, disorientation is an ordinary feeling, or even a feeling that comes and goes as we move around during the day. I think we can learn from such ordinary moments. Say, for example, that you are concentrating. You focus. What is before you becomes the world. The edges of that world disappear as you zoom in. The object—say the paper, and the thoughts that gather around the paper by gathering as lines on the paper—becomes what is given by losing its contours. The paper becomes worldly, which might even mean you lose sight of the table. Then, behind you, someone calls out your

name. As if by force of habit, you look up, you even turn around to face what is behind you. But as your bodily gestures move up, as you move around, you move out of the world, without simply falling into a new one. Such moments when you "switch" dimensions can be deeply disorientating. One moment does not follow another, as a sequence of spatial givens that unfolds as moments of time. They are moments in which you lose one perspective, but the "loss" itself is not empty or waiting; it is an object, thick with presence. You might even see black lines in front of your eyes as lines that block what is in front of you when you turn around. You experience the moment as loss, as the making present of something that is now absent (the presence of an absence). You blink, but it takes time for the world to acquire a new shape. You might even feel angry from being dislodged from the world you inhabited as a contourless world. You might even say to the person who addressed you with the frustrated reply of "What is it?" What is "it" that makes me lose what is before me?

Such moments of switching dimensions can be disorientating. If my project in this book has been to show how orientations are organized rather than casual, how they shape what becomes socially as well as bodily given, then how can we understand what it means to be disorientated? Is disorientation a bodily sign of "dis/organization," as the failure of an organization to hold things in place? What do such moments of disorientation tell us? What do they do, and what can we do with them? I want us to think about how queer politics might *involve* disorientation, without legislating disorientation as a politics. It is not that disorientation is always radical. Bodies that experience disorientation can be defensive, as they reach out for support or as they search for a place to reground and reorientate their relation to the world. So, too, the forms of politics that proceed from disorientation can be conservative, depending on the "aims" of their gestures, depending on how they seek to (re)ground themselves. And, for sure, bodies that experience being out of place might need to be orientated, to find a place where they feel comfortable and safe in the world. The point is not whether we experience disorientation (for we will, and we do), but how such experiences can impact on the orientation of bodies and spaces, which is after all about how the things are "directed" and how they are shaped by the lines they follow. The point is what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do—whether they can offer us the hope of new directions, and whether new directions are reason enough for hope.

I have noted that phenomenology is full of moments of disorientation. And yet, such moments are often moments that "point" toward becoming orientated. As noted earlier, Merleau-Ponty, following Husserl, suggests that the "I can" proceeds from overcoming disorientation, from reorienting the body so that the line of the body follows the vertical and horizontal axes. Such a body is one that is upright, straight, and in line. The straight body is not simply in a "neutral" position: or if it is the neutral position, then this alignment is only an effect of the repetition of past gestures, which give the body its contours and the "impression" of its skin. In a way, the utterance "I can" points to the future only insofar as it inherits the past, as the accumulation of what the body has already done, as well as what is "behind" the body, the conditions of its arrival. The body emerges from this history of doing, which is also a history of not doing, of paths not taken, which also involves the loss, impossible to know or even to register, of what might have followed from such paths. As such, the body is directed as a condition of its arrival, as a direction that gives the body its line. And yet we can still ask, what happens if the orientation of the body is not restored? What happens when disorientation cannot simply be overcome by the "force" of the vertical? What do we do, if disorientation itself becomes worldly or becomes what is given?

In a footnote to his text Merleau-Ponty refers to Stratton's *Vision without Inversion* in order to provide both an analysis of the way in which orientation happens as well as what happens when it fails to happen. As he states: "We remain physically upright not through the mechanism of the skeleton or even through the nervous regulation of muscular tone, but because we are caught up in a world. *If this involvement is seriously weakened, the body collapses and becomes once more an object*" (2002: 296; emphasis added). The "upright" body is involved in the world and acts on the world, or even "can act" insofar as it is already involved. The weakening of this involvement is what causes the body to collapse, and to become an object alongside other objects. In simple terms, disorientation involves becoming an object. It is from this point, the point at which the body becomes an object, that Fanon's phenomenology of the black body begins. By implication, we learn that disorientation is unevenly distributed: some bodies more than others have their involvement in the world called into crisis. This shows us how the world itself is more "involved" in some bodies than in others, as it takes such bodies as the contours of ordinary experience. It is not just that bodies are directed in specific ways, but that the world is shaped by the directions taken by some bodies more than others. It is

thus possible to talk about the white world, the straight world, as a world that takes the shape of the motility of certain skins.

From Fanon we learn about the experience of disorientation, as the experience of being an object among other objects, of being shattered, of being cut into pieces by the hostility of the white gaze. Disorientation can be a bodily feeling of losing one's place, and an effect of the loss of a place: it can be a violent feeling, and a feeling that is affected by violence, or shaped by violence directed toward the body. Disorientation involves failed orientations: bodies inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape, or use objects that do not extend their reach. At this moment of failure, such objects "point" somewhere else or they make what is "here" become strange. Bodies that do not follow the line of whiteness, for instance, might be "stopped" in their tracks, which does not simply stop one from getting somewhere, but changes one's relation to what is "here." When such lines block rather than enable action they become points that accumulate stress, or stress points. Bodies can even take the shape of such stress, as points of social and physical pressure that can be experienced as a physical press on the surface of the skin.

Furthermore, as I showed in chapter 3, an effect of being "out of place" is also to create disorientation in others: the body of color might disturb the picture—and do so simply as a result of being in spaces that are lived as white, spaces into which white bodies can sink. I suggested that white space (as a "habit space") is an effect of the accumulation of such gestures of sinking. It is interesting to note here that Jacques Rolland's description of seasickness as a disorientation uses the metaphor of sinking. As he states: "We have seasickness, because we are at sea, that is, off the coast, of which we have lost sight. That is, again, because the earth has gone, the same earth into which, ordinarily, we sink our feet in order for this position or stance to exist. Seasickness arrives once the loss of the earth is given" (2003: 17, see also Levinas 2003: 66–68). The ground into which we sink our feet is not neutral: it gives ground to some more than others. Disorientation occurs when we fail to sink into the ground, which means that the "ground" itself is disturbed, which also disturbs what gathers "on" the ground.

It is for this reason that disorientation can move around; it involves not only bodies becoming objects, but also the disorientation in how objects are gathered to create a ground, or to clear a space on the ground (the field). Here, in the conclusion to this volume, I explore the relation between the notion of queer and the disorientation of objects. It is worth noting that throughout this book I have been using "queer" in at least two senses, and I have at times slid from one sense to the other. First, I have used "queer" as a way of describing what is "oblique" or "off line." This is why, in chapter 3, I described a mixed orientation, which unfolds from the gap between reception and possession, as offering a queer angle on the reproduction of whiteness. I also describe the presence of bodies of color in white spaces as disorienting: the proximity of such bodies out of place can work to make things seem "out of line," and can hence even work to "queer" space; people "blink" and do "double turns" when they encounter such bodies.

Second, I have used queer to describe specific sexual practices. Queer in this sense would refer to those who practice nonnormative sexualities (Jagose 1996), which as we know involves a personal and social commitment to living in an oblique world, or in a world that has an oblique angle in relation to that which is given. In chapter 2, notably, I discuss lesbianism as a queer form of social and sexual contact, which is queer perhaps even before "queer" gets taken up as a political orientation. I think it is important to retain both meanings of the word queer, which after all, are historically related even when we do not reduce them. This means recalling what makes specific sexualities describable as queer in the first place: that is, that they are seen as odd, bent, twisted. In a way, if we return to the root of the word "queer" (from the Greek for cross, oblique, adverse) we can see that the word itself "twists," with a twist that allows us to move between sexual and social registers, without flattening them or reducing them to a single line. Although this approach risks losing the specificity of queer as a commitment to a life of sexual deviation, it also sustains the significance of "deviation" in what makes queer lives queer.

To make things queer is certainly to disturb the order of things. As I have suggested, the effects of such a disturbance are uneven, precisely given that the world is already organized around certain forms of living—certain times, spaces, and directions. I have shown how the reproduction of things—of what is "before us"—is about what is assumed to be reachable at home, about what is gathered around as objects that can extend our reach. Heterosexuality as a compulsory orientation reproduces more than "itself": it is a mechanism for the reproduction of culture, or even of the "attributes" that are assumed to pass along a family line, such as whiteness. It is for this reason that queer as a sexual orientation "queers" more than sex, just as other kinds of queer effects can in

turn end up "queering" sex. It is important to make the oblique angle of queer do this work, even if it risks placing different kinds of queer effects alongside each other. Michael Moon's (1998: 16) approach to sexual disorientation as "uncanny effects" is a useful guide for us here. If the sexual involves the contingency of bodies coming into contact with other bodies, then sexual disorientation slides quickly into social disorientation, *as a disorientation in how things are arranged*. The effects are indeed uncanny: what is familiar, what is passed over in the veil of its familiarity, becomes rather strange.

In a way, it might be a queer encounter with existential phenomenology that helps us rethink how disorientation might begin with the strangeness of familiar objects. Think of Sartre's novel *Nausea* (1965). It is a rather queer novel, I would say, in the sense that it is a novel about "things" becoming oblique. *Nausea* could be described as a phenomenological description of disorientation, of a man losing his grip on the world. What is striking about this novel is how much the loss of grip is directed toward objects that gather around the narrator, a writer, as objects that come to "disturb" rather than extend human action. The narrator begins with the desire to describe such objects, and how they are given and arranged, as a way of describing queer effects: "I must say how I see this table, the street, people, my packet of tobacco, since *these* are the things which have changed" (9). Here again the table appears; it even comes first, as a sign of the orientation of writing. To write a story of disorientation begins with the table becoming queer. It is the things around him, gathered in the way that they are (as a horizon around the body, and the objects that are near enough, including the table), that reveals the disorientation in the order of things.

Disorientation could be described here as the "becoming oblique" of the world, a becoming that is at once interior and exterior, as that which is given, or as that which gives what is given its new angle. Whether the strangeness is in the object or in the body that is near the object remains a crucial question. It seems first that it is the narrator who is disorientated, that "things" have "slipped away" because he is slipping away or "losing his mind." If objects are the extensions of bodies, just as bodies are the incorporations of objects, how can we locate the queer moment in one or the other? Later in the novel, the "inside" and "outside" do not stay in place: "The Nausea isn't inside me: I can feel it *over there* on the wall, on the braces, everywhere around me. It is one with the café, it is I who am inside *it*" (35). Things become queer precisely given how bodies are touched by objects, or by "something" that happens, where what is "over there" is also "in here," or even what I am "in." The story involves things becoming strange:

> Something has happened to me: I can't doubt that any more. It came as an illness does, not like an ordinary certainty, not like anything obvious. It installed itself cunningly, little by little; I felt a little strange, a little awkward, and that was all. . . . There is something new, for example, about my hands, a certain way of picking up my pipe or my fork. Or else it is the fork which has a certain way of getting itself picked up, I don't know. Just now, when I was on the point of coming into my room, I stopped short because I felt in my hand a cold object which attracted my attention by means of a sort of personality. I opened my hand and looked: I was simply holding the doorknob. (13)

We begin with the "me" as the place where something happens, a little strangeness or awkwardness that emerges over time, as if it has a life of its own. The becoming strange of the body does not stay with "me." For if it is my hands that are strange, then it is my hands as they express themselves in a gesture. Such gestures are the "point" where my hands meet with objects: where they cease to be apart; where they pick things up. So is it my hand or is it the fork that is different? What is so compelling to me about this account of "becoming queer" is how the strangeness that seems to reside somewhere between the body and its objects is also what brings these objects to life and makes them dance. So "the doorknob" when it is being what it is there to do (allowing us to open the door) is "just that." But when the doorknob is felt as something other than what is it supposed to do, then it comes to have a tangible quality as a "cold object," even one with a "personality." A cold object is one that gives us a sensation of being cold. When objects come to life, they leave their impressions.

In the first chapter, I evoked Marx's critique of German idealism for the very presumption that objects are simply before us, as things given in their "sensuous certainty." I would certainly not want to describe the queer object as that which becomes given in this way. Existential phenomenology shows us that the objects that are gathered as gatherings of history (domesticated objects, such as doorknobs, pens, knives, and forks that gather around, by supporting the actions of bodies) are in a certain way overlooked. What makes them historical is how they are "overlooked." Seeing such objects as if for the

first time (before this is a doorknob, how might I encounter it?) involves wonder, it allows the object to breathe not through a forgetting of its history but by allowing this history to come alive: How did you get here? How did I come to have you in my hand? How did we arrive at this place where such a handling is possible? How do you feel now that you are near? What does it do when I do this with you? To re-encounter objects as strange things is hence not to lose sight of their history but to refuse to make them history by losing sight. Such wonder directed at the objects that we face, as well as those that are behind us, does not involve bracketing out the familiar but rather allows the familiar to dance again with life.[1]

So what happens when the table dances? It is important to note that Marx describes the table as "turning" and even as "dancing"—as a dance that expresses the false life of the commodity rather than the breath of history: "In relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than 'table-turning' ever was" (1887: 76).[2] For Marx, when the table becomes a commodity it is endowed with agency, as if it has a life of its own. This life, we could say, is "stolen" from those who make the table, and from the very form of its "matter" (the wood). The dancing table would be a historical theft and a theft of history. We could approach the dancing table quite differently, if we see that the life of the table is "given" through this intimacy with other lives, rather than being a cut-off point. A table acquires a life through how it arrives, through what it comes into contact with, and the work that it allows us to do. Perhaps this life is a borrowed rather than stolen life, where the act of borrowing involves a pledge of return. The dancing table would be for sure a rather queer object: a queerness that does not reside "within" the table but registers how the table can impress upon us, and what we too can borrow from the contingency of its life.

In *Nausea*, objects become alive not by being endowed with qualities they do not have but through a contact with them as things that have been arranged in specific ways. Such contact is bodily: it is a touch that returns to the body, as the skin of the object "impresses" the skin of the body. The "touch" itself disorientates the body, so it loses its way. As the narrator states: "Objects ought not to *touch*, since they are not alive. You use them, you put them back in place, you live among them; they are useful, nothing more. I am afraid of entering in contact with them, just as if they were living animals. Now I see; I remember better what I felt the other day on the sea-shore when I was holding that pebble. It was a sort of sweet disgust. How unpleasant it was! And it came from the pebble, I am sure of that, it passed from the pebble into my hands. Yes, that's exactly it: a sort of nausea in the hands" (22).[3] This way of coming into contact with objects involves disorientation: the touch of the thing that transmits some thing. The pebble becomes queer in such an encounter. What the story implies is that orientation is achieved through the loss of such physical proximity: things are kept in their place, which might be near me, but it is a nearness that does not threaten to get inside of me, or spill what is inside out.

This is how phenomenology offers a queer angle—by bringing objects to life in their "loss" of place, in the failure of gathering to keep things in their place. It is not surprising to me that it is the "hands" that emerge as crucial sites in stories of disorientation, and indeed as crucial to phenomenology in general. Hands hold things. They touch things. They let things go. And yet, what does it mean for nausea to be "in the hands"? For even if the hands displace the nausea from the "I" (the hands can easily be alien objects, along with doorknobs), the hands still return us to the "I," as what offers the handle of the story. Making nausea in the hands, rather than in the handled, reminds us that existential phenomenology writes "disorientation" as a preoccupation with the subject, as a way of returning to the question of one's being even if being itself is what is in question. So even if things matter in *Nausea* and come to matter as signs of life, how they matter still returns to the subject as a sign of his interiority, even if that interior is pushed out to the outer regions of the body—the regions that are closest to the matter.

How does this "matter" matter? It is crucial that "matter" does not become an object that we presume is absent or present: what matters is shaped by the directions taken that allow things to appear in a certain way. We can return to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. He relates the distinction between "straight" and "oblique" to the distinction between "distance" and "proximity." Such categories are meaningful only in relation to phenomenal or orientated space. Merleau-Ponty suggests that distance functions like the oblique, as a way of transforming the relationship between the body and the object it perceives. As he states: "We 'have' the retreating object, we never cease to 'hold it' and to have a grasp on it, and the increasing distance is not, as breadth appears to be, an augmenting externality: it expresses merely that the thing is beginning to slip away from the grasp of our gaze and is less allied to it.

Distance is what distinguishes this loose and approximate grip from the complete grasp which is proximity. We shall define it then as we defined 'straight' and 'oblique' above, in terms of the situation of the object in relation to our power of grasping it" (2002: 304–5).

Distance is here the expression of a certain loss, of the loss of grip over an object *that is already within reach*, which is "losable" only insofar as it is within my horizon. Distance is lived as the "slipping away" of the reachable, in other words, as the moment in which what is within reach threatens to become out of reach. Merleau-Ponty, by proceeding with an analogy between the distant and the oblique, helps to show how the queer object might also be "slipping away." Here we recall my opening comments about the disorientation of switching dimensions: there is something about the loss of an object—"before" it has "gone," where the object can include simply what is "before us"—that disorientates and creates a new slant. The disorientation can persist if what retreats does not return, and something does not approach to take its place. Of course, what slips must first be proximate. It might not so much be that the object becomes queer when it slips, but that the proximity of what does not follow makes things slip. In other words, we might be speaking of the queer effects of certain gatherings, in which "things" appear to be oblique, to be "slipping away." Things can lose place alongside other things, or they can seem out of place in their place alongside other things. Disorientation involves contact with things, but a contact in which "things" slip as a proximity that does not hold things in place, thereby creating a feeling of distance.

It is interesting for me to note (again) that the object around which I have most gathered my thoughts has been the table. In a way, I have made the table a rather queer object by attending to it, by bringing an object that is often in the background to the front of my writing. To move the "behind" to the "front" can have a queer effect. In so doing I have made the table do a lot of work. We normally work "on" the table. The table exists as an "on" device: we do things "on" it rather than just "with" it. The "on" can mean contact with a supporting surface ("on the table"), which is usually horizontal, or it can simply mean proximity, situation, location, place. Some proximities exist to "support" actions—some surfaces are there to support. The work of support involves proximity, but it is also the ground for the experience of other proximities. As Levinas suggests in *Totality and Infinity*: "The bit of earth that supports me is not only my object; it *supports my experience of objects*" (1969: 138; emphasis added). Like the ground "on" which we walk, the table supports an action and thus supports my experience of the objects (the pen, the inkwell, and so on), which it also supports. If the table were oblique, it might be that it would be less supportive. But queer tables aren't simply oblique ones (the writing desk, for instance, can have an oblique angle and still support my writing). What do queer tables support, or do tables become queer when they fail to support?

We could ask, for instance, whether queer tables are the tables around which queer bodies gather. It is certainly the case that tables can support queer gatherings: the times that we might gather around, eating, talking, loving, living, and creating the spaces and times for our attachments. Queers have their tables for sure. Stories of queer kinship will be full of tables. This does not necessarily mean that the table itself becomes a queer object, or that the table necessarily has a different "function" in queer gatherings. And yet, the table might still be the site upon which queer points can be made.

To make such a point would be to suggest that there is something rather queer about furniture. We might first think about furniture as specific kinds of objects: tables, chairs, lamps, beds, and so on. We furnish space with "movable objects." I have been struck by how movability is a condition of meaning for furniture. You can move the table, here, there, into the corner of the room; in a sense the purpose of the table relies on your capacity to move it around. I suggest in my introduction to this book that I have followed the table around; yet I think that is a misrecognition. Instead, the table follows you around. The table is an effect of what it is that you do. In a way, then, while you furnish a house (with tables and other things that matter), it is the house that furnishes you. Queer furnishing is not, therefore, such a surprising formulation: the word "furnish" is related to the word "perform" and thus relates to the very question of how things appear. Queer becomes a matter of how things appear, how they gather, how they perform, to create the edges of spaces and worlds.

The objects with which we furnish "rooms" or interior spaces are called furniture. If you go to a furniture shop, or a place that sells "home furnishings," the furniture typically will be on display room by room: bedroom furniture, living-room furniture, and so on. In this manner, the shop is selling a lifestyle by how the furniture is arranged. In advertisements for home furnishings we can see this style displayed as a body intimacy: the white hetero-

sexual couple and their children surround the furniture, and it is as if in having "it" you could be "like them." Furniture involves technologies of convention, producing arrangements as an arrangement of things: in the presumption that life should be organized in certain ways, in this space or that, for doing this or for doing that, where you find this or you find that. So, you will have a room in which you sleep, which will be your bedroom, which is where you will find the bed. Over and over again we see the repetition of this form, which "invites" one to inhabit spaces by following these lines. Furniture too is an orientation device, a way of directing life by deciding what we do with what and where, in the very gesture toward comfort, the promise of "that sinking feeling."

And yet, perhaps a different orientation toward furniture is possible. Consider the expression, "You treat me like furniture"—which usually means, "You don't notice me; you make me part of the background." So, if furniture is conventional and indeed directs the bodies that use it, then furniture often disappears from view; indeed, what makes furniture "furniture" is this tendency to disappear from view. A queer furnishing might be about making what is in the background, what is behind us, more available as "things" to "do" things with. Is the queer table simply one we notice, rather than simply the table that we do things "on"? Is a queer chair one that is not so comfortable, so we move around in it, trying to make the impression of our body reshape its form? The chair moves as I fidget. As soon as we notice the background, then objects come to life, which already makes things rather queer.

Where do we go when we notice how tables follow us around, and when they become, in this following, rather queer? Where does the table take us when it dances with renewed life? If we think of "queer tables" we might also turn to the piece titled "Tableau" by Countee Cullen, a black queer poet from the Harlem Renaissance. The French word *tableau* shares the same root as the English word "table"—both are from the Latin *tabula*, for board. Here the table is a picture, and the picture is rather queer:

TABLEAU
Locked arm in arm they cross the way,
The black boy and the white,
The golden splendor of the day,
The sable pride of night.
From lowered blinds the dark folk stare,
And here the fair folk talk,
Indignant that these two should dare
In unison to walk.
Oblivious to look and work
They pass, and see no wonder
That lightning brilliant as a sword
Should blaze the path of thunder.

A queer picture for sure; the proximity of the white boy and the black boy who walk alongside each other "in unison." They have crossed the color line, "locked arm in arm"; they have crossed the straight line, "locked arm in arm." These moments are the same moment: we can register the difference only by reimagining this cross as the point of intersection between different lines. The act of walking alongside each other, without wonder, and as if it were an ordinary path to take, is returned by gazes of indignation. The boys take a path that others do not follow. A path is cleared by their "besideness." Just that. Two bodies side by side. They pass by; they pass through. Perhaps this is a different kind of politics of sides: one is not asked to "take sides" when one is "beside"—one walks beside and alongside. That is enough to clear the ground. To walk "in unison," to be "arm in arm," requires work: one has to keep up. You walk together through such gestures of following, a following in which one is not left behind. Perhaps the simple gesture of bodies that keep up involves a radicalization of the side, when the beside becomes alongside, where one side is not "against" the other.

This is not just about any body, but specifically a black body and a white body. Two boys. It is the proximity of these bodies that produces a queer effect. So queer tables are not simply tables around which, or on which, we gather. Rather, queer tables and other queer objects support proximity between those who are supposed to live on parallel lines, *as points that should not meet*. A queer object hence makes contact possible. Or, to be more precise, a queer object would have a surface that supports such contact. The contact is bodily, and it unsettles that line that divides spaces as worlds, thereby creating other kinds of connections where unexpected things can happen. If we notice only some arrivals (the arrival of those who are out of place), then it is also true that we only notice some forms of proximity, some forms of sexual and social contact that create new lines in the very moment they cross others. What happens when we follow such lines?

It is not, then, that queer "surfaces" through the failure to support, or that queer surfaces are not supportive. I suggest above that disorientation happens when the ground no longer supports an action. We lose ground, we lose our sense of how we stand; we might even lose our standing. It is not only that queer surfaces support action, but also that the action they support involves shifting grounds, or even clearing a new ground, which allow us to tread a different path. When we tread on paths that are less trodden, which we are not sure are paths at all (is it a path, or is the grass just a little bent?), *we might need even more support*. The queer table would here refer to all those ways in which queers find support for their actions, including our own bodies, and the bodies of other queers.[4] The queer picture on the table shows, I think, the potential of such supportive proximities to challenge the lines that are followed as matters of course. In refocusing our attention on proximity, on arms that are crossed with other arms, we are reminded of how queer engenders moments of contact; how we come into contact with other bodies to support the action of following paths that have not been cleared. We still have to follow others in making such paths. The queer body is not alone; queer does not reside in a body or an object, and is dependent on the mutuality of support.

What does it mean to think about the "nonresidence" of queer? We can consider the "affect" of disorientation. As I have suggested, for bodies that are out of place, in the spaces in which they gather, the experience can be disorientating. You can feel oblique, after all. You can feel odd, even disturbed. Experiences of migration, or of becoming estranged from the contours of life at home, can take this form. The angle at which we are placed gets in the way of inhabitance, even if it points toward inhabitance as its goal. At the same time, it is the proximity of bodies that produces disorientating effects, which, as it were, "disturb" the picture, or the objects that gather on the table, or the bodies that gather around the table as a shared object. Disorientation can move around, given that it does not reside in an object, affecting "what" is near enough to the place of disturbance. If, as James Aho suggests, "every lifeworld is a coherency of things" (1998: 11), then queer moments happen when things fail to cohere. In such moments of failure, when things do not stay in place or cohere as place, disorientation happens.

The question then becomes how we "face" or approach such moments of disorientation. In a way, we can return to the question of "facing" or of the approach we take to objects. It is interesting to note that for Merleau-Ponty the object becomes oblique when it is "retreating." It is during this moment of retreat that the object "slips away." And yet, throughout this book, I have described objects as going in a different direction: *as approaching*. I have discussed the object's arrival as itself an effect of an approach, which makes the object "near enough." Of course, we still have to be facing an object to notice that it is retreating. We still have to face an object for the effect of the object to be "queer." What this suggests is that disorientation requires an act of facing, but it is a facing that also allows the object to slip away, or to become oblique.

We need to think, then, of the relationship between "the face" and the act of facing. Merleau-Ponty describes the face as orientated.[5] In *Phenomenology of Perception*, he states: "My gaze which moves over the face, and in doing so faces certain directions, does not recognize the face unless it comes up against its details in a certain irreversible order and that the very significance of the object—here the face and its expressions—must be linked to its orientation, as indeed is indicated by the French word *sens* (sense, significance, direction). To invert an object is to deprive it of its significance" (2002: 294). This model does seem to depend on the face as an object of knowledge, as something that "can" be recognized, as something that has a "right" way of being apprehended. But at another level, the face "matters" as it acquires significance through direction. In other words, the significance of the face is not simply "in" or "on" the face, but a question of *how we face the face*, or *how we are faced*.

What makes things "queer" for Merleau-Ponty is in that moment when they become distant, oblique, and "slip away." If the face of the table is orientated, if it acquires its significance in how it points to us, then the table disorientates when it no longer faces the right way. When the face is inverted, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, it is deprived of its significance. Perhaps a queer orientation would not see the inverted face as a deprivation, and would approach "the retreat" as an approach—not in the sense that what retreats will return but in the sense that in the retreat of an object a space is cleared for a new arrival. Or, if a face is inverted and becomes queer or deprived of its significance, then such a deprivation would not be livable simply as loss but as the potential for new lines, or for new lines to gather as expressions that we do not yet know how to read. Queer gatherings are lines that gather—on the face, or as bodies around the table—to form new patterns and new ways of making sense. The question then becomes not so much what is a queer orientation, but how we are orientated toward queer moments when objects slip. Do we retain

our hold of these objects by bringing them back "in line"? Or do we let them go, allowing them to acquire new shapes and directions? A queer phenomenology might involve an orientation toward what slips, which allows what slips to pass through, in the unknowable length of its duration. In other words, a queer phenomenology would function as a disorientation device; it would not overcome the "disalignment" of the horizontal and vertical axes, allowing the oblique to open up another angle on the world.

If queer is also (in effect) an orientation toward queer, a way of approaching what is retreating, then what is queer might slide between sexual orientation and other kinds of orientation. Queer would become a matter of how one approaches the object that slips away—as a way of inhabiting the world at the point in which things fleet. And yet, I have suggested that queer unfolds from specific points, from the lifeworld of those who do not or cannot inhabit the contours of heterosexual space. After all, some of us more than others look "wonky," living lives that are full of fleeting points. Some people have suggested to me that I have overemphasised this latter point, and in so doing have risked presuming that the queer moments "reside" with those who do not practice heterosexuality. A person said to me, but lesbians and gays have "their lines too," their ways of keeping things straight. Another person said that lesbians and gays can be "just as conservative." I would insist that queer describes a sexual as well as political orientation, and that to lose sight of the sexual specificity of queer would also be to "overlook" how compulsory heterosexuality shapes what coheres as given, and the effects of this coherence on those who refuse to be compelled. As Leo Bersani argues, we do not have to presume the referentiality of queer, or stabilize queer as an identity category, to explore how the sexual specificity of being queer matters (1995: 71–76). To be at an oblique angle to what coheres does matter, where the "point" of this coherence unfolds as the gift of the straight line.

And yet, the suggestion that one can have a "nonhetero" sexual orientation and be straight "in other respects" speaks a certain truth. It is possible to live on an oblique angle, and follow straight lines. After all, conservative homosexuals have called for lesbians and gays to support the straight line by pledging allegiance to the very form of the family, even when they cannot inhabit that form without a queer effect. Lisa Duggan (2003) and Judith Halberstam (2005) have also offered compelling critiques of a new "homonormativity." As Duggan describes, "it is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but *upholds and sustains them*" (50; emphasis added).

We could think of this in terms of assimilation, as a politics of following the straight line even as a deviant body. Homonormativity would straighten up queer effects by following the lines that are given as the accumulation of "points" (where you "get points" for arriving at different points on the line: marriage, children, and so on). For instance, as Judith Butler argues, gay marriage can extend rather than challenge the conservatism of marriage (2002: 18). Such a politics would "extend" the straight line to some queers, those who can inhabit the forms of marriage and family, which would keep other queers, those whose lives are lived for different points, "off line." Lee Edelman calls such a politics a "reproductive futurism," which works to "affirm a structure, to authenticate social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of the Child" (2004: 30). This version of gay politics would ask us to reproduce that which we do not follow, by speaking in the name of a future as an inheritance that we did not receive: we would try and be as straight as we could be, as if we could convert what we did not receive into a possession.

We are right to be critical of such a conservative sexual politics, which "supports" the very lines that make some lives unlivable. Oddly enough, this gay conservatism has also returned us to the table. Bruce Bawer argues in *A Place at the Table* (1994) that gays and lesbians should desire to join the big table rather than have "a little table of our own."[6] In his critique of the queer desire to embrace the nonnormative, Bawer states the following: "He doesn't *want* to be assimilated. He enjoys his exclusion. He feels comfortable at his little table. Or at least he thinks he does. But does he? What is it, after all, that ties him to his little table—that drove him, in other words, into a marginal existence? Ultimately, it's prejudice. Liberated from that prejudice, would he still want to sit at his little table? Perhaps, and perhaps not. Certainly most homosexuals don't want to be relegated to that little table. We grew up at the big table: we're at home there. We want to stay there" (1994: 70). Bawer also describes a queer desire for "little tables" as the "ethos of multiculturalism," where "each accredited victim group" is given their own table (1994: 210). It is interesting to note here that the "big table" evokes the family table (where we "grew up"), and also "society" itself as a "single big table." Bawer's rejection of queer "subcultures" hence calls for a return to the family table, as the presumed ground for social existence. To join this table enacts the desire for assimilation:

in the sense of becoming a "part" of the family but also becoming like the family, which is itself predicated on likeness. What is at stake in this desire to be placed at the table?

We could agree with Bawer that a queer politics is not about laying new tables, whatever their size. After all, to set up new tables would leave the "big table" in its place. We might even agree that the "point" of gay and lesbian politics might be to arrive at this table, as the table around which a family gathers, producing the very effect of social coherence. But such an arrival cannot simply be a matter of being given a place at the table, as if it were "family prejudice" that prevents us from taking that place. After all, despite Bawer's emphasis on "being at home" at the big table, his book is full of examples of being rejected from the table, including from the different kinds of tables that organize the sociality of straight weddings (Bawer 1994: 261).[7] The desire to join the table is a desire to inhabit the very "place" of this rejection. As Douglas Crimp (2002: 6) has shown, the act of following straight lines as bodies that are at least in some ways sexually deviant is melancholic: you are identifying precisely with what repudiates you. Such forms of following do not simply accumulate as points on a straight line. We can certainly consider that when queer bodies do "join" the family table, then the table does not stay in place. Queer bodies are out of place in certain family gatherings, which is what produces, in the first place, a queer effect. The table might even become wonky.

After all, this very desire to "support" straight lines, and the forms they elevate into moral and social ideals (such as marriage and family life) will be rejected by those whose bodies can and do "line up" with the straight line, which is not, of course, all straight bodies.[8] In other words, it is hardly likely that attempts to follow the straight line as gays and lesbians will get you too many points. To point to such rejection is not, then, to say that homonormativity is the condition for an emergence of a new angle on queer politics (though it could be). Instead, it is to say that inhabiting forms that do not extend your shape can produce queer effects, even when you think you are "lining up." There is hope in such failure, even if we reject publicly (as we must) this sexual as well as social conservatism.

At the same time, to conserve and to deviate are not simply available as political choices. It is important, for instance, that we avoid assuming that "deviation" is always on "the side" of the progressive. Indeed, if the compulsion to deviate from the straight line was to become "a line" in queer politics, then this itself could have a straightening effect. I have often wondered whether recent work on queer shame risks drawing such a line. I admire Eve Sedgwick's (2003) refusal of the discourse of queer pride. She suggests instead that shame is the primary queer affect because it embraces the "not"; it embraces its own negation from the sphere of ordinary culture. But I am not sure how it is possible to embrace the negative without turning it into a positive. To say "yes" to the "no" is still a "yes." To embrace or affirm the experience of shame, for instance, sounds very much like taking a pride in one's shame—a conversion of bad feeling into good feeling (see Ahmed 2005).[9] What does it mean for this "yes" to be inaugurated as the proper signifier of queer politics? Does this, in the end, create a line around queer, by asking "others" to repeat that "yes," by embracing their rejection (the "no") from straight culture?

Such a "yes" is not available to everyone, even to all sexual deviants, given how we are shaped by the multiple histories of our arrival. Some might feel compelled to follow the lines before them, even if their desires are off line. Of course, to live according to certain lines does involve a certain kind of commitment to those lines: one's actions are behind them. But it does not necessarily mean an assimilation in the terms described above: the points of deviation might, instead, be hidden. Not all queers can be "out" in their deviation. For queers of other colors, being "out" already means something different, given that what is "out and about" is orientated around whiteness. At the same time, of course, not all queers even have the choice of staying "in": for some, one's body is enough to keep one out (of line). Some butch lesbians, for instance, just have to open the front door to be out: getting out is being out. Yet, for others, there are ways of staying in, even when one gets out.

We could consider "the closet" itself as an orientation device, a way of inhabiting the world or of being at home in the world. The closet returns us to the question of queer furnishings, and how they too are orientation devices. The closet provides a way of staying in. Orientations would be about the terms upon which moments of deviation are let "out" or kept "in," thereby creating lines between public and private spaces. If the closeted queer appears straight, then we might have to get into the closet, or go under the table to reach the points of deviation. In other words, while the closet may seem a betrayal of queer (by containing what is queer at home) it is just as possible to be queer at

home, or even to queer the closet. After all, closets still "make room" or clear spaces, in which there are things left for bodies to do.

Indeed, I am suggesting here that for some queers, at least, homes are already rather queer spaces, and they are full of the potential to experience the joy of deviant desires. As Gayatri Gopinath suggests, in the postcolonial home, sex might happen "in the house," locating "female same-sex desire and pleasure firmly within the confines of the home and 'the domestic' rather than a safe elsewhere" (2005, 153). To queer homes is also to expose how "homes," as spaces of apparent intimacy and desire, are full of rather mixed and oblique objects. It is also to suggest that the intimacy of the home is what connects the home to other, more public, spaces. If homes are queer then they are also diasporic, shaped by the "entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'" (Brah 1996: 16). Within homes, objects gather: such objects arrive and they have their own horizons, which "point" toward different worlds—even if this "point" does not make such worlds within reach. The point of the intersection between queer and diaspora might precisely be to show how the "where" of queer is shaped by other worldly horizons—by histories of capital, empire, and nation—which give queer bodies different points of access to such worlds, and which make different objects reachable, whether at home or away.

After all, if there are different ways of following lines, there are also different ways of deviating from them, as deviations that might come "out" at different points. I suggested in the introduction to this book that to follow a line is to become invested in that line, and also to be committed to "where" it will take us. We do not stay apart from the lines we follow, even if we take the line as a strategy, which we hope to keep apart from our identity (where one might say: "I do" this, but "I am" not that which "I do"). The act of following still shapes what it is that we "do do," and hence what we "can do." And yet, there are different kinds of investment and commitment. For some, following certain straight lines might be lived as a pledge of allegiance on moral and political grounds to "what" that line leads to. But for others, certain lines might be followed because of a lack of resources to support a life of deviation, because of commitments they have already made, or because the experience of disorientation is simply too shattering to endure. For example, as I suggest in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004a), some lesbians and gay men may need access to heterosexual kinship networks in order to survive, which might mean appearing to live a certain kind of life, one that even seems "straight" to other queers.

In calling for a politics that involves disorientation, which registers that disorientation shatters our involvement in a world, it is important not to make disorientation an obligation or a responsibility for those who identify as queer. This position demands too much (for some, a life-long commitment to deviation is not psychically or materially possible or sustainable, even if their desires are rather oblique), but it also "forgives" too much by letting those who are straight stay on their line. It is not up to queers to disorientate straights, just as it is not up to bodies of color to do the work of antiracism, although of course disorientation might still happen and we do "do" this work. Disorientation, then, would not be a politics of the will but an effect of how we do politics, which in turn is shaped by the prior matter of simply how we live.

After all, it is possible to follow certain lines (such as the line of the family) as a disorientation device, as a way of experiencing the pleasures of deviation. For some queers, for instance, the very act of describing queer gatherings as family gatherings is to have joy in the uncanny effect of a familiar form becoming strange. The point of following is not to pledge allegiance to the familiar, but to make that "familiar" strange, or even to allow that which has been overlooked—which has been treated as furniture—to dance with renewed life. Some deviations involve acts of following, but use the same "points" for different effects. This is what Kath Weston's ethnographic studies of queer kinship show us. As she notes: "Far from viewing families we choose as imitations or derivatives of family ties created elsewhere in society, many lesbians and gay men alluded to the difficulty and excitement of constructing kinship in the *absence* of what they called 'models'" (1991: 116; see also Weston 1995).

A queer politics does involve a commitment to a certain way of inhabiting the world, even if it is not "grounded" in a commitment to deviation. Queer lives would not follow the scripts of convention. Or as Judith Halberstam notes, queer might begin with "the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing" (2005: 65). The "conventions" take the white heterosexual couple as their social ideal. If we see the failure to sink into the chairs of convention as a political gift, then other things might happen. In a way, we can bring Weston and Halberstam together by suggesting that queer lives are about the potentiality of not following certain conventional scripts of family, inheritance, and child

rearing, whereby "not following" involves disorientation: it makes things oblique.

What kind of commitment would a queer commitment be? If anything, I would see queer as a commitment to an opening up of what counts as a life worth living, or what Judith Butler might call a "liveable life" (2004: xv). It would be a commitment not to presume that lives have to follow certain lines in order to count as lives, rather than being a commitment to a line of deviation. I share Lisa Duggan's enthusiasm for queer as "the democratic diversity of proliferating forms of sexual dissonance" (2003: 65). Such proliferating forms would not necessarily be recognizable; rather, they would be forms of sociality as well as sexuality that are not available as lines to be followed, although they might emerge from the lines that already gather, and even have already gathered us around. We might, then, face the objects that retreat, and become strange in the face of their retreat, with a sense of hope. In facing what retreats with hope, such a queer politics would also look back to the conditions of arrival. We look back, in other words, as a refusal to inherit, as a refusal that is a condition for the arrival of queer. To inherit the past in this world for queers would be to inherit one's own disappearance. After all, as a mixed-race queer the choice is not either to become white and straight or to disappear. This is a choice between two different kinds of death. The task is to trace the lines for a different genealogy, one that would embrace the failure to inherit the family line as the condition of possibility for another way of dwelling in the world.

If orientations point us to the future, to what we are moving toward, then they also keep open the possibility of changing directions and of finding other paths, perhaps those that do not clear a common ground, where we can respond with joy to what goes astray. So, in looking back we also look a different way; looking back still involves facing—it even involves an open face. Looking back is what keeps open the possibility of going astray. This glance also means an openness to the future, as the imperfect translation of what is behind us. As a result, I would not argue that queer has "no future" as Lee Edelmen (2004) suggests—though I understand and appreciate this impulse to "give" the future to those who demand to inherit the earth, rather than aim for a share in this inheritance. Instead, a queer politics would have hope, not even by having hope in the future (under the sentimental sign of the "not yet"), but because the lines that accumulate through the repetition of gestures, the lines that gather on skin, already take surprising forms. We have hope because what is behind us is also what allows other ways of gathering in time and space, of making lines that do not reproduce what we follow but instead create wrinkles in the earth.

To resist an impulse to make deviation a ground for queer politics is not, then, to say that it does not matter which lines we follow. It does matter. Some lines, as we know, are lines that accumulate privilege and are "returned" by recognition and reward. Other lines are seen as ways out of an ethical life, as deviations from the common good. Despite this, queer is not available as a line that we can follow, and if we took such a line we would perform a certain injustice to those queers whose lives are lived for different points. For me, the question is not so much finding a queer line but rather asking what our orientation toward queer moments of deviation will be. If the object slips away, if its face becomes inverted, if it looks odd, strange, or out of place, what will we do? If we feel oblique, where will we find support? A queer phenomenology would involve an orientation toward queer, a way of inhabiting the world by giving "support" to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place. Queer gatherings, where the objects we face "slip away," are disorientating. For me, the table is just such a supporting device for queer gatherings, which is what makes the table itself a rather queer device. It is hence not surprising that a queer phenomenology, one that is orientated toward queer, will be full of tables. It is also not surprising that such tables will be full—inhabited by those who in gathering around have already made a rather queer impression.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Phenomenology provides a set of tools for thinking about orientation. Given that orientation is commonly described as a bodily spatial awareness (as the "sixth sense") and is related to proprioception and kinesthetics, it is important to note that many other traditions in psychology and the social sciences have also contributed to debates about how bodies become orientated. In particular, work in the neurosciences may be of interest to readers, particularly given that the neurosciences and phenomenology share common histories, interests, and concerns, and that key texts in each draw on work in the other. See Gallagher (2003) who summarizes some of the main debates about orientation and proprioception in the neurosciences and phenomenology. I should note as an aside here that my starting point in thinking about queer phenomenology is not so much to explain orientation as a distinct sensory formation (with the primary debate being about its origins and mechanisms). Rather, I want to offer instead another way of thinking about orientation, which points to how spatial distinctions and awareness are implicated in how bodies get directed in specific ways. In other words, orientation for me is about how the bodily, the spatial, and the social *are entangled*. This is not to say, however, that we cannot learn from work that proceeds from other starting points. See also Weiss (1999: 8–38) for an account of relevant debates about the origins of the body schema.
2. Writing tables are not the only kinds of tables that appear in philosophy. As I will discuss in relation to the work of Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt, dining tables also make an appearance, although this is less of a convention and it creates quite a different impression. Not all tables refer to the conventional meaning of furniture, or if they do expose this convention, they do so more obliquely. A "table of contents" is also a conventional element within philosophical writing. As Michel Foucault shows us, "the table" when used in this way functions as an ordering device, which enables "thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and differences" (2002: xix). It is not accidental that the word "table" points to this function: to place things on a board is itself a

way of ordering objects, gathering them around, or giving them a place, around which we can work. It is also useful to recall that the table provides support for philosophy as a key metaphor. For example, consciousness itself has been imagined through the metaphor of the table: *tabula rasa*, the blank slate. The table is what "waits" for writing, for the very "marks" that transform the potentiality of life into the actuality of being. Life becomes writing on the table, which evokes futurity as a present mark: when we say "the writing is on the table" we imply that a specific future has already been decided. The appearance of the table as a supporting device takes different forms, depending on what kind of support the table is being asked to provide.

3. In many cases "the table" simply appears as an object alongside other philosophical objects without any account of it as that which is "before" the philosopher at the moment of writing. As I will show in chapter 1, Husserl gives us an account of the table as a writing table that he is facing, before the table becomes an object that is used to illustrate his phenomenological method. Such an account is also available within the work of other philosophers. A good example is Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy*, which sustains "the table" as its primary object and begins with a description of the scene of writing: "It seems to me that I am now sitting in a chair, at a table of a certain shape, on which I see sheets of paper with writing and print. By turning my head I see out of the window buildings and clouds and sun" (1998: 1). The table functions as a way of illustrating a philosophical point about knowledge and the existence of matter as independent of perception (sense data). When tables appear in order to illustrate points, then they tend also to disappear as objects with their own histories. I should note that when tables appear in unconventional philosophical writing, then the conventions for their appearance also change. For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, for instance, the round table is evoked as a nonphilosophical table: "Discussions are fine for roundtable talks, but philosophy throws its numbered dice on another table" (1994: 28). For Michel Serres, the table enters as a critique of the ordering of tables: "Set against the classical table of correspondences or equivalencies, language as restricted economy, there is the table at which eating and drinking takes place, which exceeds the economy" (cited in Connor 1999). And as I will explore in chapter 1, Heidegger's turn away from Husserl's phenomenological method means he turns to quite a different kind of table. I am suggesting that how tables appear in philosophy shows the orientation of philosophy, as well as other modes of writing, which also might say something about the orientation of this book. See Banfield 2000 for an account of the specific role of "tables" within the British philosophical tradition, as its primary example of an external and familiar object, which then turns to how Virginia Woolf uses tables in her writing as a way of being in dialogue with this tradition.
4. It is striking, for example, that Edith Stein's work on empathy makes orientation crucial. She suggests that empathy involves switching orientations: "When I now interpret it as a sensible living body and empathically project myself into it, I obtain a new image of the spatial world and a new zero point of orientation" (1989: 61). It is useful to recall the work of such early women phenomenologists, who indeed shaped the preoccupations of phenomenologists such as Husserl in ways that have often gone unrecognized. Edith Stein was Husserl's student, and she worked with him on the manuscript that was posthumously published as the second volume of *Ideas*. Stein stresses the intercorporeal aspects of lived experience; in particular she introduces the idea of the "foreign body" as "living" and as "co-given" (1989: 57). In many ways, later feminists such as Gail Weiss and Rosalyn Diprose who stress the intercorporeal dimensions of lived experience could be seen as following Stein's work, even if the influence is not direct.
5. For an exploration of the intimate relationship between home and migration, see the volume *Uprootings/ReGroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (Ahmed, Castañeda, Fortier and Sheller [2003]).
6. This definition is taken from the *Macquarie ABC Dictionary*. All subsequent definitions are drawn from this volume.
7. Butler states that materialization produces the effect of matter, or "boundary, fixity and surface" (1993: 9). I am also suggesting that "matter" is orientated: that matter is directed in specific ways, which is what gives matter its shape or form. We could therefore redescribe materialization as the "direction of matter."
8. This is especially true for disciplinary lines or the lines that accumulate to produce formations of knowledge. Sometimes I am amazed when I find that some people are not aware of the work done by feminist, black, and postcolonial scholars on questions relevant to the general debates within cultural studies or philosophy. How can you not know? I want to ask. How can they not be cited? I protest. What I have learned is that not knowing about certain things is an effect of the lines people have already taken, which means they "attend" to some things only by giving up proximity to others, which is at the same time giving up on certain futures. Such a "giving up" is not conscious or even a loss that can be made present. *We do not know what follows from the lines that we have not followed as an effect of the decisions we have taken.* Given that some lines more than others are lines of privilege (i.e., that following such lines is "returned" by reward, status, and recognition), then the loss of certain futures becomes a political loss and a necessary site of political struggle. So point to such exclusions we must!
9. See chapter 8 of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Ahmed 2004a) for an analysis of hope, which attends to the relationship between hope and investment.

1. Orientations Toward Objects

1. As Gadamer points out, Husserl rejects Max Scheler's argument that "sense perception is never given" and argues instead that "interpretation is always a secondary act" (1985: 318).
2. See my model of this slide between sensation, perception, and judgment in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004a: 24–25). Here I offer a rethinking of "impressions" by considering how objects "impress upon bodies" and how such impressions

involve both contact (with objects) and intentionality (about objects). For a more detailed summary, see the introduction to this book.

3. We could even call here for a philosophy of housework, which would bring that work to the center of attention as a specific orientation of care toward objects that are already available at home. Housework does appear in Bachelard's *The Poetics of Home*, but in a way that suspends the "work" of housework. As Bachelard states: "The minute we apply a glimmer of consciousness to a mechanical gesture, or practice phenomenology while polishing a piece of old furniture, we sense new impressions come into being beneath the familiar domestic duty. For consciousness rejuvenates everything, giving a quality of beginning to the most everyday actions. It even dominates memory. How wonderful it is to really become the inventor of a mechanical action! And so, when a poet rubs a piece of furniture—even vicariously—when he puts a little fragrant wax on his table with the woollen cloth that lends warmth to everything it touches, he creates a new object; he increases the object's human dignity; he registers this object officially as a member of the human household" (1994: 67). Bachelard brings domestic work into his phenomenology only by seeing the creativity "under" the work rather than attending to the form of the work. We might suspect that such a romantic reading of housework is more available when housework is not a required duty. See Morley 2000, Sibley 1995, and Bowlby 1995 for critiques of what Sibley calls "Bachelard's happy phenomenology of the home" (94)
4. Many thanks to Imogen Tyler who found this quote for me and then encouraged me to think more about how mothers might have a different relationship to writing tables and hence to the body of philosophy.
5. This is a way of restating Heidegger's (2002) and Gadamar's (1995) critique of Husserl's phenomenology on the grounds that it assumes one can perceive an object without mediation by presuppositions, or that one can simply put such presuppositions aside. In other words, giving up the fantasy of the bracket turns phenomenology toward hermeneutics, with its emphasis on interpretation as a stance that shapes what is apprehended in the first place.
6. This is one reading of the idea of the "bracket." For a more sympathetic queer reading, see Fryer 2003, which relates the natural attitude to "the normative dimension." By doing so, Fryer suggests that phenomenology shares with queer theory a "post-normative" stance insofar as it puts the normative out of action. To put the normative "out of action" might, of course, involve collective action: it would not be achieved by individual perception. See also note 1 in my conclusion, which relates the Husserlian bracket to a philosophy of wonder.
7. For some critics, such an investigation of the familiar world is exactly what phenomenology promises. Bourdieu, for example, suggests that phenomenology "sets out to make explicit the truth of primary experience of the social world, i.e., all that is inscribed in the relationship of *familiarity* with the familiar environment, the unquestioning apprehension of the social world which, by definition, does not reflect on itself and excludes the question of the conditions of its own possibility" (1977: 3; see also Schutz 1970). But if the familiar is defined as "that which does not reflect on itself" and phenomenology as "that which reflects" on the familiar as "that which does not reflect on itself," then it is something other than the familiar that this version of phenomenology has in its sight. However, Husserl's later work, especially *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, where he attends to the "near," or what can be reached in the "life-world," involves a reorientation of his phenomenology toward the familiar, toward how things appear at home. Importantly, this work also involves a key emphasis on the role of embodiment and intersubjectivity, which is taken up by Merleau-Ponty. As Husserl puts it: "In terms of the life-world, this means nothing other than that a body, which as such can be already explicated with its experiential meaning through its own essential properties, is always at the same time a body, in its being-such, under particular 'circumstances.' First of all, it belongs to the most general structure of the life-world that the body has, so to speak, its habits of being in its being-such, that it belongs within a type which is either known or, if it is 'new' to us, is still to be discovered, a type within which the explicable properties belong together in typical ways. But it is also part of the life-world's formal typology that bodies have typical ways of being together, in coexistence (above all in a given perceptual field) and in succession" (1970: 218). See Steinbock 1995 for an excellent analysis of this "homeworld" in Husserl's later philosophy and how this shifts us toward a phenomenology of "generativity."
8. Husserl attends to the temporality of the background via the notion of the "internal horizon," which he develops throughout the corpus of his work. So, the "now" of perception involves retention: it involves the "just past," which is "before" the "now" but evoked as "before" only in the "now." This reminds us that intentionality (to be directed toward something that does not reveal itself "at once") involves a complex temporality, in which the present already exceeds itself: "Even if I stop at perception, I still have the full consciousness of the thing, just as I already have it at the first glance when I see it as this thing. In seeing I always 'mean' it with all the sides which are in no way given to me, not even in the form of the intuitive, anticipatory presentifications. Thus every perception has, 'for consciousness,' a horizon belonging to its object" (1970: 158). Or, as he puts it later: "Perception is related only to the *present*. But this present is always meant as having an endless *past* behind it and an open *future* before it" (160). As we can see, phenomenology in its turn to the present of what we perceive does return us to what is "behind" in a temporal as well as a spatial sense, which takes us "back" to the "background," as well as turns us toward the future, as that which is before us but not quite available in the present. For Husserl this is primarily described as "time consciousness," but we can see an important connection between a phenomenology of perception and a more materialist conception of histories that are "behind" or even at the "back" of what is "presented" or in the present.
9. As Deleuze puts it, following Spinoza: "You do not know beforehand what a mind or body can do, in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination"

(1992: 627). I would suggest that "mind and body" prematurely closes things down: we could rephrase Deleuze's formulation by suggesting that we do not know what things can do when they get near to other things, which might include bodies and minds. So we do not yet know what a writer can do, let alone the table, once they get near enough to each other. Yes, writing might happen. Or it might not. We don't always know what will happen if writing does not happen: whether the "not" feels like a block, or whether it provides an empty space that bodies fill with other things. You might doodle, creating some rather queer impressions. And if writing is what happens, then we don't know what lines will be created on the paper, which lies on the surface of the table, between skin and wood, or whatever materials happen to come into contact. In due course I return to the "can do" and suggest that what bodies "do do" restricts capacities in the present even if it does not "decide" exactly what happens.

10. Jean-François Lyotard asks the following question: "If the condition for the historical nature of the furniture is not in the furniture, but in the historical nature of the human world where this furniture had its place, what conditions guarantee us that this historical element had its place" (1991: 112). Lyotard shows us here that we cannot stabilize history without assuming that history is given, without making history itself "ahistorical." My point about the relation between history and tables would be different; I would say that history is not only before the table (its conditions of arrival), but also in the form of the table (labor) and in the work that the table is then asked to do (as I will explore in the following section). As such, history is not only what is given but what takes shape and is reshaped as an effect of the given. See also Heidegger's reflections on chairs and history, where he suggests that chairs are shaped by history even if we don't sense that history: "We thus say that one sees in the chair itself that it came from a factory even though we have no sensation of a factory or anything like it" (2002: 226).
11. This is not to say that matter comes to matter only given the work of human labor. Such an argument would make the human *into the center of things*, as the absent presence around which all things are centered. Other kinds of labor shape how objects might come to surface one way or another. Merleau-Ponty uses the example of a pebble, and what makes a pebble a pebble. As he puts it, "beyond a certain range of their changes, they would cease to be this pebble or this shell, they would even cease to be a pebble or a shell" (1968: 161). Pebble beaches, for instance, are striking to me when I imagine how they are becoming sand; but it is a becoming that is not available to consciousness, or has not arrived, in the present. The pebble becomes sand as an effect of time. The pebble could be seen as "becoming sand," but we could not see this becoming simply on the surface of the pebble. We could even see sand as a "having been pebble," but that would also point us beyond what is available in the present. What does time do, if not make available the possibility of seeing that which is not in view? Time is also occupied not only in the sense that we do something with it, but also in how it is available to us only through what we do. In time, the pebble may become sand; it ceases to have the characteristics that make it recognizable as a pebble. But the pebble acquires its shape through contact; and it is this contact that reshapes the pebble such that it is becoming something "other" than what it is. Time "gives form," which suggests that "matter" is not inert or given, but is always in a process of "materialising" (Butler 1993: 9). The pebble is shaped by its contact with water; and the waves that pound it, which made it "it" (and not a rock), also shape its becoming something other than what it is in the present. The object assumes the form of contact, as a contact that takes place in time, but is also an effect of time. The "becoming" or "arrival" of the object both takes time and involves contact with other objects, and it is an arrival that, perhaps, may come to pass as the opening up of the future to forms that have yet to emerge. See the conclusion to this book, which refers to pebbles becoming queer.
12. It is important that we contest the matter/form hierarchy, which locates what is dynamic in form and leaves matter "for dead." As feminist philosophers have shown us, this binarism is gendered: women have been associated with matter, and men with form, such that masculinity becomes the gift of life, by giving form to matter (see Irigaray 1974: 172; Butler 1993: 29, 31; and Grosz 1995: 121).
13. Rosemary Hennesey (2000) argues that queer has become commodified. It is noteworthy that Marx describes the commodity itself as queer. Just as queer can be commodity, so commodity can be queer.
14. Also relevant here is the literature on material culture, specifically on how objects "matter" and are "entangled" within spheres of meaningful human action or systems of symbolic exchange (see, for example, Dant 1999; Baudrillard 1996; Thomas 1991).
15. This is a reformulation of the significance of "the particular," as that which does not reside in individuals (see my *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* [2000], notably the chapter titled "Ethical Encounters: The Other, Others and Strangers").
16. I am very grateful to Paul Harrison who directed me toward *Ontology* and Heidegger's table during my October 2005 seminar "Lines, Points, and Other Impressions." In the earlier version of this chapter, I relied on the example of the hammer offered in *Being and Time* and then made my own connections between the hammer and the table. It was therefore uncanny to discover that the example of the hammer in *Being and Time* was a substitute for the table in *Ontology*. As John Van Buren observes in his translator's notes to Heidegger's volume: "What had also dropped out was Heidegger's powerful fifteen-page phenomenological example of 'tarrying for a while' in his home, 'being-in-a-room' there, and the 'sewing' of his wife, the 'playing' of his children, his own 'writing,' and their daily meals at the table in this room. This central example was replaced by that of a 'hammer,' and what survived of it was a cursory mention of a 'table' in a 'room' with 'writing' and 'sewing' equipment on it" (1999: 92). How fitting that when I was writing about a hammer I was "really" writing about a lost table.
17. It is worth commenting here on the relation between "this" and "the." In my reading

of Husserl's table I suggest that the problem with the bracket, and what it puts aside, is that "this table" becomes "the table," as a table that no longer points to the conditions of how things arrive, or become near. For Heidegger, "the table" is what makes the table "this" (and not something else), so in a sense our experience of "the table" is that it "is" this. In other words, Heidegger is implying that the definitive article is precisely "this," where "this" is used to indicate "a person, thing or idea, etc., as pointed out, present or near." So for Heidegger, the "this" becomes the "the," which follows the same direction as Husserl but in order to make a counterclaim about what the table "is."

18. See my description in chapter 2 of the dining table as an object that supports family gatherings, for which I draw on Hannah Arendt's description of the table.
19. My argument here relates to the emphasis in science and technology studies on how bodies and technologies are mediated by each other—as being, in Andrew Pickering's terms, "entangled" (1995: 26). Or, as Bruno Latour puts it, objects and subjects are always "quasi" objects and "quasi" subjects; they form "strange new hybrids" (1993: 51). As tools, objects do not exist "apart" from subjects, and are therefore social. If technologies point toward action, then the entangling of bodies and technologies is about what capacities they enable or fail to enable. This means that agency is not "in" the body or the tool, as if they could act on their own as it were. Agency is a matter, instead, of how bodies come into contact with objects, as a contact that is never simply between two entities (this body and this tool), as each entity is already shaped by contact with others, within what science and technology studies would call an actor network, and what I might call a familiar and social order. Actions are enabled and constrained by how bodies and technologies come into contact; work is also a question of "what works" and what doesn't work when persons and things work together. See Ihde 1990, which brings together science and technology studies with phenomenology.
20. For an excellent reading of the second volume of *Ideas*, see Al-Saji 2000, which attends specifically to the role of affect in Husserl's model of the living body.
21. See the introduction to my *Strange Encounters*, which examines how encounters involve more than one body (2000: 6–9); see also chapter 7 on the ethics of such encounters.
22. In chapter 3, I offer an analysis of sharing as a form of division or cutting, as well as a mode of participation.
23. It is important to note that in the second book of *Ideas* the table is not described as the writing table: we do not know "what" kind of table it is. The table appears in its proximity to Husserl's body as the object that he touches and which has certain qualities. In a way the reorientation of Husserl toward questions of the body means that the table "matters" quite differently in his later work. We should not overestimate this difference: the table still functions here as an illustration of a philosophy of the body, which keeps other things in the background. To attend to such orientations is not a mode of negative critique; rather it is to show how writing itself is "directed," as a direction that shapes what things appear within the written text. We are reading, in other words, for "the angle" of writing.
24. The term *habitus* is used by Husserl in the second book of *Ideas* to explore how habits are acquired and become "customary" (1989: 118). It has, however, primarily entered social theory via Pierre Bourdieu, which has augmented what we could call a social or relational phenomenology. See Adkins and Skeggs 2004 for an excellent collection of feminist essays on Bourdieu.
25. I am alluding here to Heidegger's description of his wife seated at the table. As he states, "This side is not the east side, and this narrow side so many cm shorter than the other, but rather the one at which my wife sits in the evening when she wants to stay up and read" (1999: 69). I would suggest this making present of the wife at the table is quite different from bringing attachments to the surface of the table: *she appears on another side.*
26. I want to stress here that I am not suggesting that the arrival of women into philosophy is new or recent, as some readers have questioned. My point is that we only notice the arrival of bodies that inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape, which can include disciplinary spaces such as philosophy. That the woman philosopher remains noticeable is a sign of the orientation of philosophy rather than a sign of the work she has or has not been doing. Our task is not to learn not to notice such arrivals but to turn noticing into a different kind of work that also registers the orientation of the "in place," even when it celebrates new arrivals. See also chapter 3, which considers the arrival of black bodies as "bodies out of place" in spaces orientated around whiteness.

2. Sexual Orientation

1. In chapter 3 I explore how orientations in which others are perceived as "near" and "far" are crucial to the discourses of orientalism and to the racialization of bodily space.
2. For an excellent account of how phenomenology can be used as a method in "trans studies," see Rubin 1998. I should note that my own focus here on queer orientations is on the specific contours of lesbian lives. Other queer lives might have different contours, even if they share an oblique angle to the straight line. Phenomenology can offer a lens with which to consider what unfolds from these different points.
3. There are a number of critiques of this use of queer because of how it elides the differences between nonnormative sexualities: see, for example, Stacey 1997. I will explore the limits of queer as an "antinormative" orientation in the conclusion to this book, where I point to the need to consider how the different conditions of our arrival as queers shapes our relation to norms. See also chapter 7, "Queer Feelings" in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Ahmed 2004a).
4. We should note here that "inversion" is also a spatial and directional term, deriving from the Latin for "turn about." It can have various meanings, including to reverse in

position, direction, or tendency; to turn upside, inside out, or inwards. As Judith Butler comments: "The traditional invert gets its name because the *aim* of its desire has run off the rail of heterosexuality" (1992: 356).

5. The psychoanalytic reading seems quite different from the phenomenological one I discuss in chapter 1, in light of this tendency to go back or to go behind, and for the "behind" to be seen as about disappearance as well as appearance. In much of Freud's work, what goes back or is "the backwards" is not an effect of what has come before: what is "behind" does shape the present, but through what disappears. After all, psychoanalysis offers us a model of history as disappearance through its model of repression. Freud uses the example of the mystic writing pad (which almost gets us back to the table) to describe repression: the disappearance of the marks leaves its trace "on" and "under" the surface. Insofar as Marxism emphasizes the disappearance of labor in commodity fetishism, then it too provides a model of history as disappearance. A queer phenomenology, in which phenomenology is in dialogue with psychoanalysis and Marxism, might go "behind the back" to account for what disappears in how things appear. See my account in the next section of what disappears in the production of "a field of heterosexual objects."
6. Freud's position is a direct challenge to arguments in group psychology that presume that "the social instinct" (the bonds that exist between subjects who would otherwise be strangers), can be separated from other instincts that shape our intimate lives. And yet, at the same time, his argument sustains a distinction between the familial bond and the social bond by seeing the latter as derivations of the former, as "diverted from this aim" (38). My reading implies that we can also see the family bond as a diversion, in which family members succeed in identifying themselves *with* one another by love for a shared object.
7. As Teresa de Lauretis points out, Freud is unable to theorize the feminine lesbian (1994: xiii); or he is only able to theorize the feminine lesbian by looking for signs of masculinity on her body or in her psyche. We might also note that Freud describes the woman in this case as a feminist, which equates feminism as well as lesbianism with the desire for masculinity and the phallus. However, it is also important to stress that while Freud reads the lesbian as masculine as a way of straightening her desire, it does not follow that masculinity for lesbians, or for women in general, functions in this way. Female masculinity does not mean identifying with men, or even taking their place. As Judith Halberstam suggests, female masculinity may be "a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than simply a derivative of male masculinity" (1998: 77). Her exploration of this gender involves a direct critique of "psychoanalytic approaches that assume that female masculinity mimics male masculinity" (77). It is worth noting that the masculine lesbian as well as feminine lesbian disappears when using the psychoanalytic frame: the former is read as a (straight) man, the latter would not exist or would be inauthentic.
8. In the psychoanalytic tradition what has to be explained is how the girl first "turns away" from the mother, who is her primary love object: "The most perplexing question of all: how does the little girl manage to relinquish her love for her mother and turn to her father?" (Grigg, Hecq, and Smith 1995: 13; see also Hamon 2001: 1). The question in this case would not be why she turns away from him, but why she turns away from the mother and toward him in the first place. We could reformulate the psychoanalytic question as: why does she turn away from the mother and toward him, only then to turn away from him again?
9. I will explore such disorientation and queer objects in the conclusion to this book.
10. See Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993) for an excellent explanation of how social constructionism involves a critique of the voluntaristic model of choice.
11. As I suggest in the previous chapter, we can also see "handedness" not as already given, but as an effect of orientations. The more one side of the body is "used," the more we orientate toward that side and away from the other side. Robert Hertz's (1973) classic anthropological essay on the right hand makes exactly this claim: cultures are "orientated toward" the right side, which means a prohibition on the use of the left side, which affects what that side can do. This organic asymmetry between right and left becomes the basis for other forms of asymmetry (including male/female, white/black). This is not to say that "handedness" is cultural (let alone about choice): rather, it is just to say that orientation toward sides becomes given insofar as we have already "inherited" this historical orientation toward the right side. To be left handed is already to be deviant.
12. Thanks to Elena Loizidou who encouraged me to read what Hannah Arendt has to say about tables.
13. Indeed, dining tables have a special function within religious histories, precisely given how they generate spaces for bodies to gather, and to pass things around. For example, the table is a crucial symbolic moment in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition based on the Passover seder, as seen in the Last Supper and as reenacted every spring in many Jewish households. Food is passed around the table and prayers are said over it, as an act of passing that binds people together. It is not only the bodies that gather around this or that table who are bound together, but each gathering is bound to other gatherings, through this shared orientation toward the table, to form a wider gathering that gathers "over" the tables. Thanks to Mimi Sheller for this point, and for other communal table stories.
14. For an account of wonder, which draws on Descartes and Irigaray, see chapter 8 of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Ahmed 2004a).
15. I should note here that there is a range of practices for representing marriage in family trees. In some cases, marriage is represented by parallel horizontal lines (like an equals sign), and in others by a single horizontal line. The former practice works to differentiate marriage ties from the consanguineous relation between siblings. What is important is that marriage is represented as being on the horizontal axis, and as a starting point for vertical lines. Such "lines" help to make the very forms of connection they apparently represent. As Sarah Franklin (2005) has argued, the "lines" of genealogy are performative: through repetition, they create the

very ties and connections that then get lived as matters of course. See also the third section of chapter 3, which explores genealogical lines in relation to mixed families.

16. Queer theory is often represented as being about the nonalignment of sex, gender, and sexual orientation and given this tendency is often designated as "better" than feminist and lesbian and gay scholarship (see Corber and Valocchi 2003: 1). For me, the more difficult question is how sex, gender, and orientation are aligned in the very process of "becoming straight." While I see this project as queer, I also see this project as inhabiting the fields of women's studies and lesbian and gay studies, which have provided crucial insights into the alignments and nonalignments of sex, gender, and sexual orientation.
17. In suggesting the heterosexual couple is premised on resemblance, I am making two points. First I am contesting the presumption that heterosexuality is about "love for difference," which is crucial to Freud's model of anaclitic love. The very "direction" of heterosexual desire is often about "the good match," that is, searching for a love object that can "return" one's ideal image back to oneself (see Ahmed 2004a: 125–30). Second, the repetition of the couple form produces the effect of resemblance; heterosexual couples come to be seen as "alike" insofar as they are posited as continuous points along a horizontal line.
18. Interestingly, the argument that queer orientations are "biological" has depended on reading such orientations as following the family line, which straightens the queer effect, and established the queer as a "point" on a continuous line. For example, recent work by scientists on queer genes involves looking for signs of queerness within the family tree: Dean Hamer and Peter Copeland ask "whether being gay runs in families" (1994: 74; see also LeVay 1996: 175). Their method is a straight one: they "simply traced back the linkages of gay men, looking for signs of homosexuality in all the twigs and branches of the family tree" (20). The lines of such trees follow the usual line: they use "squares to represent males and circles to represent females. Mates were connected by horizontal lines, and parents and children by vertical lines" (78). It is no accident that the search for the gay essence, differently figured as biology, gene, brain, etc., reproduces the horizontal and vertical links of conventional genealogy. Such a search brings the queer back in line, positing that queerness runs, like dye, within the family on the maternal "side" of the family line.
19. Derrida (1992) and Diprose (2002) offer critiques of Mauss's model insofar as it remains within the economic logic of return. While I agree with their critiques, I also think Mauss's model is extremely important given the way in which gifts can operate "as if" they are not economic (as if they are about personal and social generosity), when in fact they demand such returns as modes of obligation. The use of the gift as a language, as Diprose suggests, can often work to conceal the very social relations of debt that they exercise. For an alternative analysis of the gift and of the given in Husserl's phenomenology, see Marion 2002.
20. I will explore this concept of inheritance in greater depth in chapter 3; particularly in light of the slide between the two meanings of inheritance: to receive and to possess.
21. We can see here a distinction between the "background" and the "behind." The background does not come into view, but it is still in the direction we are facing: in the sense that the background is "around" that which is faced. In *Ideas* Husserl does start by attending to the writing table. But it becomes clear that even when the writing table seems to have his attention, it becomes part of the background. We might say that the behind is that which is "the other side" of what is faced. And yet to push to the background can be to push something behind: in a way although the background is on the side of the face, it too can be "made behind." It might be the very illusion of being faced, which keeps what is in the background "behind."
22. Words also can be near other words. We know from psychoanalysis that the nearness of words is also not just casual: word-to-word (metonymy) and word-for-word (metaphor) depend on histories that stick and that takes us backward as well as sideways. See chapter 2 of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Ahmed 2004a) for an analysis of "sticky signs"—in particular the "sticky" work of metonymy.
23. Thanks to Sarah Franklin for this point.
24. On the gendered nature of gift economies, see Lèvi-Strauss 1969, Rubin 1975, and Irigaray 1985. Such work has shown us how women as a gift/commodity is exchanged between men to secure kinship relations: this makes the gift a matter of the reproduction of life as well as the reproduction of culture.
25. I will develop this distinction between being orientated "around" something and being orientated "toward" something in the following chapter.
26. The straight gaze might even correct this queer effect by seeing the couple as extending the heterosexual form (for instance, by seeing the butch lesbian as "the man" in the couple). See the third section of this chapter.
27. The "hope" of contact is related to the "fear" of heteronormative culture that lesbians will recruit straight women by turning them away from men. The fear, in other words, confirms the hope that proximity to lesbians might open up possibilities for other women. While we might contest the stereotype of the lesbian recruiter, she may also embody the promise of lesbian sociality as a sociality premised on being moved by contact with others.
28. For an excellent reading of this metaphor of heterosexuality as a current or channel (which when blocked leads to other channels) see Roof 1991: 185–86.
29. Of course, this fantasy of lesbian merger is not just repeated within psychoanalytical literature but also within lesbian culture. The soap opera *The L Word*, for example, repeatedly plays with this fantasy as a social risk for both couples and community. For some, merger might indeed by experienced as a genuine risk in intimate relations between women, who may be more orientated toward intimacy given the social "work" that gets assigned to femininity. What I am critiquing here is how the fantasy of lesbian merger works to pathologize lesbianism as the loss of difference.

30. In reading the work of Nestle, among other radical writers on queer and sex issues, I have been struck by how much power is invested in the figure of "the lesbian feminist." This figure is constructed in a way that is very similar to how she is represented mainstream popular culture: as all powerful, as moralizing, a killjoy, puritanical, and unsexy. It is time to tell another story, one that emerges with at least some recognition of our debt to lesbian feminists who were brave enough to speak up about forms of male and heterosexual power in the 1960s and 1970s. This is not to say we should idealize such feminisms but rather that we should avoid demonizing them. See Rubin 1993: 28 who describes "antisex" and "antiporn" feminists as participating in a "demonology."
31. See Martin 1996: 86 for a critique of the analogy between butch-femme and interracial lesbian intimacies.
32. Thinking about this "habit change" suggests that lesbians in turning toward women *also have to take other kinds of turns*. Lesbians do not necessarily turn away from men, but they have to turn away from the cultural obligation to define their sexuality as directed toward men, which requires more than one turn given how this obligation is "enforced" through law, culture, and political economy.
33. See also Sedgwick for a critique of the equation between "sexual orientation" and the "gender of the object choice" (1990: 35).
34. This was true in some ways but not others. My early experiences of public space did involve encountering racism. See the following chapter for an exploration of the racialization of space.
35. The lesbian critique of woman-identification and the queer critique of the lesbian feminist critique of sadomasochist practices has been so embracing that it is now hard to imagine that lesbian feminists had any fun in the 1970s. While I share the view that lesbianism is a sexual orientation, which is about desire rather than identification (or desire as well as identification), I would question the distinction between "prosex" and "antisex" within some queer work. Such work tends to posit a new set of "sexual ideals" premised on liberation from what has become known as the moralizing terms of radical lesbian feminism, as Diane Richardson argues (2000: 64). In fact, in reading backward from queer studies to the earlier work of radical feminism I was surprised to find that the most erotic and daring work, the work that moved me the most, was the earlier writing. I found the work of radical lesbian feminists both erotic and demanding, even in the mode of its critique of the relation between sex and power. Such lesbian feminists, in writing about male power, also search beyond their critiques for a new sexual vocabulary in which women's desire for women can be put in other words. Marilyn Frye, for example, calls for a sexual vocabulary that is open to the different possibilities for action when women's bodies get closer: "Let it be an open, generous, commodious concept encompassing all the acts and activities by which we generate with each other pleasures and thrills, tenderness and ecstasy, passages of passionate carnality of whatever duration or profundity. Everything from vanilla to liquorice, from pure to chanteuse, from velvet to ice, from cuddles to cunts, from chortles to tears" (1990: 314). In offering a vocabulary for lesbian sex, Frye and other radical lesbian feminists embrace how lesbian orientations can take many social and sexual forms precisely because they do not depend on the terms available within existing sexual vocabularies.
36. Critics have posed the question of whether this *is* a novel about lesbians. For instance, Jay Prosser has argued that we should read this novel not as about lesbian desire but as about transsexual identification (1998: 135–169). I do not think it makes sense to argue over how to analyse Stephen as if there was a "truth" that could be read in her/his interiority, which could be uncovered through reading the narrative as a case history. What we can say is that it is precisely given how homosexuality and inversion were entangled in the sexological writings of the time, that "the invert" was one way in which homosexuality or lesbianism could be publicly articulated. At the same time, because "inversion" does not have a necessary referent, it could also signify other ways of not following the lines of heterosexuality and gender. It should be possible for the novel to be read for signs of lesbian desire and/or transgender experience. Such readings would mean we would not claim the novel as being about one or the other, but instead show a willingness to pass the novel around. What makes novels lesbian or transgendered is partly what they allow us to do, by reading, talking, thinking *about* them. For instance, Prosser reads the ending of the novel, when Stephen in effect "gives" Mary to Martin, as a refusal of lesbian desire and an identification with the heterosexual man (166). And yet, other readings remain possible. The ending could be read as a gesture of lesbian desire, a desire for the beloved to be free of the unhappy burden of social stigma. While the gesture remains articulated along the lines of a straight romance (the beloved becomes an object to be given or given up) it also signals the presence of another figure, that of the lesbian lover. Such a figure would be read as inauthentic, as a sign of a masculine identification, only if we followed a heterosexual logic, as Freud does when he reads the case of homosexuality in a woman. This is not to say that lesbian lover might not be masculine (Halberstam 1998); indeed she may be, just as she may experience alienation from the embodied situation of femininity. After all, such masculinity does not mean she takes the place of a man; the refusal to occupy the assigned place of the woman by embracing signs of masculinity (or signs that have historically been seen as masculine) promises to re-orientate what it means to be a woman and what kind of body and desires she might have. It might also be important to stress that being a lesbian lover does not demand masculinity, even if it might involve it. After all, the feminine lesbian experiences desire. We could read the novel by re-imagining Mary as a lover as well as a beloved, as the one whose story "has yet to be told" (Newton 2000: 188). The unhappiness of the ending, as the point of Stephen's gesture, is partly the presumption that Mary's happiness depends upon being given access to the world that is unhappy with their love. *The Well of Loneliness* shares important elements with Freud's case history of homosexuality in a woman in this respect. We could say that the unhappiness of both stories is not about an unhappiness derived

from being in love, but about a world that is unhappy with such queer expressions of love. The hope implicit in *The Well of Loneliness* is that sharing the burden of being the origin of social and familial unhappiness can get us somewhere, by allowing new worlds as well as bodies to cohere. Being turned away from happiness could be rewritten as a turning towards "the what" as well as "the who" that such happiness negates. It is this turning towards the negated that shapes the strangeness of the world where queers gather.

37. I formulate this argument in *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000) by suggesting that a phenomenological model of corporeal generosity needs to be supplemented by an understanding of the "economies of touch" (48–49).

3. The Orient and Other Others

1. This quote within a quote is drawn from Jean Lhermitte's *L'Image de notre corps* (cited in Fanon 1986: 17).
2. Within this literature, a key influence is existentialism, specifically Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of bad faith. See, especially, Gordon 1995 for an analysis of antiblack racism as a form of bad faith. Gordon's work on black existentialism also draws on black writers such as Du Bois and Fanon, thereby clearing the way for another articulation of the relation between philosophy, race, and racism.
3. When we consider what it means for the Orient to be European we should register the significance of the "almost" as a linguistic form of hesitation. The "almost" functions to remind us that even if the Orient is made oriental by Europe, it does not follow that the Orient can be reduced to Europe as a sign of European authorship or authority. If the Orient is *almost* a European invention, then it also is *not quite* one.
4. Narcissism would refer us to the act of being *orientated toward oneself*, such that the self is the object of one's desire. To describe orientalism as narcissism would be to suggest that in looking at "the orient"—or even in directing one's desire toward it—the Orient stands in for the West, as a return of its image, or as an alibi. The postcolonial critique of anthropology as a form of narcissism makes exactly this claim. See Tyler 2005 for an excellent analysis of the discourses of narcissism.
5. Another way of describing this process would be to evoke the psychoanalytic distinction between identification and desire, or between being and having. See "In the Name of Love" in Ahmed 2004a.
6. Thanks to Imogen Tyler who directed me toward Warner's essay.
7. Donna Haraway (2003) makes an even stronger claim by arguing that history *is* inheritance.
8. If we think about inheritance as history, and as what we receive from others, then we can reconsider the biological as well as social aspects of inheritance: the body takes the shape of its history. Both biological and social inheritance would be described not as simply lines that we follow, but as the contingency of contact, where things coming into contact with other things shapes what we receive. So, histories might be as much about the skin, physiology, and blood as they are about styles, words, clothes, and technologies. History does not reside within such materials but instead shapes how they arrive in the forms that they do, which is also about "what" they come into contact with.
9. We can note here the historical investment in the notion of mixed-race and queer bodies as "end points" via the "social belief" that such bodies are infertile or nonreproductive; such bodies came to embody an anxiety about death, which in turn associates "life itself" with heterosexual whiteness. See Goodman 2001.
10. For a close reading of examples of such defensive whiteness, see the introduction and chapters 2 and 5 of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Ahmed 2004a).
11. I am rephrasing the argument I make in chapter 6, "Going Strange, Going Native," of *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000) about "becoming other" as a way of "not being" through proximity rather than distance. See also chapter 5 of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004a) on the topic of multicultural love, whereby the nation "becomes" different by its love for others who "are" different.
12. It would be interesting to explore here the role of mimicry in the passing down of habitual forms of action. Habits are the effects of repeated action. Such actions are social and are directed toward others as well as around the self. Sociality could be described as the invitation to "return" habits with habits: to repeat what others "do" until the "habit" becomes a common ground (which is not necessarily a conscious act of return). Relationships can even be orientated *around* habits. It is no accident that when one person in an intimate relationship breaks a shared habit, this act can affect the intimacy of the relationship and even "break" it. Inheritance is also what we receive from others: in sharing a habit, we share a way of inhabiting the body.
13. For work that uses Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to explore the racialized body, see Smaje 1997; Wicker 1997; Hage 1998; and Puwar 2004.
14. It is worth noting here that the word "habit" comes from the Latin for condition, appearance, and dress.
15. There is an irony here. If Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology assumes motility, in the force of the utterance, "I can," then his reliance on a disability is instructive. The "able body" is an effect of technologies that, as it were, expose motility itself as a device.
16. We need to ask what happens when diversity becomes incorporated into the "ego ideal" of an organization. We could assume that if enough nonwhite bodies gather, then the "in place" might be less secure and the organization might become less white. The very demand for bodies that are different, though, can still keep things in place. Diversity becomes something they "are," which means the organization can "have it" by being seen as taking "them" in.
17. For an analysis of the relationship between whiteness and institutional racism, see "Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism" (Ahmed 2004b).
18. To argue that the presence of bodies of color can have a "queer effect" is not to pose an equivalence between being of color and being queer, which would, of course, negate the specificity of the experiences of queers of color. Rather, it is to point to

how "queer" does not only refer us to nonnormative sexualities but to the moments in which norms fail to be reproduced. We need to explore how queer and race intersect at different points. See Barnard 2004.

19. This is why white working-class bodies can be seen as not "really" white, and black middle-class bodies can be seen as not "really" middle class. At the same time, the white working classes are not "on the same line" as the black working classes, and the black middle classes are not "on the same line" as the black working classes. The "points" of intersectionality make the social map very messy.
20. Thanks to Imogen Tyler for encouraging me to think about the significance of Husserl's loss of a chair for my argument about whiteness, and to Mimi Sheller for her insights into the politics of mobility.
21. Of course, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, as I showed in the previous chapter, is full of queer moments, often when he describes experiments by neuroscientists that rely on disturbing the ordinary functions of perception. It is important to note here that his analysis suggests that the "I can" requires the straightening of perception (spatial functions come back into line so the body can act) and is an effect of action: "We remain physically upright not through the mechanism of the skeleton of muscular tone, but because we are caught up in a world. If this involvement is seriously weakened, the body collapses and becomes once more an object" (2002: 296). If we begin to think about the conditions of involvement, and how the world is shaped by some "involvements" more than others, then we can begin to develop a politics of disorientation—that is, one that *sees the reduction of some bodies to objects as an effect of how the world itself takes shape*. See the conclusion to this volume for an extension of this point.
22. I develop this thesis on the "economies of movement" (how movement for some blocks the movement of others) in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004a). See also the introduction to Ahmed, Castañeda, Fortier, and Sheller 2003, which critiques the ways in which mobility has been taken up within social and cultural theory.
23. The difference between racial categorizations in the United States and the United Kingdom is significant, and it means, of course, different orientations toward "race." Some of my arguments might not translate, which points to the difficulty in working with "objects" that acquire different meanings depending on the "point" of their dwelling. Of course, all objects transform when they translate, or travel. One approach might be to see what does not translate as a gift, in the sense that it generates some new impressions. See Spivak 1995 for an analysis of what follows from what does not translate or "move across."
24. I am drawing on my own experience of mixed-race genealogy, which will not necessarily correspond with the experiences of others. For excellent black British feminist accounts of mixed raceness that draw on empirical research, see Ali 2003; Ifekwunigwe 1999; and Tizad and Phoenix 1993. See also Ifekwunigwe 2004 for a good collection of historical and contemporary articles in mixed-race studies.
25. While I was working on this chapter one of my Pakistani cousins (who now lives in London) gave me her copy of our family biography, which was written by my eldest aunt and uncle. Reading through it, and reading about my aunt's incredible life, I felt more than ever that I often underestimate how much my Pakistani "side" has shaped me. In a way, it is fitting that it is the lives and loves of politically active women that sustains this connection: women who refuse to define themselves through men, and who orientate their lives creatively around other women. This became an especially important connection when my father ended contact with me when I told him about my queer life. It is only through my aunts that any connection to my Pakistani family is now possible. It is interesting to imagine how family stories might be told differently, through the very affective labor of the women who don't reproduce the family line; who in a conventional tree would just be an "end point." In an alternative or queer genealogy, life might even unfold from such points.
26. For a manifesto on the intimacy of mixed race and queer identities, see the Web site by Lauren Jade Martin, a mixed-race queer activist and writer, at http://www.theyellowperil.com/manifesto.htm. Martin suggests that mixed-race (multiracial and biracial) identities are queer because they do not inhabit existing racial categories. But she also suggests that multirace or mixed-race people are more likely to become queer. As she puts it: "Almost every person I know of mixed-race background is queer. I don't think that this is a random coincidence. I'm not saying that there is a direct correlation—that if your parents are of different races then that means you are destined to be a flaming homosexual—but I do think there is a relation here that needs to be explored. There is something in living an interstitial existence—a life between the lines—that creates a certain freedom and fluidity. We are anomalies among anomalies, able to enter multiple worlds at multiple times, as both outsiders and insiders." Being between lines, she suggests, might open up other kinds of "between." Or course, it might not, as the experience of being mixed or between could also mean we seek support by following other kinds of lines.
27. For other important and critical work on "queer diasporas," see Puar 1998; Patton and Sanchez-Eppler 2000; Fortier 2002; and Gopinath 2005.
28. Of course, this use of "black" as a gathering device is very specific to British race politics. Such "words" do not always travel, or if they do, they acquire quite different meanings. The use of this word in the United Kingdom is no longer so powerful, as it has been seen to risk essentialism by assuming that all those who are not white have common backgrounds and interests. Within public policy, black has been replaced with black and minority ethnic, which is often abbreviated as BME (a rather helpful way, one suspects, of concealing the "trouble" of race). My own view is that the word "black" can gather us around without necessarily assuming a "common background." I have always been rather hopeful about collective forms of political gathering.

Conclusion

1. It might be possible to rethink Husserl's concept of bracketing. Rather than the bracket functioning as a device that puts aside the familiar, we could describe the

bracket as a form of wonder: that is, we feel wonder about what is in the bracket, rather than putting what is in the bracket to one side. A reconciliation of Husserlian phenomenology and a Marxist critique of the reification of objects might be possible through wonder: a wonder at how things appear is what allows histories to come alive. See chapter 8 of my *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004a), which describes Marxism as a philosophy of wonder.

2. Thanks to Lisa Armstrong who reminded me during a visit to Smith College that the table takes a very queer turn in Marx.
3. Of course, there is a much queerer story to tell about hands. Within lesbian sexual cultures hands emerge as erotic sites, becoming public as well as intimate signs of desire. See Merck 2000 for an exploration of the significance of lesbian hands.
4. This might even make Proust's legs an example of a queer table. As Diana Fuss (2004: 189–90) notes, Proust used his legs as a table, and his bedroom as a writing room, given his ill health and physical immobility. When one's legs serve as one's table, they support different kinds of action, providing something to do something on.
5. In contrast, for Levinas the face is precisely that which is not orientated. This is why despite the way he reorientates philosophy from ontology to ethics, from the question of being to the question of otherness, or what is "otherwise than being" (1998), Levinas has less to say about "orientation" than do other phenomenologists. For Levinas the orientation of ethics itself is precisely to suspend orientation, in the sense that it is to suspend one's relation to others in time or in space. To approach others as one might approach an object, as something "in" space, would not be an ethical approach. We can only truly approach the other, he suggests, when we are "uprooted from history" (1969: 52). Furthermore, the other is not "before" me; I do not "face" the other's face, and the other's face is certainly not a matter of direction. This is why his work does not offer a phenomenology of the face: "I do not know if one can speak of a 'phenomenology' of the face, since phenomenology describes what appears. So, too, I wonder if one can speak of a look toward the face, for the look is knowledge, perception. I think rather that access to the face is straightforwardly ethical. You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering a face is not even to notice the colour of his eyes!" (1985: 85). I also would not want to offer a phenomenology of the face in this sense of beginning with such description (see Ahmed 2000: 145). Yet, I think we learn a lot from what we do and do not notice, and the question of ethics is partly about the directions we take that allow us to notice some things rather than others. For me, the act of facing, how it is that we come to face the direction that we do, is deeply bound up with the ethical relation we have with others: facing is about a "somatic mode of attention" (Csordas 2002: 241–46), which allows us to be touched by the proximity of others. The direction we face is also what allows us to encounter some faces and not others; to notice them as faces at all, whether or not we can describe their faces. Lingis in his translator's preface to *Otherwise than Being* suggests that facing "is not turning a surface" but instead an "appealing" (1998: xiv). I would propose an ethics of facing (rather than of the face), which proceeds from the relation between "turning surfaces" and an appeal. More generally, such an ethics would reconsider the role of surfacing, or what we could call "the politics of turning" (and turning around), and how in facing this way or that the surfaces of bodies and worlds take their shape. As I showed in chapter 1, Husserl's description of what is around him shows that he is facing the writing table, which depends on the relegation of other spaces to the background, including what is "behind" him. It would be right for us to think both of that table as itself "facing" Husserl and of pointing toward the work he does: the work of philosophy. An ethical turn in philosophy might then also return to the question of the table, in the sense that the "face" of philosophy is itself shaped by what it faces, *by what gets its attention*. An ethics of the table might give attention to the table, which also means noticing the labor that is behind its arrival, as well as the work it allows us to do.
6. For bringing this book to my attention, I thank those who participated in the workshop on orientations at the Five College Women's Studies Research Center.
7. In this particular instance, Bawer describes how he and his partner were missing from the wedding photographs of couples in whose weddings they had participated. Weddings involve tables both in this sense of being "pictured" (*tableau*) and also in the organization of receptions and dinners. Conventionally, a wedding places the "bride and groom" and their "immediate family" at the front table, and other tables face this table. The heterosexual couple becomes given by being given this place around which other tables gather. The point of the gathering is to witness their place at the table.
8. Of course, you can have a heterosexual orientation and "not line up" in the sense that you may actively refuse that line (by refusing marriage, monogamy, or other ways of being straight) or in the sense that what you have behind you prohibits your capacity to move along the line (you may lack the resources necessary for approximating a social and moral ideal).
9. For an important critique of the racial politics of "queer shame," see Perez 2005.

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