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In his 1937 essay “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” Herbert Marcuse proposed—in an almost offhand manner, and without addressing the implications of this claim for any larger Marxist tradition—that “in suffering the most extreme reification man triumphs over reification”: a triumph, he suggested, which was of a specifically erotic character.¹ Early in his career, Marcuse used the category of reification in an unusually multivalent way, a way that has significant implications, I will argue, both for the Marxist tradition and for modern forms of antiheteronormative politics. Marcuse’s deployment of this category—which constitutes a striking contrast with its more univocal sense in the work of his Western Marxist predecessors, including Georg Lukács, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno—would take its most sustained theoretical form almost twenty years later, in *Eros and Civilization*, and would ultimately be indissociable from his investment in Freudian psychoanalysis. Over this twenty-year span, both before and during his sustained exploration of the revolutionary implications of psychoanalysis, Marcuse would, first of all, consistently link the estrangement of labor power to repression: the reification of the body under the interdependent regimes of what the Frankfurt school influentially called “instrumental reason” and of what Marcuse called procreative, “genital supremacy” required, he argued, the restriction of eroticism to the genital area of the body. But he insisted at the same time that only by polymorphously re-eroticizing the body—erotically objectifying it, reifying it, turning it into a thing, into a (very different kind of) instrument—could the former type of reification be negated.

Previously in the Western Marxist tradition, reification had been formulated as a fundamentally cumulative and quantitative historical process. With the expansion of capitalism came a quantitative increase in reification’s pervasiveness and depth. By the time Marcuse was writing, the Frankfurt school had articulated this category in terms of instrumental reason, a form of reason driven by purely pragmatic, technical interests and concerned with the efficiency of means to predetermined ends. An earlier, critical, Enlightenment reason had devolved into a “totalitarian” reason² that was the driving force behind what Marcuse called the “comfortable, smooth, reasonable democratic unfreedom which prevails in advanced industrial civilization.”³ In Marcuse’s early work, nonetheless,

reification begins to take on, in addition to these negative connotations, more positive, liberatory, and specifically erotic ones. For Marcuse instrumental reason has so saturated all of civilized culture—not just work but also leisure, not just production but also consumption—that a nonrepression of primal sexuality, an extreme sexual reification of the body, is an indispensable precondition for any negation of “democratic unfreedom.” And in this sense, as I intend to show, Marcuse begins to formulate reification as a potentially *qualitative* historical process. Here reification takes on a more unrelentingly dialectical character than in the typical Western Marxist formulation of this category, in terms of a narrative of quantitative increase and potential reversal.

Within a decade of *Eros and Civilization*'s publication, however—at the very moment when what Marcuse viewed as potential revolutionary agents, potential substitutes or spurs for a compromised, assimilated Cold War working class, were manifesting themselves in practice (youth movements, marginalized minority groups, “Third World” guerrilla armies)—Marcuse abandoned what was, finally, a more or less exclusively *theoretical, speculative* focus on the liberatory potential of reified eroticism. This is ironic, to put it mildly, considering that this exclusively theoretical emphasis was being politically enacted by at least one strain of New Left activism—gay liberation, on which Marcuse's influence, I will suggest, was largely unintentional.

The arguments of *Eros and Civilization* are certainly outdated in many ways, after the Foucauldian critique of Freud (and, indeed, of Marcuse) in particular. Marcuse's relevance at this moment vis-à-vis Marxist and queer theory and the relation between them—a relevance that is by no means obvious but that I want to insist upon—has more to do with reading his arguments in relation to certain contexts than with the arguments themselves. The distinctive erotics of reification he formulates, first of all, mediate a historical and dialectical relation between a phobic and highly influential postwar clinical psychoanalytic establishment and the gay liberation movement of the seventies. The theoretical vocabularies of these politically opposed movements were in fact highly consistent with one another, and Marcuse's with both. But even more important, I think, are the implications of Marcuse's reformulation of reification—especially in the context of *Eros and Civilization*'s well-established influence on the early gay liberation movement—vis-à-vis the still largely traditional use of this category in contemporary Marxist thought.

Against Universal Heterosexuality

Before turning to *Eros and Civilization* I want to elaborate one of its contexts, a widespread sociocultural linking of regression with homoeroticism that characterized the U.S. ideological landscape during the period of the book's preparation and publication. I want ultimately to stress the influence of a psychoanalytic vocabulary, which held a certain amount of cultural hegemony at this moment, on the later gay liberation movement. But it is worthwhile at first to recall how the character of this movement was overdetermined by the ways homosexuality had been politicized in the fifties. As numerous commentators have pointed out, by the height of the Cold War the homophile movements, on the one hand, had rejected their communist roots and were being as unfrontational as possible. Increasingly made up of middle-class professionals with a great deal financially to lose, they began portraying themselves as an oppressed minority largely analogous to national, religious, and other ethnic groups, arguing that homosexuals were more like heterosexuals than unlike them, that they were not ill or maladjusted in any sense but were merely different and therefore deserved basic equality under the law.⁴ On the other hand, homosexuality was a privileged metonym for a more radical form of subversion in the work of figures as different in political outlook as Marcuse and, say, Paul Goodman, who sought ways of intervening critically in a society they saw as being fundamentally without opposition, a society Goodman pejoratively called "organized" and Marcuse called "one-dimensional." The discourses they produced, which tended to be driven by anarchist and Marxist perspectives, respectively, attributed an unprecedented political homogeneity to postwar U.S. culture, characterizing that culture in terms of a relative ideological containment of those forms of progressive class, race, and gender politics that had seemed more consequential earlier in the century. I would suggest that the character of the seventies gay rights movement, then, was dialectically overdetermined by an ideological opposition in the fifties and early sixties between an assimilationist, minoritizing emphasis on winning basic civil rights and a more radical, universalizing argument for the subversive character of homosexuality, an argument for its status as a direct affront to the bourgeois democratic state and to a normalized, phobically heterosexist culture.⁵ The relatively militant character of the early gay liberation movement was in this respect influenced negatively by the conservatism of the homophile organizations and positively by figures like Marcuse and Goodman.

Moreover, this schematization of postwar definitions of homosexuality in terms of competing ideological lines is valid at an even higher level of social abstraction. The hegemonic juridical discourses of homosexual-

ity during this period participated in a universalizing logic strikingly similar to that of radicals like Marcuse and Goodman, and even more directly contested minoritizing homophile arguments. Indeed, politically driven universalizations of homosexuality on both the Left and the Right suggested that homosexuality represented a direct threat to state power, and their common reliance on psychoanalytic categories constituted them as part of a more general ideological contest between the relatively conservative postwar institution of clinical psychoanalysis and frequently utopian radicalizations of psychoanalysis. The widespread interest in Freud's ideas among U.S. intellectuals following World War II was dramatically split along political lines, and the conservative character of clinical psychoanalysis during this period has been succinctly characterized by Paul Robinson as an aspect of its medicalization: "By the 1940's . . . psychoanalysis had become a branch of the medical profession, and the typical practicing psychoanalyst carefully distinguished the discrete precepts and techniques of his therapeutic science from the ambitious metahistorical adventures in which Freud had indulged."⁶ Similarly, Kenneth Lewes has suggested that the postwar period in the history of U.S. clinical psychoanalysis "was characterized by an increasingly moralistic tone and a growing emphasis on conventional social values," part and parcel of an increasingly "adaptational" focus on the "whole personality," a "trend to deinstinctualize the determinants of deviant sexual behavior":⁷ homosexuality, the new argument went, was the product of unhealthy environments (overbearing mothers, for infamous example) rather than fundamental intrapsychic dynamics. This movement "outward," from the instincts to interpersonal relations and the "whole personality," was a fundamentally conservative gesture. Contrary to what it might have promised in terms of a more sociologically critical psychoanalysis, that movement in fact fetishized both personality and social reality rather than pursuing what Adorno, in a paper he delivered in 1946, called the "inner history" of the libido: "Concretely, the denunciation of Freud's so-called instinctivism amounts to the denial that culture, by enforcing restrictions on libidinal and particularly on destructive drives, is instrumental in bringing about repressions, guilt feelings, and need for self-punishment."⁸

Almost ten years later, in his "Critique of Neo-Freudian Revisionism," Marcuse more fully explored and more explicitly situated in relation to the economic and political realities of the postwar period the conservatism of this ongoing clinical "revisionism." With this postwar emphasis on interpersonal relations, for Marcuse, "psychoanalytic theory turns into ideology: the 'personality' and its creative potentialities are resurrected in the face of a reality which has all but eliminated the conditions for the personality and its fulfillment." Like Adorno, Marcuse identifies the neorevi-

sionists' "expurgating [of] the instinctual dynamic" as the linchpin of its conservatism:

Whereas Freud, focusing on the vicissitudes of the primary instincts, discovered society in the most concealed layer of the genus and individual man, the revisionists, aiming at the reified, ready-made form rather than at the origin of the societal institutions and relations, fail to comprehend what these institutions and relations have done to the personality that they are supposed to fulfill.⁹

Consequently, "the weakening of the psychoanalytic conception, and especially of the theory of sexuality, must lead to a weakening of the sociological critique and to a reduction of the social substance of psychoanalysis" (*EC*, 243).

Marcuse emphasizes, moreover, that this development is the product of objective historical circumstances: the therapeutic,

unconditional affirmation of the patient's claim for happiness . . . becomes practicable only if happiness and the "productive development of the personality" are redefined so that they become compatible with the prevailing values, that is to say, if they are internalized and idealized. And this redefinition must in turn entail a weakening of the explosive content of psychoanalytic theory as well as of its explosive social criticism. If this is indeed (as I think) the course that revisionism has taken, then it is because of the objective social dynamic of the period: in a repressive society, individual happiness and productive development are in contradiction to society; if they are defined as values to be realized within this society, they themselves become repressive. (*EC*, 244–45)

The instinctual focus of psychoanalysis was indispensable in part because, as I will emphasize in the next section, the instincts denote memory: Marcuse's emphasis on memory attempted to reclaim historical consciousness during a period in which, as far as he was concerned, historical consciousness had vanished.

Consequently, like the more anarchistic Goodman, whose work centered on the confrontation between the state power comprised in "the organized society" and "homosexual subversion," Marcuse represented homosexuality as a privileged instance of subversion of the regime of the indissociable "reproductive" and "performance" principles, a crucial metonym for the polymorphous sexuality of which he advocated the liberation. Rejecting any emphasis on the "whole personality" and indeed paying scant attention to the ego at all, Marcuse dialectically embraced the psychoanalytic configuration of unrepressed homosexuality as a direct threat to the progress of civilization, reversing the conservative Freudian

narrative from infantile polymorphous sexuality to the mature repression civilization requires, advocating instead a transformative trajectory from the specific, profound postwar form of social repression “back” to polymorphous sexuality.

Meanwhile, Cold War–era political and juridical discourse increasingly implicated reactionary psychoanalytic universalizations of homosexuality as part of a larger effort to, as Robert Corber has put it, “invalidate Marxist categories by shifting attention from the material world to the individual’s subjective experience of it.” Thus, influential political figures such as Arthur Schlesinger and Hannah Arendt extended the conservatism of clinical psychoanalysis by suggesting that people who were attracted to radical political movements were maladjusted, thereby fueling the closetedness of both communism and homosexuality by linking both with psychopathology: Schlesinger himself, Corber points out, suggested that homosexuals and communists alike were “lonely and frustrated people.”¹⁰ At the same time, however, this political discourse—and the instances of specifically juridical discourse through which it was mobilized, such as the Senate Appropriations Committee’s 1950 characterization of homosexuals as a national security risk—ineluctably partook of the universalizing logic that also informed reactionary psychoanalytic conceptions of homosexuality, whereby the latter, like communism itself, constituted a fluid, potentially uncontrollable force fundamentally subversive of “civilization.” And as Corber remarks, moreover, precisely because the medical evidence of homosexuality’s insidious invisibility that was marshaled by the government “acknowledged the resistance of sexuality to containment through representation, it called into question the fixity of male and female *heterosexual* identities” (my emphasis).¹¹ Thus, the juridical reliance on psychoanalytic discourse began inadvertently to add government legitimation to a logic of universalization that implicated heterosexuality and homosexuality alike. If the immediate goal of this reactionary brand of universalization was the containment of the specter of homosexuality, its ultimate, utopian goal—like that of state attempts to “contain communism”—was its elimination: the universalization, that is, of *heterosexuality*. Indeed, both reactionary and revolutionary versions of the psychoanalytic model suggested that both homosexuality and heterosexuality were potentially universal components of experience. These opposing political perspectives shared in common a distinctly psychoanalytic logic of universalization: fear of homosexual universalization, on the one hand, and resistance to heterosexual universalization, on the other.

Reification and Memory

Marcuse's unique use of the category of reification begins, again, in his pre-Freudian phase, in his politically charged analyses of eroticism in the late thirties. In "The Affirmative Character of Culture," for example, Marcuse brings this issue up briefly but does not explore it in any detail. He distinguishes between a bourgeois imperative—"marketing the body as an instrument of labor"—and a bourgeois taboo—marketing it "as an instrument of pleasure"—arguing that the latter negates the former, while both are forms of reification. He contends that the prohibition of pleasure is a traditional condition of bourgeois freedom and makes a distinction between two forms of objectification. In the bourgeois era, he asserts, "for the poor, hiring oneself out to work in a factory became a moral duty, while hiring out one's own body as a means to pleasure was depravity and 'prostitution.' . . . Insofar as the body becomes a commodity as a manifestation or bearer of the sexual function, this occurs subject to general contempt." Contempt is the response, moreover, not only to "prostitution but [to] all production of pleasure that does not occur for reasons of 'social hygiene' in the service of reproduction." These marginalized, "demoralized" strata of society, however, "provide . . . an anticipatory memory. When the body has completely become an object, a beautiful thing, it can foreshadow a new happiness. In suffering the most extreme reification man triumphs over reification."¹²

While Marcuse here begs all kinds of questions by so tentatively raising—and so quickly moving past—the issue of "triumphant" reification, he does explore further the implications of the connection between remembering and foreshadowing in his 1948 critique of existentialism in general and *Being and Nothingness* in particular. In that extensive review essay, Marcuse adopts Sartre's own remarks about sexuality to argue that the realm of freedom inheres in being "in-itself" as opposed to being "for-itself": because Sartre privileges the latter, Marcuse sets him on his feet, so to speak. Discerning in being "for-itself" the bourgeois demand to work, to produce, to participate in capitalism's performance principle, Marcuse charges that by urging its primacy, Sartre actually promulgates a quietist position even as he conceives of "le désir"—"essentially," Marcuse insists, "le désir sexuel"—as the negation of all activity, all "performance," and thus as the experience in which the human subject becomes thinglike, given over to pleasure in his or her own body. For Marcuse this implies that "reification itself thus turns into liberation," and this by way of a return to a more natural state of "facticity," a regressive liberation from the accoutrements of instrumental standardization.¹³

Subsequent to the critique of Sartre, Marcuse's focus on the reifica-

tion of the body increasingly located the broader “battle of universalizations” I elaborated in the previous section on the body itself: the theoretical transition from this critique to *Eros and Civilization*, that is, entailed a translation of Marcuse’s distinctive use of the category of reification into more specifically psychoanalytic terms. While the reification of the body as instrument of labor demanded by the state presupposed the restriction of eroticism to genital sexuality, Marcuse advocated a polymorphous reification of the body as an instrument of pleasure that would negate this prior moment of reification. It would indeed be in his radicalizing of Freudianism that Marcuse would make explicit what is only implicit in his critique of Sartre: the power of a critical, utopian articulation of regression with homoeroticism to negate the historically specific subject-object dynamic that obtains under the regime of instrumental reason. While in this critique Marcuse emphasizes that “the ‘*désir sexuel*’ accomplishes this negation of the negation not as a mere relapse into animal nature, but as a free and liberating human relation” (“E,” 327), in *Eros and Civilization* he does indeed link a kind of psychic “relapse” with the sexual reification of the body, the liberating force of the ego’s memory of repressed polymorphous sexuality. The linchpin of this force is the “affinity between phantasy” and what Marcuse calls “the perversions”: “In its refusal to accept as final the limitations imposed upon freedom and happiness by the reality principle, in its refusal to forget what *can be*, lies the critical function of phantasy” (*EC*, 146, 149). Relapse, memory, phantasy: *Eros and Civilization* uses psychoanalytic categories to reformulate in a more explicitly *narrative* fashion the link between reification and social transformation more tentatively glossed in earlier texts. As Marcuse puts it in his penultimate chapter, under the regime that radically dissociated “possessive private relations” and “possessive societal relations,” the latter constituted a realm in which the body is fully instrumentalized through labor, while, by contrast,

the full force of civilized morality was mobilized against the use of the body as a mere object, means, instrument of pleasure; such reification was tabooed and remained the ill-reputed privilege of whores, degenerates, and perverts. . . . With the emergence of a non-repressive reality principle, with the abolition of the surplus-repression necessitated by the performance principle, this process would be reversed. In the societal relations, reification would be reduced as the division of labor became reoriented on the gratification of freely developing individual needs; whereas, in the libidinal relations, the taboo on the reification of the body would be lessened. No longer used as a full-time instrument of labor, the body would be resexualized. The regression involved in this spread of the libido would first manifest itself in a reactivation of all erotogenic zones and, consequently, in a resurgence of

pregenital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy. The body in its entirety would become an object of cathexis, a thing to be enjoyed—an instrument of pleasure. This change in the value and scope of libidinal relations would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the private interpersonal relations have been organized, particularly the monogamic and patriarchal family. (*EC*, 200–201)

Of course, by the time *Eros and Civilization* was published, a number of real social threats to the “monogamic and patriarchal family” were several decades old. Indeed, what Marcuse identifies as the recent past and present, “bourgeois” domestication of the sexual instincts would come closer, as such generalizations go, to describing an early-nineteenth-century U.S. sexual order rather than a modern one already tainted by, say, first-wave feminism, or by that increasing commodification of sexuality that kicked into high gear around the turn of the century. This passage ignores these developments, transposing nineteenth-century taboos into the postwar period, and Marcuse’s increasing acknowledgment of this reality *after* the publication of *Eros and Civilization* perhaps goes a long way toward explaining the dramatic difference in tone that characterizes the later *One-Dimensional Man*, where he would become less optimistic about the revolutionary import of the erotic, where indeed the contest he depicts in this passage between instrumentalities of pleasure and “surplus repression” would metamorphose into a more insidious form of sexual instrumentality he would influentially dub “repressive desublimation.”

I will return to the larger implications of this shift in tone below; for the moment I want to emphasize, in spite of the above reservations, that this passage is Marcuse’s most forceful and detailed statement of reification’s transformative power, its power not merely to negate but to supersede the estrangement, under the regime of instrumental reason and the performance principle, of the public and private realms, the realms of labor and pleasure. In the context of *Eros and Civilization*’s larger argument, moreover, this becomes the utopian power to bridge the estrangement of “man [*sic*]” and “nature,” of subject and object as such. Indeed, one of the reasons for the relative optimism of *Eros and Civilization* is Marcuse’s belief—in striking contrast to *One-Dimensional Man*—that increasing technological rationality creates certain conditions of possibility for liberation, that there are certain “historical limits [to] the established reality principle” (*EC*, 129–40), that indeed many of Freud’s most fundamental assumptions about history and culture no longer hold:

In Freud’s theory, freedom from repression is a matter of the unconscious, of the subhistorical and even subhuman *past*, of primal biological and mental processes; consequently, the idea of a non-repressive reality principle is a

matter of retrogression. That such a principle could itself become a historical reality, a matter of developing consciousness, that the images of phantasy could refer to the unconquered *future* of mankind rather than to its (badly) conquered past—all this seemed to Freud at best a nice utopia. (*EC*, 147)

But these developing conditions of possibility for liberation upon which Marcuse insisted were in fact the very thing that required not a constant degree of social repression but an increasing level of “surplus repression.” What Marcuse identifies as regression “would still be a reversal of the process of civilization, a subversion of culture—but *after* culture had done its work and created the mankind and the world that could be free. It would still be ‘regression’—but in the light of mature consciousness and guided by a new rationality” (*EC*, 198). *Eros and Civilization* is nothing if not an exercise in narrative-construction: not merely a reversal of Freud’s narrative of historically accumulating layers of repression, it undertakes a theoretical transformation of the arguably conservative ahistorical implications of Freudianism into radically historical ones. It is a brilliant use of Freud’s metapsychology to link memory with a future beyond the realm of necessity, to imagine qualitative historical change during an era in which—according to the Frankfurt school’s critique of instrumental, “one-dimensional” thought—historical, utopian thinking had been so pervasively replaced by ahistorical, positivist thinking (e.g., the increasing conservatism of clinical psychology) that maintaining historical perspective of any kind was all but impossible.

At the same time, while this manipulation of Freudianism has been widely acknowledged as a source of *Eros and Civilization*’s theoretical power, the book’s psychoanalytically formulated emphasis on the transformative power of reification has barely been acknowledged. Martin Jay, for instance, rightly emphasizes the revolutionary implications of memory in Marcuse’s thought. But he also relates memory to “dereification,” somewhat inaccurately asserting that

it was not really until Georg Lukács introduced the idea of reification in *History and Class Consciousness* that the emancipatory potential of memory was tapped by a Marxist thinker of note. . . . The concept of dereification implied a certain type of remembering, for what had to be recaptured were the human origins of a social world that had been mystified under capitalism as a kind of “second nature.”¹⁴

In my view it is fundamentally mistaken to suggest that Marcuse uses the category of reification as do, say, Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, to designate a largely quantitative historical accumulation of layers of mystification. The passage from *Eros and Civilization* cited

above demonstrates that for the Marcuse of this text, the radical reformulation of the categories of an ostensibly conservative metapsychology is indissociable from a radical reformulation of the category of reification, that reification can have transformative, liberating repercussions as well as conservative, mystifying ones. In this sense the category of “dereification”—which implies a mere reversal of a quantitative historical process—is finally anathema to Marcuse’s project. Marcuse advocates not a mere return to an earlier, polymorphous stage but the way a memory of polymorphous sexuality can preserve a utopian negation of the reigning performance principle and prefigure a new, more congenial reality principle. His emphasis, again, is not merely on memory but on *anticipatory* memory.

Marcuse and Gay Liberation; or, Theory and Practice

When Marcuse finally gets around to elaborating the specific power of the only concrete catalysts of historical change *Eros and Civilization* identifies—the “perversions”—the register of his argument shifts in a subtle but significant way. The mythic figures Marcuse uses to envision a specifically homoerotic negation of the contemporaneous reality principle are Orpheus and Narcissus, whom he represents primarily in terms of their striking contrast with Prometheus, representative of instrumental reason, the struggle to control and exploit nature. Identifying the reality principle with “productiveness” and the pleasure principle with “receptiveness” (*EC*, 12), Marcuse asserts that Orpheus and Narcissus represent a passive, “receptive” relation to the natural world and the ultimate reunification of man with the nature he had subjugated:

Trees and animals respond to Orpheus’ language; the spring and the forest respond to Narcissus’ desire. This Orphic and Narcissistic Eros awakens and liberates potentialities that are real in things animate and inanimate, in organic and inorganic nature—real but in the un-erotic reality suppressed. These potentialities circumscribe the *telos* inherent in them as: “just to be what they are,” “being-there,” existing. (*EC*, 165)

As a result of this liberation, “the Orphic and Narcissistic experience of the world negates that which sustains the world of the performance principle. The opposition between man and nature, subject and object, is overcome” (*EC*, 166). Further, Marcuse explicitly registers Orpheus’s love for “young boys”:

The classical tradition associates Orpheus with the introduction of homosexuality. Like Narcissus, he rejects the normal Eros, not for an ascetic ideal,

but for a fuller Eros. Like Narcissus, he protests against the repressive order of procreative sexuality. The Orphic and Narcissistic Eros is to the end the negation of this order—the Great Refusal. (*EC*, 171)

Thus in this one instance, where Marcuse deploys the same explicitly mythic vocabulary that is foundational for the “science” of psychoanalysis itself, he also makes explicit what had only been implicit in his review of Sartre: homosexuality, which constitutes for Marcuse a kind of “regression,” also *prefigures* a new reality principle beyond the realm of necessity. Homosexuality holds out a kind of metonymic promise of a fuller, unifying extension of Eros into nature. “In the world symbolized by the culture-hero Prometheus, [the Orphic and Narcissistic Eros] is the negation of *all* order; but in this negation Orpheus and Narcissus reveal a new reality, with an order of its own, governed by different principles” (*EC*, 171).

As it happens, however, Marcuse is more interested in utopian figures of perversion than he is in real perverts. He reminds us that “Plato blames Orpheus for his ‘softness’ (he was only a harp-player), which was duly punished by the gods—as was Narcissus’ refusal to ‘participate.’ Before the reality as it is, they stand condemned: they rejected the required sublimation” (*EC*, 208–9). This reminder, however, should also remind us that at the very moment Marcuse was writing these words, the U.S. government was condemning gays, and communist sympathizers, for *their* “softness.” An ironic lapse, for this particular text, of memory: of this real-life, contemporaneous, governmental implementation of Platonic blame, *Eros and Civilization* seems completely unaware. A relative ignorance of and indifference to real homosexuals, a nonpartisan displacement of real people by universalizing, uncontainable specters, were things Marcuse appears to have shared in common with the state he otherwise opposed. Whatever one thinks of the politics of the homophile movements, for instance, their very existence discloses the undialectical character of Marcuse’s claim that this period provided “no ground on which theory and practice, thought and action meet” (*ODM*, xiii).

And in spite of itself, *Eros and Civilization* ultimately represents homosexual liberation and proletarian liberation as wholly incommensurate, if not contradictory, political imperatives. In the book’s final pages, Marcuse takes care to point out that “remembrance is no real weapon unless it is translated into historical action” (*EC*, 233). But he never gets around to elaborating how the memory-driven reification of sexuality he elaborates would manifest itself in practice. “Where Freud’s instinctual theory is designed to explain the structure of real and existent mental phenomena,” Fredric Jameson has pointed out, “Marcuse’s use of that

theory has a more speculative and hypothetical cast”¹⁵—precisely because he begins by turning the Freudian narrative around, “revers[ing] the direction of progress,” as he put it in the “Political Preface” to the 1966 edition (*EC*, xi). And as he insisted in the first edition, “we use Freud’s anthropological speculation only in this sense: for its *symbolic* value. The archaic events that the hypothesis stipulates may forever be beyond the realm of anthropological verification; the alleged consequences of these events are historical facts” (*EC*, 60). In this respect *Eros and Civilization* constitutes a thoroughly immaterial and ahistorical critique of material and historical realities. The homoerotic is, again, merely a *prefiguring* of a future, polymorphous Eros. It is no accident that Marcuse’s most sustained attempt to imagine the role of the erotic in socioeconomic revolution, to explore the political implications of homoeroticism in particular, is largely metonymic, “symbolic”—more or less incidental to actual political practice.

I stress this because, as I suggested at the outset, it would be left to gay liberation to transform the figural into the material, political, and historical: if Marcuse’s influence on and involvement with the New Left was in part consciously cultivated by him, the influence of *Eros and Civilization* on the gay liberation movement that emerged a good fifteen years after its publication was a use to which Marcuse could scarcely have imagined, much less intended, his arguments being put. To situate *Eros and Civilization* in relation to the larger history of Marcuse’s political engagement is in this respect very illuminating. The book was published in 1955, and the U.S. political landscape of that year contrasts dramatically with the historic level of radical activity in the years following the 1964 publication of *One-Dimensional Man*. The latter was, along with the controversial and widely read 1965 “Repressive Tolerance” essay,¹⁶ the first of Marcuse’s texts to have an unmistakable influence on the New Left—primarily because of the way they diagnosed contemporary society’s seemingly endless capacity to contain resistance.¹⁷ *One-Dimensional Man* was the most despairing political diagnosis Marcuse would produce; it is indeed ironic that it was published just as the youth movement began to develop momentum, that this was the text that, more than any other, put Marcuse on the New Left map. The “Repressive Tolerance” essay he published only a year later became widely controversial because it advocated not merely resistance but revolutionary violence. Indeed, the dramatically changing political situation apparently made the pessimism of *One-Dimensional Man* disappear almost overnight, sending Marcuse on what Douglas Kellner has called a “desperate” search for new agents of social change, agents that could potentially goad a relatively prosperous, apolitical working class into action.¹⁸

Historically separated from the revolutionary enthusiasm of Marcuse's involvement in the New Left by the valley of despair manifested in *One-Dimensional Man*, in other words, *Eros and Civilization* holds a very different theoretical and ideological relationship with New Left politics than do most of his other major texts, which indeed were written a decade or more after its publication. Paul Brieness emphasizes that it was only the "spreading influence" of *One-Dimensional Man* that "led to new and renewed study of *Eros and Civilization*" within the New Left.¹⁹ This way of contextualizing *Eros and Civilization* is confirmed by a series of subsequent gestures on Marcuse's part that can be seen as revisions of the earlier argument, not to say rejections of it, including the shift in tone, to which I have already referred, of *One-Dimensional Man*—where, for example, he reverted to a more traditional use of the category of reification: against the contrast I have elaborated between conservative and revolutionary, public and private forms of instrumentality, in *One-Dimensional Man* he asserted without qualification that "to exist as an instrument, as a thing," is "the pure form of servitude" (ODM, 33).

His "desperate" search for new agents of social change after 1964 was, moreover, a search for *practical* rather than theoretical or symbolic ones. For all its pessimism, *One-Dimensional Man* briefly and tentatively concludes, for example, by locating the only possible source of revolutionary negation in a radicalized version of the emerging civil rights movement, in "the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and unemployable" (ODM, 256). In *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), Marcuse would explore the political implications of the student movement and sixties youth culture more generally and intimate the possibility of an alliance between this domestic movement and Third World guerrilla armies.²⁰ In *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972), written as capitalism's long mid-century boom was finally, visibly running out of steam, he would even espouse renewed hope for the participation of an increasingly anxious, besieged working class in a "United Front."²¹

But Marcuse's most telling autocritique of the theoretical narrative he constructed in *Eros and Civilization* was perhaps the "Political Preface" he included in the 1966 edition, eleven years after the book's original publication. Here he emphasizes that *Eros and Civilization's* erotic emphasis had really been his way of stressing the political importance of the life instincts more generally. "Can we speak of a juncture between the erotic and political dimension?" he asks (*EC*, xxi), as if *Eros and Civilization* did not already constitute an emphatically affirmative answer to that question. "Today the fight for life, the fight for Eros, is the *political* fight" (*EC*, xxv). Marcuse deemphasizes, in other words, any more direct political implica-

tions his original argument might have had: “‘Polymorphous sexuality’ was the term I used to indicate that the new direction of progress would depend completely on the opportunity to activate repressed or arrested *organic*, biological needs” (*EC*, xv). His connection between decade-old theory and contemporary practice here is that between the forces of Eros and emerging contemporary political movements, as if to suggest a connection between the “regression” he had idealized and the “instinctual” revolt of these movements—that of foreign guerrilla armies, for example:

In the revolt of the backward peoples, the rich societies meet, in an elemental and brutal form, not only a social revolt in the traditional sense, but also an instinctual revolt—biological hatred. The spread of guerilla warfare at the height of the technological century is a symbolic event: the energy of the human body rebels against intolerable repression and throws itself against the engines of repression. (*EC*, xix)

Here we see a foreshadowing, in fact, of the harmonizing of foreign and domestic fronts of protest Marcuse would advocate at length in *An Essay on Liberation*: “instinctual” revolt turns out to be the common denominator linking internal and external sites of resistance. His most sustained articulation in the “Political Preface” is, indeed, that between the force of Eros and domestic youth movements. Here, as in *An Essay on Liberation*, he makes a direct connection between “regression” and an immaturity he valorizes:

In and against the deadly efficient organization of the affluent society, not only radical protest, but even the attempt to formulate, to articulate, to give word to protest assume a childlike, ridiculous immaturity. Thus it is ridiculous and perhaps “logical” that the Free Speech movement at Berkeley terminated in the row caused by the appearance of a sign with the four-letter word. It is perhaps equally ridiculous and right to see deeper significance in the buttons worn by some of the demonstrators (among them infants) against the slaughter in Vietnam: MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR. (*EC*, xxi)

“‘By nature,’” he concludes, “the young are in the forefront of those who live and fight for Eros against Death” (*EC*, xxv). If *Eros and Civilization* was the theory, the “Political Preface” was the applied theory. The “pervert” turns out to be the one agent of utopian negation Marcuse emphasized over his long career, the sole alternative to a compromised proletariat, which is not merely theoretical but purely *figural*, purely *symbolic*, not incidentally dissociated from but precisely *in lieu of* political practice: presupposing its immediate impossibility, presupposing the mutual exclusivity of the figural and the practical, and in this respect contradicting the practical. In the larger context of Marcuse’s oeuvre, *Eros*

and Civilization's purely theoretical cast is simultaneously an articulation of “perversions” as figures of negation and an implicit concession of the impossibility of that negation. In attempting to assimilate proletarian and sexual forms of revolution on a purely speculative, purely theoretical level, Marcuse ultimately, inadvertently posits their relation as contradictory.

If increasing technological rationality constitutes (theoretically?) a condition of possibility for erotic liberation in *Eros and Civilization*, moreover, there is an emphatic retreat from *any* emphasis on the political implications of the erotic in *One-Dimensional Man*, where the pessimism about technological rationality's complete saturation of the psyche is so profound that a kind of nostalgic puritanism rears its head:

Compare lovemaking in a meadow and in an automobile, on a lover's walk outside the town walls and on a Manhattan street. In the former cases, the environment partakes of and invites libidinal cathexis and tends to be eroticized. Libido transcends beyond the immediate erotogenic zones—a process of nonrepressive sublimation. In contrast, a mechanized environment seems to block such self-transcendence of the libido. Impelled in the struggle to extend the field of erotic gratification, libido becomes less “polymorphous,” less capable of eroticism beyond localized sexuality, and the *latter* is intensified. (*ODM*, 73)

For the Marcuse of *Eros and Civilization*, “Eros signifies a quantitative and qualitative aggrandizement of sexuality” (*EC*, 205). Unlike the healthy, socially expansive “nonrepressive sublimation” of Eros with which Marcuse links the homoerotic in that text (but which has become more or less unattainable in *One-Dimensional Man*), “localized sexuality” constitutes a mere repressive containment of the erotic—what *One-Dimensional Man* designates “repressive desublimation.” Mere *sexuality* is repressive; the properly *erotic* is not. This passage (and the paragraphs that surround it) convey a qualified nostalgia for a preindustrial, pretechnological, preurban landscape: “this romantic pre-technical world was permeated with misery, toil, and filth,” Marcuse admits, but at least “there was a ‘landscape,’ a medium of libidinal experience which no longer exists” (*ODM*, 73). Here reification denotes, exclusively, the cumulative historical force of technology: Marcuse reverts to a more quantitative view of reification, which has little to do, anymore, with remembering.

If in *Eros and Civilization* the homosexual subject, the “pervert,” prefigured a reality principle beyond the realm of necessity, in *One-Dimensional Man*, where no such “beyond” is imaginable, this subject signifies only repressive desublimation, merely contains threats to the established system. Meanwhile, the ongoing space of origin of modern homosexual subjectivity—and therefore also of the various forms of modern anti-

heteronormative politics—has always been very much within the “town walls.” And notwithstanding differences in tone between *Eros and Civilization* and *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse was, again, never very politically invested in those mere real-life urban gays who inhabit a “mechanized [if subcultural] environment” and whom his model would therefore consign to the category of repressive desublimation. Eros, after all, is indissociable from procreation. While on the one hand critiquing the *injunction* to procreate under the regime of the performance principle, and approvingly citing the *Symposium*’s assertion that “the road to ‘higher culture’ leads through the true love of boys,” Marcuse simultaneously and uncritically locates in Eros a synthesis of “spiritual” with “corporeal” procreation, ultimately allowing Freud’s original association of Eros with the biological “life instincts” to stand (*EC*, 211).

For Marcuse, would gay liberation—as distinct from the urban socio-cultural formations in which it originated (a distinction that is far from absolute)—constitute repressive desublimation, and perhaps its more overtly political equivalent, “repressive tolerance”? For its own part, gay liberation defined itself very much against its own idea, anyway, of repressive tolerance, characterized in 1971 by Dennis Altman as a manifestation of “greater apparent freedom but a freedom manipulated into acceptable channels. Thus most of the Western World has abolished legal restrictions against homosexuality while maintaining social prejudices.”²² Gay liberation largely rejected precisely this sort of tolerance, contending that homosexuality could in no way be integrated into the existing order of things. As one of its chants put it, “Two, four, six, eight—Smash the family, smash the state.”²³ Gay liberation tended largely to agree—in spirit if not always in vocabulary—with the Marcusean suggestion that the “tolerance” homophile organizations sought would be “repressive” in that it would neutralize, individuate, contain the revolutionary negation promised by the “perversions.” But one cannot simply call the active attempt of gay politics to secure (not merely to prefigure) a more free, less heteronormative world “erotic” in Marcuse’s sense, while simultaneously designating urban gay cultures merely “locally” sexual. Gay liberation, like contemporary queer politics, has been fundamentally driven by a refusal to settle for merely local gay space, by an imperative to push the boundaries of what constitutes gay space at any given moment. For a proverbial wrench to throw into the Marcusean machinery I have tried to describe here, one need look no farther than the spilling over of the Stonewall riots from the bar itself into Christopher Street and “beyond,” an event that encapsulates this imperative (which is ultimately, of course, as historical as it is spatial). This landmark instance of political resistance that originated in the commodity-saturated space of a bar in Greenwich Village is a mater-

ial, institutional (and increasingly, since gay liberation, *also* symbolic) event that Marcuse's figural and ultimately pessimistic juxtaposition of the economic and the erotic cannot accommodate.

Having said this, however, I also want to stress that *Eros and Civilization* was as influential on gay liberation as any single book could be. "Liberation," wrote Altman, "implies more than the mere absence of oppression. . . . To achieve liberation, as Marcuse has pointed out in another context, will demand a new morality and a revived notion of 'human nature.'" Indeed, Altman's program for the development of gay liberation—to which Marcuse, even more than other New Left "gurus" (e.g., Goodman), was central—can be summed up by the imperative he espouses "to transform sexuality into eroticism."²⁴ *Eros and Civilization* is routinely identified as one of only a handful of theoretical and/or programmatic texts—many of which were "rediscovered," and including texts by Goodman, as well as by Wilhelm Reich—that influenced not only the New Left in general but gay liberation in particular.²⁵ Like these other texts, it provided a vision of liberation—a refusal of mere tolerance—that fueled and corroborated a New Left–influenced militancy that distinguished gay liberation from the conservatism and assimilationism of pre-Stonewall gay politics. If these radical movements were soon superseded by organizations whose reformism would not be challenged until the onset of the AIDS crisis, the least we can say about gay liberation's historical effectiveness is that it put an antiheteronormative politics on the national and indeed global agenda; it made such a politics visible in a way it never had been before. Only in a context of widespread activism did gay liberation take seriously this text that had been produced at the oppressive height of postwar political reaction. In running, so to speak, with this "merely" theoretical text, with the psychoanalytically formulated vocabulary of *revolutionary sexual liberation* it provides, gay liberation gave it social, historical, cultural—practical—efficacy, an efficacy utterly out of Marcuse's hands. The structural contradiction the book implicitly posits between sexual and proletarian forms of liberation, meanwhile, is reiterated in the text's distinct theoretical and practical roles: those "perversions" Marcuse "symbolically" formulates as temporary, promising alternatives to the traditionally defined revolutionary subject, gay liberation soon disarticulates from complicated structural questions altogether in its own reification of the sexual—in its emphasis on the independently revolutionary force of the erotic as such.

Rethinking Reification

In what way, then, does this set of historical, conjunctural relationships linking clinical psychoanalysis, *Eros and Civilization*, and the gay liberation movement provide an opportunity to rethink reification? We can approach an answer to this question by situating the book within an even broader contextual horizon. This was not, for one thing, simply gay liberation's "own" reification of the sexual. This discursive fetishizing of the revolutionary force of repressed sexual instinct, this eclipsing of real people by fantasies of homosexual subversion in Marcuse, and even in gay liberation, clearly has its origin in the Freudian paradigm Marcuse appropriates. In Jameson's elaboration of the ideological limits of Freudianism—its fundamental repression, as he puts it in *The Political Unconscious*, of History—he posits reification as a historical condition of possibility for psychoanalytic theory as such:

The psychoanalytic demonstration of the sexual dimensions of overtly non-sexual conscious experience is possible only when the sexual "dispositif" or apparatus has by a process of isolation, autonomization, specialization, developed into an independent sign system or symbolic dimension in its own right; as long as sexuality remains as integrated into social life in general as, say, eating, its possibilities of symbolic extension are to that degree limited, and the sexual retains its status as a banal inner-worldly event and bodily function.²⁶

The "isolation, autonomization, specialization" of "sexuality" as theoretical and ideological object in the last century—in a range of clinical, sexological, and psychoanalytic discourses, for example—is one form taken by that reification Lukács identifies with modern capitalism, with the conservative, mystifying development of Taylorist "scientific management" and a simultaneous, unprecedented burgeoning of social commodification.²⁷ Historian George Chauncey has formulated this development in terms of "the growing isolation of sexuality from gender"²⁸—a subversion of the Victorian assimilation of sexual energy as such to masculinity. One can build on Lukács's grounding of the modern hegemony of rationalized juridical and scientific discourses (like those that were beginning to posit notions of heterosexual and homosexual subjectivity) in the increasing reification of economic relations in order to identify a historically specific, capital-driven reification of the erotic that took two distinct, oppositional forms: on the one hand, the reification of desire as such, the historical emergence of "sexuality" as discursively autonomous object, and on the other, the rationalizing, scientific containment of that reified desire in the distinctly modern form of the heterosexual/homosexual

binary itself. These subjective majority and minority categories constitute ideological attempts rationally to contain, to “manage” in largely Taylorist fashion, the direct threat to a residual nineteenth-century gender imaginary posed by this subversive reification of the sexual. A heterosexual/homosexual binary that eventually gains widespread theoretical and ideological purchase becomes in this light an instance of the “scientific management” of anxieties about dramatically changing gender norms.²⁹

The category of reification indeed suggests a useful way of distinguishing between two opposing but mutually constitutive political histories of the category of “sexuality” in the last century. It suggests a rearticulation of the minoritizing/universalizing “incoherence” of modern sexual definition formulated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (see note 5) in terms of a universalizing reification of the erotic, on the one hand, and a minoritizing recuperation of this direct threat to gender and sexual hierarchy, in the form of hierarchized sexual subjectivities, on the other. These opposing, contradictory manifestations of reification have overdetermined the dialectical trajectory of antiheteronormative politics in the United States during the past century, setting the stage for an ideological contest between opposing but mutually constitutive forms of antiheteronormative politics embodied, for example, by the homophile organizations and gay liberation, respectively: minoritarian, constitutional politics focused largely on reformist rights-claims; and a politicized, insurrectional universalizing of homoeroticism as negating subjective sexual categories as such and indeed the constitutional state itself (state discourses—state notions of “citizenship,” for example—all too easily accommodate the political articulation of those categories).³⁰

This way of historicizing a modern reification of the sexual thus elaborates a dominant ideological imperative, current a century ago, to stabilize and retrench the social formation by rationalizing it. By the postwar period, however, with the metamorphosis of Taylorism into large-scale Fordism, with intensive, pervasive rationalization of society as the structural norm, a similarly pervasive ideological shift takes place as attention begins to focus on subjective (as opposed to social) and specifically psychoanalytic negotiations of this oppressively rational, instrumentalized state of affairs. For apologists for the social order—including the U.S. government as well as the conservative psychoanalytic establishment that government found itself consulting—“therapeutic” approaches are advocated as a means of helping civilization’s discontents adjust to the social order rather than change it. From a more radical perspective—for Marcuse, Goodman, Reich, Horkheimer, and Adorno, for example—psychoanalytic categories seem to be especially promising tools for theorizing widespread social conformity as well as the preconditions for breaking

that conformity. Indeed, in his “Critique of Neo-Freudian Revisionism” Marcuse suggests that this period throws into unprecedented relief the “discrepancy” between theory and therapy: “While psychoanalytic theory recognizes that the sickness of the individual is ultimately caused and sustained by the sickness of his civilization, psychoanalytic therapy aims at curing the individual so that he can continue to function as part of a sick civilization without surrendering to it altogether.” But for Marcuse, this qualified refusal to surrender was negligible: “The difference between mental health and neurosis lies only in the degree and effectiveness of resignation”—indeed, “therapy is a course in resignation” (*EC*, 245–46). (I have also suggested, though, that during the period when he wrote *Eros and Civilization* it was theory that became, for Marcuse, a course in resignation.)

In both conservative and progressive, reactionary and revolutionary instances, in other words, this postwar emphasis on the subjective negotiation of social contradiction took place by way of a psychoanalytic discourse implicated in that earlier, broadly defined scientific management of reality; but this discourse also, at least in the case of Freud’s distinctive combination of clinical therapeutic methods with larger “metahistorical adventures,” maintained a significant negative capability, a capacity for narrative “reversal” of the kind Marcuse would ultimately enact. In an era, moreover, when the homophile movements—the first active, liberal, minoritarian form a relatively visible gay politics ever took—are attempting to transvalue homosexual subjectivity by refuting a psychoanalytic logic of “maladjustment” and replacing it with an emphasis on basic civil liberties, the increasing influence of psychoanalysis on juridical discourse on sex begins to contradict the minoritizing logic of homosexuality that, I am suggesting, both an earlier medical establishment and an earlier state had played such a central role in institutionalizing in the first place. During this period scientific and juridical universalization of the homoerotic begins pervasively to challenge scientific and juridical minoritization. It is tempting—in spite of the critical, historical perspective on psychoanalytic theory I have tried to maintain here—to formulate this development as an emphatic historical return of the repressed: a return, specifically, of repressed contradiction. That universalized, reified eroticism, irreducible to subjective majority and minority categories and “managed” with some success by those categories but persistently in contest with them, ultimately manifests itself at a broad social level.

And it is precisely in this way that Marcuse fails to historicize Freud. Because the argument’s theoretical momentum overwhelms any practical purchase minoritization may still have, *Eros and Civilization* fails to register the material or institutional relevance of individual identity—of the

ego, as Marcuse would put it, that component of Freud's psychology that is lost in the war between pleasure principle and performance principle with which Marcuse occupies himself. In my discussion of the pivotal passage from *Eros and Civilization* quoted above, I suggested that Marcuse anachronistically transposes into the mid-twentieth century sexual taboos more appropriately identified with the nineteenth century—and relatively dehistoricizes those taboos by designating them as “bourgeois.” I now want to add that Marcuse's text also fails to acknowledge the extent to which what he theorizes as a subversive reification of the sexual *has already taken place in practice*: that the Freudian theory in which he is so invested was indeed a central participant. Decades before the publication of *Eros and Civilization*, the use of the body as an instrument of pleasure, as a pleasurable means rather than a productive end, had already been institutionalized in the categories of heterosexual and homosexual subjectivity that are simultaneously categories of object choice, categories that posit (gendered) bodies as objects of pleasure and desire. These categories constitute specifically sexual examples of instrumental reason, but an instrumental reason characterized by the same dialectical confluence of positive and negative, liberatory and constraining connotations with which I have been crediting reification in this essay. It is significant, I think, that *Eros and Civilization* uses terms like “perversions” and “homosexuality” to signify subversive utopian fantasies but never uses the noun form of “homosexual”: reified subjective categories based on object choice—queer egos, real live homos—are precisely what is erased in Marcuse's transposition of nineteenth-century taboos, only to return later under the more pessimistic heading of “repressive desublimation.” Indeed, that contradiction between a reified eroticism irreducible to subjective categories and the subjective managing and containment of that eroticism is visible in the theoretical differences that distinguish *Eros and Civilization* from *One-Dimensional Man*, which characterize reified eroticism as hydraulically revolutionary force and subjective mystification, respectively. Marcuse, that is, does some hypostatizing of his own, uncritically appropriating a healthy dose of Freud's ahistoricism along with his revolutionary intimations.

Marcuse, pushing the revolutionary limits of Freudianism, formulates the polymorphous overwhelming of the body by eroticism as a *reification* of the body—as, in one sense, it is: the disarticulation of sexual energy from its “containment” by the (nineteenth-century male) body in the psychoanalytic discourse this overwhelming must presuppose, the discursive isolation, reification, of sexual experience in the category of polymorphous sexuality Marcuse uncritically, ahistorically appropriates. In diagnosing, hypothetically, a reification of the *body*, Marcuse participates

in and—for readers equipped to exercise a certain kind of Marxian skepticism toward Freudian theory as such—defamiliarizes an ongoing reification of the *sexual*. And if, moreover, this reification of the sexual enables a revolutionary antiheteronormative politics, if it makes hierarchies of sexuality visible, it must, according to the most basic common denominators linking traditional Marxist formulations of reification, also have some kind of contradictory relationship to *class* politics, to the visibility of *class* hierarchies. This is indeed the implication of Marcuse's larger oeuvre, in which the book that professed the most optimism about sexual liberation and formulated that optimism in terms of reification held no optimism whatsoever about proletarian forms of liberation.

I have tried to suggest that a hegemonic psychoanalytic vocabulary that participates in an ongoing reification of the sexual in the past century broadly purveys during midcentury the vision of a fundamental war between sexuality and rationality, Eros and the state. That vocabulary, meanwhile, facilitates the development of a historically pivotal, politically charged formulation of that distinctly modern contradiction between a reified eroticism irreducible to subjectivity and its subjective containment: this contradiction produces a contest over the radicalism or conservatism of psychoanalytic theory. More important, and partly by way of *Eros and Civilization*, that vocabulary provides a historically specific form of anti-heteronormative politics that negates the state rather than participating in its categories with a vocabulary, again, of revolutionary sexual liberation: an ideology, a discourse of its own (which would be increasingly interrogated, of course, as gay and queer politics developed, and which indeed was never uncontroversial within the movement). In Marcuse and the gay liberation movement he influenced, that subversive reification of the erotic in which Freud and contemporaneous sexologists and clinicians participate is given a specific political formulation; and the contest between minoritizing, constitutional forms and universalizing, insurrectional forms of antiheteronormative politics is translated into a contest between homophile resistance to the traditional psychoanalytic pathologization of homosexuality and psychoanalytically formulated radicalizations of homosexuality—a fifties contest that would be of decisive influence on the direction of gay liberation in the early seventies. To situate *Eros and Civilization* in relation to certain political uses to which it was subsequently put is to discern an ongoing historical, politically radical, and emphatically *leftist* participation in reification, that dynamic Western Marxism—a typically heteronormative political and theoretical tradition—has tended to reduce to an insidious form of mystification. This ahistorical text constitutes an (authorially disavowed) historical link between this century-old moment of subversive sexual reification and the most pivotal moment in anti-

heteronormative politics the United States has yet witnessed. This is at least one practical office of this “merely” theoretical text. Marcuse eventually attempted to take back *Eros and Civilization*’s unapologetic linking of erotic liberation with reification. But it was, as they say, already out there.

Notes

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1. Herbert Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 116.

2. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 6.

3. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 1 (hereafter cited as *ODM*).

4. See Dennis Altman, *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation* (New York: Avon, 1971), 70–107, and John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 149–95.

5. Here I employ the terms with which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick usefully and influentially formulates a definitional incoherence characterizing modern conceptions of homosexuality: a disalignment between “minoritizing” and “universalizing” understandings of the term. In Sedgwick’s model, the minoritizing view of homosexuality delimits the homoerotic to a minority population defined or identified as homosexual and therefore distinguishes unproblematically between (minoritized) gays and (majoritized) straights. The universalizing view, meanwhile, presupposes that homoeroticism is irreducible to and subversive of subjective categories as such—and unrelentingly, therefore, calls the distinction between gay and straight into question. See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), esp. 82–90.

6. Paul Robinson, *The Freudian Left* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 147–48.

7. Kenneth Lewes, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality* (New York: Meridian, 1988), 140, 144, 146.

8. Quoted in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 103–4.

9. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 240–41 (hereafter cited as *EC*).

10. Robert J. Corber, *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homopho-*

bia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Cold War America (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 25 (first quote), 20 (second quote).

11. Ibid., 61. Selections from the 1950 Senate Report, “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in the U.S. Government,” are reprinted in *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, ed. Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (New York: Routledge, 1997), 241–51.

12. Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” 116.

13. Herbert Marcuse, “Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre’s *L’Être et Le Néant*,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8 (1948): 326–27 (hereafter cited as “E”).

14. Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 228.

15. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), 115.

16. Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (1965; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 81–123.

17. See Paul Brienens, “Marcuse and the New Left in America,” in *Antworten auf Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968), 133–51.

18. Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 280.

19. Brienens, “Marcuse and the New Left in America,” 146.

20. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

21. Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

22. Altman, *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation*, 96.

23. See Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley, “Leftist Sexual Politics and Homosexuality: A Historical Overview,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 29, nos. 2/3 (1995): 2.

24. Altman, *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation*, 70 (first quote), 98 (second quote).

25. In addition to *ibid.* and to Hekma et al., “Leftist Sexual Politics,” 2, see Jeffrey Escoffier, “Sexual Revolution and the Politics of Gay Identity,” *Socialist Review* 82/83 (1985): esp. 133–34; and Michael Bronski, *The Pleasure Principle: Sex, Backlash, and the Struggle for Gay Freedom* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998). Bronski maintains the centrality of sexual experience to the fight against homophobia, a gesture that thereby explicitly opposes the agenda of contemporary gay conservatism. Identifying himself as a child of the sixties, he lists *Eros and Civilization* as one of six texts from this era that have “enormously influenced . . . my thinking. . . . These works may seem, in our postmodern times, slightly antiquated or even naive but, I feel, they still offer profound insights into how civilization is organized and how we live our lives” (3).

26. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), 64.

27. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (1923; reprint, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 83–110. In the remainder of this paragraph and in the paragraph following I summarize an argument I have made in more detail else-

where: see Kevin Floyd, "Making History: Marxism, Queer Theory, and Contradiction in the Future of American Studies," *Cultural Critique* 40 (1998): esp. 173–85.

28. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 100.

29. On the implication of early-twentieth-century sexual science in an ideological attempt to retrench a vanishing Victorian gender order, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870–1936," in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 245–96.

30. I take this opposition between "constitutional" and "insurrectional" forms of politics from Etienne Balibar. On the persistent historical contest between these two forms of politics produced by the contradictions inherent in the reified bourgeois category of the "citizen," see Balibar, "'Rights of Man' and 'Rights of the Citizen': The Modern Dialectic of Equality and Freedom," in *Masses, Classes, Ideas* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 39–59.