the changing profession

Queering History

JONATHAN GOLDBERG AND MADHAVI MENON

THE ESSAY THAT FOLLOWS WAS PROMPTED BY A SESSION AT THE 2004 MLA ANNUAL CONVENTION, "TEN YEARS SINCE *QUEERING THE RENAISSANCE*," organized by Madhavi Menon and chaired by Jonathan Goldberg. The other panelists were Jeffrey Masten and Richard Rambuss, two of the contributors to the 1994 volume, and Laurie Shannon. The papers ranged widely from theoretical questions about the activity of queering to the practices of glossing texts, from relations between queering and gendering to the ways in which queering might also throw into question the human-animal divide. The essay below picks up on some of the broadest theoretical questions raised by the panel, emphasizing the need to continue the work begun a decade ago and suggesting some methodological problems and challenges to be faced.

Queering the Renaissance announced in 1994 that "however much we have learned to queer the Renaissance in the past couple of decades, we are still on the verge of a major reassessment of the field" (Goldberg, Introduction 3). Essays in that volume turned into books: Alan Bray's posthumous *The Friend*, Marcie Frank's *Gender, Theatre, and the Origins of Criticism*, Graham Hammill's *Sexuality and Form*, Jeffrey Masten's *Textual Intercourse*, Richard Rambuss's *Closet Devotions*, Dorothy Stephens's *The Limits of Eroticism in Post-Petrarchan Narrative*, Valerie Traub's *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*. Contributors like Janet Halley, Forrest Tyler Stevens (now writing as Tyler Curtain), and Michael Warner have continued the work of queering, if not in the Renaissance, while Carla Freccero has a new book, *Queer/Early/Modern*, with aims similar to those of this essay. The work of *Queering the Renaissance* has continued also with the writing of those who were not on the scene a decade ago, Madhavi Menon's *Wanton Words* and Laurie Shannon's *Sovereign Amity* among them. Such work contributes to and demarcates a field but at the same time marks it as one whose boundaries must remain indeterminate; indeed, to produce queerness as an object for our scrutiny would mean the end of queering itself, a capitulation to teleology that is, we would join Paul Morrison

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https://doi.org/10.1632/003081205X73443 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in saying, "at once heterosexual and heterosexualizing" (68).

This resistance to teleological productions of queerness marked the non- and even anti-identitarian emphasis of *Queering the Renaissance*. We must never presume to know in advance how questions of sexuality will intersect with or run aslant the prevailing forms of sociality marked by gender or status or the relation of such questions to the objects of a more literary investigation, whether tied to the traditional objects of literary study or a broader sense of the discursive. Equally, we need to question the premise of a historicism that privileges difference over similarity, recognizing that it is the peculiarity of our current historical moment that such a privileging takes place at all. Why has it come to pass that we apprehend the past in the mode of difference? How has "history" come to equal "alterity"? And what effect does the privileging of the hetero have on studies of sexuality? In opposition to a historicism that proposes to know the definitive difference between the past and the present, we venture that queering requires what we might term "unhistoricism." Far from being ahistorical—or somehow outside history—unhistoricism would acknowledge that history as it is hegemonically understood today is inadequate to housing the project of queering. In opposition to a history based on hetero difference, we propose homohistory. Instead of being the history of homos, this history would be invested in suspending determinate sexual and chronological differences while expanding the possibilities of the nonhetero, with all its connotations of sameness, similarity, proximity, and anachronism.

Thus, the challenge for queer Renaissance studies today is twofold: one, to resist mapping sexual difference onto chronological difference such that the difference between past and present becomes also the difference between sexual regimes; and two, to challenge the notion of a determinate and knowable identity, past and present. Even if the model of past alterity were to be replaced with a model of past similarity—sodomy is similar to rather than different from current regimes of homosexuality—that similarity should lead not to identity but rather to the nonself-identical nonpresent. To queer the Renaissance would thus mean not only looking for alternative sexualities in the past but also challenging the methodological orthodoxy by which past and present are constrained and straitened; it would mean resisting the strictures of knowability itself, whether those consist of an insistence on teleological sequence or textual transparency. This version of homohistory thus does not necessarily refer to homosexuality at all. Rather, it suggests the impossibility of the final difference between, say, sodomy and homosexuality, even as it gestures toward the impossibility of final definition that both concepts share. Paying attention to the question of sexuality *as a question* involves violating the notion that history is the discourse of answers, a discourse whose commitment to determinate signification, Jacques Rancière has argued, provides false closure, blocking access to the multiplicity of the past and to the possibilities of different futures.

Altering the Renaissance

If literary and sexual conservatism aligns itself with an insistence on identifiable chronological disjunction—on alterity, with its derivation from the Latin *alter*: "The state of being other or different" ("Alterity")—then the project of unhistoricizing sexuality would take seriously the idea of *idem*, Latin for "same," which we have come to know as "identity." Rather than think of "identity" in the sense of identity politics, however, we invoke the earliest use of "idemptitie" recorded in the *OED*: in Henry Billingsley's Euclid translation of 1570, *idemptitie* refers to a proportionality, likeness, or similarity that

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is more an approximation than a substantialization ("Identity"). To pursue the project of queering under the rubric of idemtity rather than either identity or alterity, then, might productively push categories—in this instance, the categories of sameness and difference that serve congruent normalizing purposes in both the field of history and the domain of sexuality. The irony of historical alterity as it is practiced in the academy today, and not least as it is used as a wholesale term covering all aspects of literary research, is that it fiercely deploys historical difference even as it remains largely unmindful of queer difference. Indeed, the universalizing scope of historicism in Renaissance studies often works to moot different markers of sexuality for the sake of categories claimed to be more general, and it often does so under the banner of a liberal politics whose homogenizing effects are anything but homo in the sense we seek to advance here. In its turn against universalism, historicism has replicated universalist assumptions; refusing, in the name of presentism, for example, the difficult task of thinking the relations between a past and present, neither of which is self-identical or identical to the other. It sets in stone the notion of chronological difference as a way not to think the questions that queer scholarship presses to ask. For this reason, the project of queering the Renaissance insists on queering historicism, with all its concomitant notions of ontology, teleology, and authenticity.

This challenge, as Dipesh Chakrabarty articulates it in *Provincializing Europe*, is to "reconceptualize the present, to learn to think the present, the now that we inhabit as we speak as irreducibly not-one" (249). If the present is "not-one," neither is the past; this similarity does not preclude difference, but it makes clear that any horizon of temporal possibility must be simultaneously a horizon of impossibility. If we persist in using the term *Renaissance*, for example, it is to refuse the teleologically inflected *early modern* with its certainty that what matters in the past is its relation to a predetermined modernity. With Bruno Latour we would say instead that we have never been modern. To use the older term against the newer one also implies ongoing possibilities of resignification in recognition of the fact that the past is never fully over and never fully known. In short, we need to hold in mind the challenges to difference inscribed by historicist formulations and take seriously the critique of the "Great Paradigm Shift" articulated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet* (44), where she deconstructs Foucault's epoch-making distinction of a before and after homosexual identity. Examining its deployment in David Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, Sedgwick succinctly notes that Foucault and Halperin had the same narrative to tell but filled in different pictures of homosexual identity (Foucault's is based in a cross-gendered identification, Halperin's in the refusal of such a transitive gendered identity). Sedgwick urges recognition of the "unrationalized coexistence of different models" (47), indeed of radically incommensurable and irreconcilable definitions of sexuality, to argue against absolute breaks as models for how history happens (such breaks provide historians with a narrative mode that seems indispensable, for some, to define what history is). Indeed, one could take Sedgwick's critique as additionally pertinent insofar as it alerts one to the mixed historical messages of Foucault's introductory volume; his supposedly clear-cut before-and-after is continually belied by schemas whose duration is scarcely so organized; think, for example, of the fact that the introductory volume is also a genealogical account explaining how sexuality became the privileged domain of psychoanalysis, an account that stretches back to the church and its confessional practices; note also how the varying forms of modern identity identified by Foucault emerge around different figures—the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the

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Malthusian couple—at different times. Even according to Foucault, it would seem that any story to be told about "the homosexual" could not stand in for the emergence of sexuality per se. Nor could "the homosexual" stand alone.

Sedgwick's critique of the mapping of sexual and chronological identity has been extended recently by Valerie Traub in the *Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, where she reclaims the term *lesbian* for use in the Renaissance, announcing a desire "to enjoy the pleasures of queering history, while appreciating a past that both is, and is not, our own" (354). Her intervention is mirrored in the challenge to hetero history offered by Stephen Guy-Bray in "Same Difference: Homo and Allo in Lyly's *Euphues*," which deploys the term *allo* to oppose *hetero*, arguing that "the narrowness of our system is intensified by the fact that the Greek prefixes . . . lead us to believe that we only have two choices: *heteros* means the other when there are only two, as opposed to *allos*, which means a potentially infinite number of other people and other differences" (115). This recent work is responsive as well to Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, who suggest in *Premodern Sexualities* that "in struggling against cultural demonizations of certain kinds of sameness, queer perspectives can usefully call into question the historiographical status of concepts of alterity and sameness" (xviii). Such a questioning of historicism, then, focuses specifically on work done in the history of sexuality that takes as its warrant a set of sentences in the introductory volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. "As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology," Foucault wrote, summarizing the difference succinctly and memorably: "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was a now a species" (43). Much work in the history of sexuality has taken its task to be detailing the emergence of this new life form and mapping the contours of modern identity as fully as possible—Arnold Davidson's *The Emergence of Sexuality* stands as one recent example of this project.

The project of writing homohistory, however, would resist this identitarian mapping even as it would worry the historical question of the relation between past and present; a precedent for this resistance is Janet Halley's essay in *Queering the Renaissance*, "*Bowers v. Hardwick* in the Renaissance," which regards the project of queering the Renaissance as entailing also the queering of the supposed historical divide between past and present and hence challenging the assumption that Foucault's statement enjoins an ever more detailed and positivist account of the triumph of the disciplinary apparatuses securing the boundaries of modern sexual identity. In following the positivist trail, modern sexuality studies has become a field really only about lesbian and gay male identity; Foucault's insistence that modern sexual identity is part and parcel of a redescription of what constitutes a notion of life—and the discriminations among, and valorization of, certain kinds of life—has scarcely been contemplated. The project of queering the Renaissance thus needs to take stock of different desires—writing the history of heterosexuality, for instance, as Rebecca Ann Bach is doing—but it also needs to reckon with desire itself, not as an essence to be explained but as a formation that rarely has a single objective correlative by which to be measured.

Indeed, to focus on the final section of *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* is to read Foucault in a way that challenges the notion—both embraced and deplored—of Foucauldianism. Even as historicism has unfolded under the banner of Foucauldianism,

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much that has been faulted in the New Historicism has also been blamed on Foucault, and the culturalism that for a time seemed to be what literary studies was becoming has in its celebration of difference also sheltered under the rubric of Foucauldian constructivism. We do not intend here to work through the ways in which Foucault has been credited (or blamed), so much as to note that the initial volume of *The History of Sexuality* is an exceedingly complex book whose continuing provocations do not easily settle down into the kinds of practices that have succeeded in the name of its author. A writer so aware of the insidious power of a "normalizing society" (144) might, we suppose, be resistant to such acts of categorization. Rather, Foucault's final section, "Right of Death and Power of Life," in which he introduces the concept of biopower, issues a challenge to queer theorists and historians alike to situate questions of identity within the framework that marks identity's limits. Similarly, and from a different theoretical vantage point, Lee Edelman has commented on the limits of identity. In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, he argues that "queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one" (17); the book goes on to outline a theoretical model that should be exemplary for studies of Renaissance sexuality, suggesting that queer theory should refuse

> every substantialization of identity, which is always oppositionally defined, and, by extension, of history as linear narrative (the poor man's teleology) in which meaning succeeds in revealing itself—*as itself*—through time. Far from partaking of this narrative movement toward a viable political future, far from perpetuating the fantasy of meaning's eventual realization, the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form. (4)

Despite Foucault's scathing disdain for a politics tied to the liberation of sexuality, however, this conclusion has not been the thrust of Foucauldian interventions into the study of sexuality. For to see, as Foucault does, that the demand for a "right to life, to one's body, health, happiness, satisfaction of needs" (145) is produced through the normalizing regimes in which "life" becomes a political issue is to begin to understand why questions of queering might, on the one hand, inquire into the boundaries between the human and its animal others but might, just as well, seek to trouble the differences that pit Europe against its others or the past against the present. This is not to suggest that these pairs of difference can be equated. Rather, the project of queering would proceed under the assumption that none of these terms can stabilize themselves so fully into self-sameness as to allow easily for the adjudication of difference or sameness to emerge with finality; indeed, such closures falsely and oppressively arrive at fixed conclusions, not only in the production of theoretical objects but also pressingly in a political field that assumes the end of history and global domination by the forces of a new imperialism.

Thus, if the absolute alterity of the past needs to be jettisoned in favor of queering historicist methodology, then the principle of sameness also needs to be upheld as an idea without an essence. In its championing of homohistory, then, unhistoricism would not only reject the emphasis on *heteros* but would also challenge the search for protoidentities. For if for some time now queer studies has pursued the alterist model separating a before and an after of homosexuality, lately the focus has shifted to attempts to discover in the past the lineaments of modern queer identity (examples include the work of the early American historian Richard Godbeer and that of Michael Rocke, in *Forbidden Friendships*, whose demonstration of the prevalence of male same-sex sex in quattrocento Florence discovers many of the social formations that might have been familiar in post–World

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War II New York). Even as chronological alterity is seemingly abjured in favor of conceptual narratives, then, the stories of similarity continue to be tethered to knowable identities. Telling examples of this recent shift—from viewing the past as different to viewing it as teleologically prior to us—can be found in David Halperin's *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*, which is, among other things, his belated response to Sedgwick's critique and his attempt to rethink the strictly alterist model he once espoused. Halperin's project is not exactly that of queering the Renaissance. For the most part his before-after schema has antiquity on the one side and modernity on the other, and his forays into the period in between are rare. Nonetheless, in a chapter provocatively titled "Forgetting Foucault"—insistent on arguing that one does just that if one assumes that the historical schema offered in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* is the strict alterist model that Halperin himself once endorsed (and despite his disclaimers continues to endorse at many points in the book)—a brief but significant encounter with a Renaissance text occurs. Halperin still believes that we have had only a hundred years of homosexuality, but he now wishes to show that before that we had something like, if not identical to, modern identity. To make his point, he follows the lead of Jonathan Walters and briefly examines a tale first told by Apuleius and retold by Boccaccio in order to show how the later version anticipates more modern regimes of sexuality. It is in this context that Halperin proposes that "perhaps we need to supplement our notion of sexual identity with a more refined concept of, say, partial identity, emergent identity, transient identity, semi-identity, incomplete identity, proto-identity, or subidentity" (43). To some this list could seem breathtaking in its possibilities, but it has to be remarked that these possibilities all remain tethered to a category of identity that is presumed to be what Sedgwick showed it cannot be: self-identical, a notion of identity that is not what we are calling idemtity, for it posits a clear difference between sameness and difference. Halperin measures these early modern forms of near identity against something he continues to refer to as "our notion of sexual identity"; this category is a product of the triumphalist homogenizing of a concept of modern identity that was the object of Sedgwick's critique more than a decade ago.

Reading the Renaissance

What warrant is there for this in Boccaccio? As Carla Freccero stresses in her analysis of Halperin in a chapter of *Queer/Early/Modern*, Boccaccio offers, against the model found in Foucault, access to the question of how sexuality becomes a subject for literary representation. The tenth tale in the fifth day of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as Halperin summarizes it, retells a story in which a husband discovers that his wife is being unfaithful and proceeds to have sex with her partner. For Halperin, there is nothing remarkable in Apuleius's conclusion to the tale, because antiquity recognizes that adult males may take younger men or women as their sexual partners. Halperin's focus is on the husband, a "normal man" in Apuleius, whose desire for a boy represented as an erotic object makes it clear that "it is not necessary for the narrator to invoke any specific sort of erotic inclination, much less a deviant one, on the part of the husband" to explain why he beds the boy he discovers to be his wife's lover (39). According to Halperin, the question of desire is where Boccaccio locates his version of this story; it is marked, Halperin says, "as deviant" (39), on two counts: this husband desires "young men, not the usual objects of desire for a man, and . . . has no desire for the usual objects of male desire—namely, women" (40).

There is no question that Pietro, the husband, desires young men, and it is explicitly the case that the most recent young man that his wife has taken for a lover is someone who

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has been an object of his own desire. However, is it true that Pietro has no desire for women? How is it, then, that he is married? The narrative begins by explaining that in response to local gossip, Pietro took a wife. The nature of the gossip is not specified. Presumably, people are talking because he has not married. Does that mean that he has a "deviant" desire in terms of object choice, as Halperin claims? The way the tale is set up, a man disinclined to marry chooses a woman, of whom we are told she would sooner have had two husbands than one; if he is disinclined, then she is dissatisfied. The premise of the story then may be less a historical window on an emerging form of homosexual identity than a plotting of what happens when too much meets too little. The wife does not complain that he refuses her utterly, just that he does not satisfy her. Musing on her situation, she puts it in an untranslatable idiom: "Questo dolente abbandona me per volere con le sue disonestà andare in zoccoli per l'asciutto, e io m'ingegnerò di portare altrui in nave per lo pievoso" (Boccaccio 107). The recent Penguin edition tries to render this literally: "Since this miserable sinner deserts me to go clogging in the dry, I'll get someone else to come aboard for the wet" (McWilliam 433), while the Oxford translation ventures something closer to Halperin's view of the husband's deviance and almost without any warrant in the text: "If this pervert's going to desert me in order to share a stable with his geldings, I'll find another man to mount me" (Usher 374). Why did he marry me? the wife laments, he knew I was a woman. Is she complaining about his desire for young men or his desire for a particular sex act that he can perform with her or with them? The untranslatable idiom, Vittore Branca ventures in a footnote, marks the difference between "l'uso contro natura e secondo natura" ("unnatural and natural sex"; Boccaccio 107n7; our trans.), a note that echoes the wife's terminology when she declares that her proposed adultery merely violates the law, while his "offende le leggi e la natura" (108), offends both the laws and nature.[1]

The wife's complaint is not about a husband who has homosexual desire but rather about one who refuses to fulfill the obligations for procreative marital sex—that is the tale of woe she delivers to the old woman she approaches for advice. Her confidant explains to the wife that whereas women were made solely to reproduce, men were not; that is, to the old woman, the husband's desires are congruent with ordinary male disinclination, expected rather than aberrant (indeed, no mention is made of the husband's desires for young men when the wife asks the old woman for her help). Moreover, the untranslatable and fully idiomatic distinction between "dry" and "wet" sex is not one between forms of desire determined by the gender of the object. Boccaccio's text perhaps offers us a window onto a historical reality that the law does not grasp, the existence of fully idiomatic terms to designate forms of sex. These fall out of the purview of the law presumably because sodomy laws are not about sex acts per se and certainly not about disallowing forms of love and desire. The wife has discursive recourse to the law and the law of nature that supposedly follows from it because the husband has entered into a legal contract that he is refusing to fulfill. Part of the joke of the tale is that the adulterous wife is no more innocent in terms of the law even if the extramarital sex she wants might result in pregnancy.

Boccaccio's tale assumes the possibility that Halperin suggests exists only in antiquity—a desire on the part of mature men for boys or for women—as can be seen, moreover, in the husband's witty solution to the predicament of this mismatched couple, as husband, wife, and lover spend the night together. The narrator reports that the dazed youth could not tell the next morning with whom he had been more often the night before: "non assai certo qual più stato si fosse la notte o moglie o marito, accompagnato"

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(117). Again, the Penguin aims for literality: the young man is "not exactly certain with which of the pair he had spent the greater part of the night, the wife or the husband" (McWilliam 440), while the Oxford edition characteristically tries (with dubious warrant in Boccaccio) to preserve the normative distinctions that Halperin also seeks to make: its young man is not sure "whether last night he'd served more in the role of wife or husband" (Usher 380).[2] This determinate gendering is, in fact, closer to the outcome of the version of the tale in Apuleius, where the husband, after forcing sex on the boy, upbraids him for not recognizing that as a boy he can only properly serve as an object of desire and therefore had no business having sex with the man's wife, not only because it was adulterous but more because he was not entitled to male status. The difference between the two versions of the story might therefore lie not in a transformation of a world ruled by gender into one on the verge of sexuality, as Halperin would have it, but rather in the ways they adjudicate the relations between the boundaries of gendered and sexual acts. The norm that Halperin regards as unproblematically fulfilled in Apuleius is a brutal imposition of a strict divide that crosses sexual difference in its hierarchy of sex acts, while Boccaccio's more relaxed tale finds that it can accommodate a variety of desires in a ménage à trois that refuses to privilege gendered difference and that multiplies in a nonpunitive way the possibilities of varieties of sexual acts. Whereas Halperin hammers home a case for Pietro as deviant in his desire, Boccaccio suspends the law. True, this is not a story about sodomy as the law would apprehend it; but it is equally not a tale that fits the nineteenth-century sociological category of deviance that Halperin deploys repeatedly. If Boccaccio is closer to us, it is not in offering a precursor to modern identity categories. Rather, a comparison of these tales might show that he is closer only insofar as queer refusals of the norms of identity are yet another variant on the possibilities offered in these stories of triangulated desire.

To say that, however, hardly produces unproblematic identification or an end to the story. For what remain to be explored further are not only the large issues of history and textuality glimpsed in this tale but its placement in the apparatuses that produce other forms of categorical difference. Why is this tale set in Perugia—what version of place is involved? Why must Pietro be a rich man? What sociality is involved in the wife's turn to an older woman for advice (that is, what are the forms of female-female sociality in a world that seems ruled by the imperative to marry)? What is the relation between source and derivation if the former is subtly undermined by the latter? What kind of a teleological step forward does Boccaccio take if he is, according to Halperin, straitening Apuleius's model? What "facts" can we adduce to counter or support Boccaccio's tale? To what extent might the fictions of the *Decameron* be tied to the law? How does the threat of death affect the situation of tale telling? What "life" does this story represent? Questions like these only mark the beginning of a process of analysis that aims, not at the definitive delivery of categories of sexual identity, but rather at throwing into question the methodological impulses that govern studies of sexuality ruled by the category of identity.

Queering the Renaissance

Such methodological questioning can only be achieved, however, when historicists begin to engage seriously with the historicity of history. In *Tropics of Discourse*, Hayden White suggests that historians

> must be prepared to entertain the notion that history, as currently conceived, is a kind of historical accident, a product of a specific historical situation, and that, with the passing

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> of the misunderstandings that produced that situation, history itself may lose its status as an autonomous and self-authenticating mode of thought. It may well be that the most difficult task which the current generation of historians will be called upon to perform is to expose the historically conditioned character of the historical discipline, to preside over the dissolution of history's claim to autonomy among the disciplines, and to aid in the assimilation of history to a higher kind of intellectual inquiry which, because it is founded on an awareness of the similarities between art and science, rather than their differences, can be properly designated as neither. (29)

White's understanding of the historian's task takes into account ideas of similarity and difference that this essay considers axiomatic. Instead of institutionalizing binary divisions between art and science, past and present, truth and interpretation, history, White suggests, should be the discipline that negotiates the dissolution of these boundaries. Even though White's history is only recognizable in its difference from what we might term hegemonic history, it is not invested in difference as a mode of being. History is not allowed to forget its own history even as the historicity of history is not predicated on definitive difference. Which is to say, for White, history has always contained contradictions between truth and interpretation; what makes current history unhistorical, for him, is its insistence on forgetting those schisms or, at least, on papering them over in the service of producing a universal history that can then be at the head of the social sciences. The dawn of such history is also the end of a history that recognizes similarity as being at least as valid as difference.

Thus, the idea of unhistoricism that we propose, hence our call for acts of queering that would suspend the assurance that the only modes of knowing the past are either those that regard the past as wholly other or those that can assimilate it to a present assumed identical to itself. We urge a reconsideration of relations between past and present that would trace differential boundaries instead of being bound by and to any one age. Reading unhistorically cannot take the object of queering for granted and should be open to the possibility of anachronism. It should not sacrifice sameness at the altar of difference nor collapse difference into sameness or all-but-sameness. In keeping alive the undecidable difference between difference and sameness it would refuse what we might term the compulsory heterotemporality of historicism, whether it insists on difference or produces a version of the normative same. Reading unhistorically would validate reading against the categorical collapses so often performed in the name of history. Such an act of queering, we venture to conclude, would be rigorously historical, though not as we—subject as we are to the routinized knowledges of the academy—understand the term *historical* today.

Notes

[1] Rocke is mistaken in his claim that the wife is convinced of her husband's lack of interest in women (123).

[2] For advice about the translation of this passage, we thank Ann Rosalind Jones, Karen Newman, and Elizabeth Pittenger.

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https://doi.org/10.1632/003081205X73443 Published online by Cambridge University Press