# Shame and the Search for Home

**Renny Christopher**

> Worse, as a lesbian, I found myself confronted with a society that seemed to see only one social issue at a time. This meant I could talk about poverty and class but not about sexuality and gender identity. I know that everything I have ever written is only a small part of what needs to be written.
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> –Dorothy Allison, "Foreword," in Amber Hollibaugh's *My Dangerous Desires: A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home*

What does it mean to be a queer of working-class origin who has joined the professional middle class but resisted assimilating to its values, even while occupying its position of material privilege? How does one in such a position live one's daily life? I dove into these books looking for answers to these questions, hoping they would help me explain myself to myself and to others.

Alas.

But although I still cannot even begin to formulate comprehensive answers to these questions, I have at least found some company among those asking similar questions. These books represent a return to a class analysis, something that has been largely, but not entirely, lacking in sexuality studies. In a review essay in *College English* in 1996, Donald Morton wrote that "queer writings of the 1990s . . . are marked by an eerie silence about the sharp historical shifts now under way," those historical shifts being the "massive transfer of wealth from the working class to the owning class."[1] The return to class analysis is represented not just by the books reviewed here, but by others as well. Jenrose Fitzgerald, in "Querying Sexual Economy: The Cultural Politics of Sexuality and Class in the United States," a review essay that appeared in the July 2002 issue of *American Quarterly*, considers works by M.V. Lee Badgett and Kitty Krupat, which take an empirical approach.[2] Fitzgerald finds much to fault in both books, but concludes that they both indicate "that truly pro-

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gressive alliances must move beyond a liberal politics of inclusion–*and* beyond a narrow vision of class struggle–if they are to provide a viable vision of social, political and economic justice" (357). What is being represented both in the complaints of a lack and the celebrations of a return, however, are theoretical discussions of class. Writers of personal narratives have been doggedly writing about class all along, and four of the works examined here, those by Amber Hollibaugh, Valerie Miner, Carlos L. Dews and Bonnie Leste Law, and Richard Rodriguez, continue in that vein, a vein pioneered in works such as Dorothy Allison's *Skin: Talking about Sex, Class, and Literature*; Leslie Feinberg's classic working-class novel *Stone Butch Blues*; and the anthologies *Queerly Classed: Gay Men and Lesbians Write about Class*, edited by Susan Raffo; and *Out of the Class Closet: Lesbians Speak*, edited by Julia Penelope.[3]

BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ARTICLE

*Brown: The Last Discovery of America*. By Richard Rodriguez. New York: Viking, 2002.

*The Low Road: A Scottish Family Memoir*. By Valerie Miner. Ann Arbor: Michigan State University Press, 2001.

*Out in the South*. Edited by Carlos L. Dews and Bonnie Leste Law. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

*My Dangerous Desires: A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home*. By Amber Hollibaugh. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

*Women and the Politics of Class*. By Johanna Brenner. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000.

*Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*. By Rosemary Hennessy. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Two themes that link queer writing and working-class writing are the quest for home and the rejection, through writing, of shame. In this society, in which the poor are blamed for their own poverty, we are taught to feel shame if we have not "succeeded." Similarly, those whose sexual desires "deviate" from the norm are taught to feel shame for those desires. Allison's definition of "perverse"–"to be disobedient to the rule of fear and hatred and shame, to seek one's own definitions and ideals regardless of what others insist" (xi)–applies equally well to "upward" class mobility as to sexuality. All of the writers here take shame and home, at least peripherally, as elements of their work.

I am going to start close to home, with Rodriguez, who once saved my life. When I was a graduate student I felt utterly and completely alone in the world, homeless and at a loss, having come into the rarified

world of the Ph.D. program after being the first in my family to get a college degree. I read Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* [4] and felt less alone, because he described a similar experience. That he was a man and I was a woman, that he was Mexican American and I was white, mattered not nearly so much as that we were immigrants coming into academia from the working class and could find no home there. I have remained a loyal reader of Rodriguez, disagreeing with some of his political positions, but always interested in how he arrived at them. And I am always dazzled by the beauty of his writing. It is so compact and elliptical that I could teach an entire class out of the preface of *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* alone.

Rodriguez describes *Brown* as the completion of his trilogy on "American public and private life," which began with *Hunger of Memory* and continued with *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father*.[5] He characterizes each of the three works as focusing on a particular aspect of his life: *Hunger* on class, *Days* on ethnicity, and *Brown* on race. (He thus reiterates what he has said several times, but what most critics of his work continue to ignore: that *Hunger of Memory* was a book about class.)

But the trilogy might–should–become a tetrology, because there is another aspect of his life that he has addressed in these books only tangentially: sexuality. He has now fully embraced a queer identity, which he had largely danced around in his previous books, proclaiming himself "a queer Catholic Indian Spaniard at home in a temperate Chinese city in a fading blond state in a post-Protestant nation" (35). In *Brown* he writes of a paradox: "I write about race in America in hopes of undermining the notion of race in America" (xi). However, although sexuality is central to his discussion of race, he is focusing on eroticism as it leads to reproduction, and therefore the production of "race," and thus is focusing not on the sexuality of his own life, but of his heterosexual ancestors. "The word race encourages me to remember the influence of eroticism on history. For that is what race memorializes. Within any discussion of race, there lurks the possibility of romance" (xv). He does, however, link miscegenation and homosexuality: "Churchmen surfed the Scriptures for any phrase that might pose as an injunction against miscegenation. Most churches still unite in the opinion that homosexuality is a grave moral offense and a vanity" (208). He mentions something he heard from a high school student from Georgia who interviewed him: "whenever I'd see a black man and a white man walking down the street together, I'd always assume they were gay"–a comment Rodriguez characterizes as "wonderful" (223).

Yet he does a rounding dance on the head of identity politics, whether based in race or sexual orientation, as "an evasion of citizenship," preferring to make the claim, as a queer Mexican American of working-class

origins, that he thinks of "the nation entire–All Americans–as my people" (128). Such claims have all too frequently been seen by his detractors as conservative, when they should more accurately be seen as quite radical. He makes a claim, a demand, that true conservatives would prefer to deny him. "I have lived my life in fragments," he writes, in a statement that most outsiders will recognize. He knows that "nothing was so dangerous in the world as love, my kind of love. By love, I mean my attempt to join the world. My cubist life . . . was due to the fact that from an early age I needed to learn caution, to avert my eyes, to guard my speech, to separate myself from myself from myself. Or to reconstruct myself in some eccentric way" (206). All queers living in a heteronormative world have had to reconstruct themselves in eccentric ways, as have all those of working-class origin who have undergone the "upward" mobility of which Rodriguez is so critical in *Hunger*. There is no way to separate the deformations that class and heteronormativity have imposed on him; they are intertwined, overlapping; both have deprived him of a sense of home.

Like Rodriguez, Miner also examines a heterosexual past from a homosexual perspective in *The Low Road: A Scottish Family Memoir*, in which she ferrets out the secrets of her Scottish ancestors. Miner describes the book, in her introduction, as "a passage through questions about poverty, immigration, national and sexual identity among the women in our family" (xxv). She also calls it "a cross-genre book, made from shards of fact, lie, intuition" (xvi). It is a memoir written like a novel, in multiple voices, in which Miner tries to imagine for the reader the Scots ancestors who people her book. Shame has a very prominent role in this story, as does the search for home.

Miner writes of her grandfather, who had ten children with two different women, one of whom he married, one of whom, she finds out much later, he never did. She addresses him directly, "you felt sure your life would stay under wraps due to their embarrassment or grief or rage. Now, I'm going to *out* you after seventy years" (5). Miner deliberately uses the term to "out" because in outing her grandfather's sexual and romantic life, she is revealing what has been covered up, what has been kept in the family closet. Her family has attempted to conceal the shame of poverty and of illegitimacy. Miner, the lesbian descendant, repudiates that sense of shame by bringing the stories of class and sex out of the closet and into her narrative.

For her grandparents, Daniel and Mae, what might have been a grand romance (albeit an illicit one) had they belonged to a different class, ends up being a burden of work. When they meet and fall in love, Daniel is already married with children, which he conceals from Mae. When she finds out about his other family, she is already pregnant; she marries a kind and devoted man whom she does not love, and then she loses the baby, but ends up having four children with him before Daniel

comes back into her life. The next baby Mae has is Daniel's, although she is still living with her husband. Eventually, Daniel and Mae manage to be together, but love's fulfillment results in both of them working themselves to the bone to support the two families each now has. Mae meets the fate all too common among women of her time and class: death by illegal abortion.

Part of the narrative details Miner's own quest for documentation, something that is always scarce when the subjects being sought after are the poor and the working class. One chapter consists of the bare facts of the "manifest of alien passengers" from the ship on which her mother immigrated to the United States. What is divulged and what is held silent in this manifest reads almost like a poem. Miner's mother, Mary, has a hard time, arriving in the United States in 1930, but for her, it is an improvement because here, "class wasn't a permanent birthmark" (114). Part of the narrative, also, is constituted of Miner's attempts to understand her ancestors' lives as she finds this documentation. "The more I meditate on these lives, the more I stare into the gaps between details" (129). When she finds a reference to her grandmother working as a servant at age eleven, she realizes that her ancestors' lives were harder than she could have imagined. She is especially appalled, as most readers will be, by the sheer number of children her grandparents had between them (fourteen). But then her research shows the ugly realities of the ban on contraception and how the lower classes were most affected by it, so that a working-class woman engaging in heterosexual activity had almost no choice, no control over her childbearing at all. Miner concludes that any "judgment I make has more to do with my privilege than her innocence. Because my moment has followed hers, I have had a chance to pursue my loves and lusts and passions with relative impunity. Childbirth, backstreet abortion, syphilis, AIDS–I sneaked through the window at a small, safe time. My grandmother was also a woman of her time and class. We all live (and die) in history" (132).

Because stories of the working-class Campbells, Gills, and McKenzies that Miner documents have been largely erased from history, Miner's project to recuperate these histories through research and imagination is a vital one. Miner herself, in an almost paradigmatic experience of working-class kids pursuing upward mobility through education, "cracked up" when she went to college. Then she "married up," into an educated, middle-class family. During those years, she became distant from her mother; the last sections of the book focus on her rapprochement with her mother, her coming out as a lesbian, and her mother's ultimate loving acceptance of her partner, Helen. Miner herself ends up comfortable with her sexuality, but never with her class status. "I wonder," she writes, "if I've become a deluded bourgeoise" (210). She travels, lives abroad, and returns, unable to settle. "I am happiest when I am moving. Like my

mother, I flirt with notions of home" (243). She understands both her class mobility and her lesbianism as, in a way, inheritances from her family, both being immigrations of a sort. She says to herself, "to survive, you immigrated beyond your parents' imaginations. You just followed [mother's] lead" (250). Although Miner's book documents a heterosexual romance that sets the family story in motion, ultimately it focuses on themes common to working-class queer writers. Namely it explores through narrative the sources of sexual and class-based shame and its defiance as well as the search for home, both understood geographically and ideologically.

What happens when "home" is someplace hostile, yet also compelling and formative? *Out in the South* is edited by Carlos L. Dews and Carolyn Leste Law, whose previous editorial collaboration was *This Fine Place So Far from Home*, a collection of autobiographical essays by academics from the working class.[6] In *Out in the South,* the voices of working-class queers and queers of colors that are so often missing from queer discourse are present alongside the voices of middle-class and white queers writing about their love/hate relationships with the South. As Dews writes in his afterword, "despite our myriad differences across gender, geography, race, and class, our queerness gives us a distinct point of view from which to critique the South, a point of view that until very recently has been totally absent in print" (236). Or, as Law puts it in her introduction, "Those who have only a mass-media understanding of the South might think such a social education [as her own] unlikely in Springfield [Missouri], or anywhere in the South, where so much fear of difference is woven into the fabric of society, but in fact the South may be the very best of all places in which to study issues of social justice precisely *because* of the glaring examples of institutionalized racism, misogyny, homophobia, and xenophobia on daily display there" (2).

The writers dispel, both indirectly and directly, a lot of mythology about the South, even while rigorously critiquing its racism, homophobia, and vastly unequal distribution of wealth. Some of the stories are startling, such as that of "Emmett," a working-class black gay man living in rural Alabama by choice, who believes that "Alabama was a place for living and building a home and a relationship with somebody that you really love" (12), although the men he sleeps with largely consider themselves heterosexuals. "Emmett" is not writing his own story; he was interviewed by Joseph Beam, and his voice is one that would rarely appear in an academic publication.

The search for home is a major theme in the volume, both among the writers who have their origins in the South and left it and among those who have moved to the South. Neither of these two groups feel very much at home in the South, although people similar to "Emmett," and the habitués of the gay bars in a small southern town studied by David

Knapp Whittier, do. But these people do not write the books that academic theorists read–all the more reason to pay attention when they are represented second-hand in a work such as this one. The pieces in *Out in the South* are uneven overall, varied in genre and approach, some narrative, some empirical. However, the majority of the contributors share an insistence on simultaneous multiplicity: that is, the necessity of considering more than one identity category at a time.

Of all the books under consideration here, the one that I felt most at home with was Amber Hollibaugh's *My Dangerous Desires: A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home*. As I read, I kept writing in the margin, "how familiar." Her book is a collection of essays written between 1979 and 2000 that document her working-class origins and her attempts to fit into leftist movements whose middle-class majority members do not accept her working-class identity or her proscribed sexuality (as a femme desiring butches). She describes the book as arising from the "contradictions which sprang from my own particular erotic desires and class experiences" (2), and she tries to weave these together into an account that is both narrative and theoretical. Her description of herself is as "a lesbian sex radical ex-hooker incest survivor rural Gypsy working-class poor white trash high femme dyke," and her description of her book is an attempt to "thread together seemingly disconnected themes like union struggles and erotic needs, prostitution and the feminist sexual nightmare, class or race struggles and sexual passion, with the larger and smaller questions which shape our daily lives and our political battles" (7). The book succeeds in doing so and thus takes a major step in both narrating and theorizing class and sexuality under her rubric of "dangerous desires." One of her dangerous desires is that perhaps we have become "just too damn postmodern for ideas like radical social change or–dare I say it?–revolution" (4). Revolution, for her, would insist not only on economic justice, but on the right to "dare to be deeply, differently queer" (4). As someone who often sings the U2 lyric, "And I'd join the movement if there was one I could believe in," I'd happily join Hollibaugh's.

All of Hollibaugh's desires are conceived as a search for home. "I wanted to take all that I had discovered *home* . . . I have wanted to find you, to tell you that I am here, to invite you to remember me or add your own unique experiences to our common purpose, our collective tale . . . to create and invigorate a passionate, uncompromised, radical, unafraid-to-ask–*and unafraid-to-tell*–kind of history" (10-11). This is exactly the kind of history I need to help me find my own way home.

Hollibaugh's father, a gypsy who was once branded by the Ku Klux Klan, and her mother lived a hard-scrabble existence in California's Central Valley. Her mother managed to get her daughter a scholarship to a private school, to get her out and "save my life," as Hollibaugh

writes. She eloquently describes the experience of being different within a working-class community in terms of being "bookish." Speaking of her family she writes, "I wanted to talk; they wanted to do" (162). Not all dangerous desires are sexual; my own most dangerous desire when I was a working-class child was to read. (It was in reading Mary Renault's books about Alexander the Great that I first learned of the existence of homosexuality, but I also learned, as Hollibaugh did, about the existence of a world "different from my hometown," which was, like hers, "not so pretty" [162].) Hollibaugh returned from the private school experience and entered into left political movements, while doing sex work to support herself, letting her movement fellows think that she was supported, as they were, by a wealthy family or a graduate student stipend. Living this contradictory, bifurcated life made her crazy, and her demand, in the book, is twofold: that social movements not be run with middle-class niceness that makes the gritty reality of the lives of the poor invisible (she writes that she has "always been more ashamed of having been a dancer in nightclubs when I've talked about it in feminist circles than I ever felt in my hometown, working-class community" [96]), and that movements based in sexual identity not outlaw nonconforming sexual identities. She asks, who "are all the women who don't come gently and don't want to; don't know yet what they like but intend to find out; are the lovers of butch or femme women; who like fucking with men; practice consensual S/M; feel more like faggots than dykes; love dildos, penetration, costumes; like to sweat, talk dirty, see expressions of need sweep across their lovers' faces; are confused and need to experiment with their own tentative ideas of passion; think gay male porn is hot; are into power? Are we creating a political movement that we can no longer belong to if we don't feel our desires fit a model of proper feminist sex?" (96). This paragraph comes from an essay written in 1983, when the items on her list were quite unspeakable; one of the few good things about the twenty-first century, so far, is that now they can be spoken. It is the insistence of voices like her's (and Allison's, especially) that has made them so.

Essays in the book deal with her work in the 1970s to defeat the California initiative to ban gays and lesbians from teaching in the public schools, the sex wars of the 1980s, and her work with the Lesbian AIDS Project of the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York. Some of the pieces are interviews or conversations with others such as Cherríe Moraga, Jewelle Gomez, and Gayle Rubin, making the work, although distinctively Hollibaugh's own, a collectivity of voices as well, exemplifying a communitarian principle of working-class values.

In writing of her working-class childhood and her eventual move out of the working-class world of her origin, she tells a classic story of unhappy upward mobility, one that is based in shame and the loss of home:

"In order to give me a chance, my parents had to create a child they did not understand; they had to endure my shame of them. The pride we carry about each other is surrounded by a sadness none of us can dissolve" (165). Her sexuality is intimately bound up with that class mobility. Her family's "fear of my queerness came as much from my moving outside the expectations of our family as it did from sex" (175).

But moving into the lesbian feminist movement was not a way for her to find home, because of the shame associated with her "improper" gender and sexual identity. "Whatever is difficult about being queer becomes a hundred times more provocative and full of menace when you struggle to understand a way of wanting and being which you know is held in contempt, even by other queers, which balances your selfhood and your erotic identity on the edge of continual humiliation. When my lover looks both male and female, wants a cock and wears one, thinks of herself as a faggot or a guy, is she a man? If I want a woman who looks like a man who is a woman who has a cock, what kind of hybrid gender does that make of me? . . . All these categories and states of being are full of strife" (260-61). She concludes that "I am my father's drag queen daughter" (264). And I am my father's faggot son, still looking for home, still finding it only in the pages of books, books like this one.

Hollibaugh finally finds "home" in a place where shame can be disavowed in her work with the Lesbian AIDS Project. In the later essays in the book, in which she discusses this work, such as "Lesbianism Is Not a Condom," she continues her critique of the lesbian feminist definition of "real lesbians," but now from a position of authority. She writes that the "struggle against AIDS brought (and brings) all my worlds together" (207). In this movement, her history as a sex worker is valued, rather than "barely tolerated," and her working-class background is valuable in helping her work with the "HIV-positive lesbians who continue to come forward as leaders . . . [and who] have histories and lives lived in neighborhoods most gay studies courses rarely identify as lesbian, let alone use as the bases of understanding queer women's lives and experiences" (212). As she points out in the essay "Sexuality, Labor, and New Trade Unionism," most "gay people are working-class people. All the issues they have in their lives are working-class issues" (236). This fact, perhaps, is finally making its way into academic discourse.

The last two books, by Johanna Brenner and Rosemary Hennessy, are very much part of academic discourse. Both authors are Marxist feminist theorists. Brenner's main interest, in *Women and the Politics of Class*, is to develop a single-system socialist feminist analysis that accounts for patriarchy and capitalism with a single theory that can explain the functions of class and gender oppression. This is a collection of essays written throughout the 1980s and 1990s and arranged chronologically. Most of the earlier essays contain little discussion of sexuality. For example, in

examining the origins of the family household system within capitalism in chapter one, she leaves out the heteronormativity of the institution; further, her analysis relies on an unspoken assumption of the nuclear family as model. Chapter two makes passing reference to sexuality: examining the state of women's movements in the early twentieth century, she sees the celebration of sexuality that was part of the image of the New Woman as ultimately destructive, because the emphasis on heterosexuality "undermined bonds between women that had previously been central to women's culture" (64). In her chapter, "Democracy, Community, and Care," Brenner discusses "familistic" politics, arguing that gay/lesbian families should not simply be "assimilated" to straight families as economic units. "[Q]ueer sexuality has not been harnessed so directly as heterosexuality to procreation and thus to the institutions of social reproduction. As lesbian-feminists of color have demonstrated, through writing and political activism, fear of or shame about having the wrong kind of sexual desire fuels a defensive repressiveness which spreads throughout a community. In contrast, appreciation for our unruly desires makes them less threatening, we have less need to regulate ourselves and others, opening up more possibility for empathic connection and thus solidarity" (192). Hennessy goes even further than this in arguing that homosexual families should not be assimilated to heterosexual families. Both critiques are particularly cogent in reminding us that queer movements' liberatory and transformative power is undercut by such assimilations.

Brenner also provides a thought-provoking critique of the "comparable worth campaign," in part on the grounds that the ways in which we value jobs should be reexamined. She suggests that the "superior value of mental over manual skills and the greater importance of supervisory over other kinds of responsibility should not be assumed but questioned," (112-13). She also makes the very radical claim that "everyone who contributes his or her labor deserves a comfortable and secure existence" (114). Reading such sentiments in print makes me very happy. My own philosophy has long been that every full-time job should pay exactly the same salary. Not a popular idea in the capitalist, "achievement"-oriented United States.

However, much as I am at home with her insistence on raising such questions, I am put off by her insistence on theoretical correctness. She devotes one chapter to a critique of "'left' conservative feminism," a category into which she throws both conservatives and "leftists" who are not Marxists. For her (and for Hennessy) anyone, no matter how "left," not practicing her type of Marxism is just as bad as the conservatives. Another area of her discourse that makes me uncomfortable is her use of the working class as an abstract object: "Many women who work–even in blue-collar and clerical jobs, generally out of economic necessity–want to keep their jobs" (167). Maybe so, maybe not. Says who? Do they

want to keep the particular jobs and working conditions they have? When "many women" remain an abstract, such statements are hollow and manipulative. Brenner makes disturbing assumptions as well. Discussing co-housing communities, she writes that they take "the sting out of living single" (195). For me living alone is a great luxury, because as a younger, working-class woman, I could never afford to live alone, yet never felt at home with any of the people with whom I lived. There is no "sting" in "living single" unless one accepts a social order that declares it yet another "failure" of which to be ashamed. Brenner's tendency to overgeneralize also emerges in sentences such as this one: "Combining work and motherhood is an issue for all women in the U.S." (231). No, it is not. There are some very wealthy women for whom it is not an issue, and many women who choose not to have children, and others who would like to have them, but do not. Saying "all women" refuses the specificity of individual women's situations.

This is why her work frustrates me even when she argues for things I agree with, such as, "No one is or ever can be truly independent, so there is nothing categorically wrong with dependence, which is simply a condition of human existence. But for relationships to be equally fulfilling, dependence has to be equal, and that requires women's having equal access with men to economic survival and political power" (168). Or when she points out that academic feminists for the most part have "no connection with working-class women, whether white or women of color. At most, working-class women are subjects of study, almost never comrades in struggle" (240). And although she makes it clear that as a member of an activist collective she does have contact with working-class women, and has worked in a blue-collar trade herself, she nonetheless abstracts "the working class" into an object of study. It seems inevitable that Marxist theorists will do this, because, as Brenner herself points out, "There is no working-class-based politics, no broad-based working-class movements, not even in recent memory, and thus no powerful counter-discourse through which to claim a valued working-class identity" (306), or for Marxist theorists to study and to follow. She writes that the "development of an anti-racist working-class feminist politics is the only basis for a renewed feminist movement" (307). There is irony in a scholar working within the middle-class privilege of the university to call for this. The working class is not leading the way to the revolution. At least not now, not here. Academic Marxists can only wish it were so.

Brenner raises the question of whether women in a "nonsexist, truly democratic society," should still have the right to abortion, because such a society "would have the right to expect various commitments from individuals," which might include defense and reproduction (179). She finds it "difficult to resolve this dilemma" and thinks that abortion would be a "right of women collectively . . . the fact that, despite individ-

ual differences among them, women are equal to each other while being unequal to–that is, different from–men, determines that they (and not men) have these rights. Only women would be in a position to appreciate both the needs of the society as a whole and what reproductive rights would mean to the individual woman" (180). This claim is absurd. Even in a classless, nonracist society, women would not be "equal" in terms of reproduction. For example, lesbians do not risk accidental pregnancy in pursuing sexual pleasure, whereas straight, fertile women do; but it must also be recognized that not all women are fertile, and what is a "woman," anyway? Is a postsurgical transsexual a woman? Is someone genitally female, but not chromosomally female, a woman?

For Brenner, these questions are not central; a class-based, Marxist analysis is central. For her, feminism has much to contribute to Marxism, insisting on "domains of social life that Marxism has fundamentally ignored: sexuality, intimacy, raising children, the care and nurture of adults. In so doing, feminism has allowed us to think far more extensively than before about the material basis of socialism. . . . Feminist theory has helped to undermine the system that Marxist theory had become: its economic reductionism, its productivism and uncritical approach to technology . . . the relationship between gender identities and the construction of political and economic 'interests.' Feminism . . . has been a rich resource for the renewal of Marxism" (201-2). She sees the main point of feminism as a tool to strengthen Marxism. She is certainly right in her critique of Marxism's history, but must feminism really be no more than a tool in the service of Marxism?

She addresses the vital issue of intersectionality, concluding that the "now obligatory invocation that 'gender, race, and class intersect' is a good beginning, but does not constitute a political strategy" (271). Well, how can it, when we do not even know what that means yet? And we can only know what it means by studying embodied, lived experiences of those intersections.

If Hollibaugh's book was the one that made me feel most at home, Hennessy's *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* was the one that made me most yearn for a sense of home that I could not quite locate. Like Brenner, Hennessy is so busy dismissing anyone who falls outside her own Marxist feminist perspective (including my own beloved Allison and Hollibaugh) that she almost loses track of the theory she is trying to formulate. She writes that the "place where capitalism's kernel of relationships and the lived reality of sexual identity converge is one of the areas of life and of social struggle I would like these essays to speak to, although in my estimation they do so only unevenly and with difficulty" (36). I think she is right in her own assessment. She gestures toward a theory that links the "parallel emergence of commodity culture and heteronormativity" and writes that the "history of heterosexuality as

a discursive ensemble that capitalism makes use of, as a vehicle for the legitimation of a gendered division of labor in the family and waged work, and as an agent in the development of race and class consciousness, has yet to be written, as does the history of hetero- and homosexuality's changing intimate links to commodity production and consumption" (97). That unwritten history is what I had hoped this book would be, but it is not. And yet, in her last chapter, "Revolutionary Love," she comes to something beautiful and appealing, something that almost makes that U2 song stop running through my mind.

Hennessy points out that "most of the archive of Marxist feminist work has been more attentive to developing an analysis of gender oppression than developing a materialist approach to sexuality" (10), and that would certainly include Brenner. Hennessy sets out to develop that materialist approach to sexuality, seeking to place class as the fundamental structural force that determines peoples' lives, unlike the neo- and post-Marxists and cultural materialists she spends much of the book arguing against. By "class," she means not the lived realities of peoples' lives, but capitalist relations of production. She uses "the working class" as an abstraction. For Marxists who use class as an abstraction in this way, the point of studying the working class is to abolish it; thus the working class is being used as an object. Much as I would like to see a redistribution of wealth, I also have to say, "wait a minute, it's not going to happen soon, and where are we to live in the meantime?" I do not just want to study the working class to abolish it, but to learn from it and about it, and so I desperately need works like Hollibaugh's. I also need works like Hennessy's, but I need them to allow for a space in which to be anticapitalist without being a Marxist theorist. For example, she explicitly rejects any critique of "classism," which "stresses the cultural expression of class hierarchies . . . and understands class differences in terms of status. As a result, it redirects the focus of class analysis from exploitation to cultural oppression" (49). But both do exist–class exploitation and cultural oppression. Is it not possible to talk about both? Hollibaugh documents classist cultural oppression *within* the leftist movements in which she worked; is that not a legitimate subject of analysis, as well as the structural exploitation that underlies it?

Hennessy traces the history of queerness, in which "[c]laiming a queer identity is an effort to speak from and to the differences that have been suppressed both by heteronorms and by the homo-hetero binary . . . [a] rejection of proper sexual identities that is both anti-assimilationist and anti-separatist" (52), but points out that in most queer theory "capitalism remains completely invisible" (53), echoing Morton's critique made several years earlier. She outlines the development of queer theory, which has moved from what she terms "avant-garde queer theory," a postmodernist version, to "materialist avant-garde" queer theory, which is

not historical materialist, but poststructuralist. She devotes an extended critique to the work of Judith Butler, whom she sees as a representative of the kind of cultural materialism that fails because it does not take the relations of production under capitalism as central to its analysis. Along with Butler, Hennessy sees Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and Slavoj Zizek as cultural materialists whose theories, "because they can only imagine social change as the struggle for discursive or cultural democracy within capitalism . . . are not only limited but quite compatible, finally, with the forms of consciousness encouraged by neoliberalism" (80-81). She rightly points out that queer critiques of heterosexuality "keep invisible how the gendered division of labor has historically secured sexual identities to the family and consumer culture. Domestic partnerships and gay marriages that redefine sexuality only in terms of rights for gays (or straight marriage resisters) leave unquestioned or even indirectly promote capitalism's historical stake in the relations among family, labor, and consumption" (67). Rather than supporting gay marriage, I have always preferred the dismantling of marriage as a state-sanctioned institution altogether, for more or less these reasons.

In the chapter "Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture," she argues that the increasing visibility of homosexuality in contemporary culture is ultimately a marketing strategy and therefore not liberatory at all, because it is still enmeshed in the exploitative system of capital. "Redressing gay invisibility by promoting images of a seamlessly middle-class gay consumer or by inviting us to see queer identities only in terms of style, textuality, or performative play helps produce imaginary gay/queer subjects that keep invisible the divisions of wealth and labor that these images and knowledges depend on. These commodified perspectives blot from view lesbians, gays, and queers who are manual workers, sex workers, unemployed, and imprisoned" (140). She offers the devastating example of the Levi Strauss corporation, which offers domestic partnership benefits, services for employees who test HIV positive, and a lesbian and gay employees association, but only to its U.S. employees, whereas its sweatshop workers in Saipan earn $2.15 an hour and remain invisible. This argues in favor of one of the points that Fitzgerald makes in her *American Quarterly* review: that "intersections between sexuality and class in the United States [need to be] situated within a transnational political and economic context."[7]

It is in her last chapter, "Identity, Need, and the Making of Revolutionary Love," that Hennessy comes to a place that feels to me something closer to home. In this chapter she finally fits sexual desire into her framework, by defining both desire and love as "affective needs," and declares that "meeting human needs is the baseline of history" (210). She discusses the concept of "emotional labor." "The social organization of affect is not just a tool to meet other needs, as some functionalist marx-

ists have assumed, nor is it a corporeal energy autonomous from the division of labor. We might even say affective potential is included in what Marx means by labor–that is, the capacity to satisfy and freely develop vital human needs, a capacity that is always socially exercised" (215). Capitalism produces "outlawed need" by alienating people from sensation and affect. "In constructing sexual identity . . . the discourses of sexuality provide the social contexts whereby sensations and affects are made intelligible in terms of normative and perverse sexual identifications and desires. 'Outlawed needs,' however, are not just those sensations and affects that the normative discourses shame[;] . . . [t]hey are also those unspeakable sensations and affects that do not fall easily into any prescribed categories" (217-18). In this way, she creates a space in which to talk about love and to talk about sexual desires–two things I am unwilling to do without–while talking about the revolution. She concludes that resituating "sexual politics on the ground of human needs links the human potential for sensation and affect that the discourses of sexual identity organize to the meeting of other vital human needs and calls for a movement for full democracy to begin there" (232).

Where, then, is the field of class and sexuality at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Still under development, still waiting for us to find ways to weave together the theoretical with the narratives of lived experiences, still waiting for more work to be done. But what looks different now is that the work is beginning to be done, and is being noticed, and that is a different direction than we were heading in the 1980s and 1990s. Maybe it is a direction that leads home.

## NOTES

1. Donald Morton, "The Class Politics of Queer Theory," *College English* 58 (1996): 471.
2. Jenrose Fitzgerald, "Querying Sexual Economy: The Cultural Politics of Sexuality and Class in the United States," *American Quarterly* 54 (June 2002): 349-57. She reviews *Out at Work: Building a Gay-Labor Alliance*, ed. Kitty Krupat and Patrick McCreery (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) and M.V. Lee Badgett, *Money, Myths, and Change: The Economic Lives of Lesbians and Gay Men* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
3. Dorothy Allison, *Skin: Talking about Sex, Class, and Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1994); Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1993); Julia Penelope, *Out of the Class Closet: Lesbians Speak* (Freedom, Calif.: Crossing Press, 1994); Susan Raffo, *Queerly Classed: Gay Men and Lesbians Write about Class* (Boston: South End Press, 1997).
4. Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (New York: Bantam, 1982).
5. Richard Rodriguez, *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* (New York: Viking, 1992).
6. C. L. Barney Dews and Carolyn Leste Law, eds., *This Fine Place So Far from Home* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).
7. Fitzgerald, 356.

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