

QUEER REORIENTATIONS OF “HOME”

DEATH, THE LOVER, AND A PLACE TO LAND IN JEANETTE

WINTERSON’S *THE STONE GODS*

by

Hwa Yi Xing

Submitted to

Department of Gender Studies, Central European University

Centro de Estudios de las Mujeres, Universidad de Oviedo

In partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies.

Supervisor: Barát Erzsébet

Second Reader: María Socorro Suárez Lafuente

Budapest, Hungary

2010



**ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER
IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES**

QUEER REORIENTATIONS OF “HOME”

DEATH, THE LOVER, AND A PLACE TO LAND IN JEANETTE

WINTERSON'S *THE STONE GODS*

by

Hwa Yi Xing

Supervisor: Barát Erzsébet

Second Reader: María Socorro Suárez Lafuente

Budapest, Hungary

2010

Approval signature:

Abstract

This thesis uses Jeanette Winterson's novel The Stone Gods as a starting point from which to rethink the problematic of "home." How to work with this traditionally conservative concept and synthesize a radically queer reconstruction of it, if this is at all possible? I explore ways in which one might relate to the desire for "home" and "belonging", while avoiding the reiteration of nostalgic, unproductive logics that find their basis in heteronormativity and reproductive futurity. I use Ahmed's concept of "orientations", arguing that queer potentiality needs to be developed in order to get to a point where queer refigurations of "home" become possible. I argue that singular originary narratives are limiting; rather, I use Fortier's conceptualization of "home" as a site of attachment, to discuss the possibility of multiple beginnings. I link a queer reconception of "home" to the acceptance of liminal and ephemeral logics that do not shy away from loss. Thinking "home" queerly opens up the potential of finding ways of belonging, and places to belong that do not disappoint.

My heartfelt thanks to:

Barát Erzsébet

María Socorro Suárez Lafuente

Jasmina Lukic

Mama

Marianna

Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Thinking “Home”..... | 1 |
| Research Question/s | 2 |
| An Introduction to <i>The Stone Gods</i> | 3 |
| General Framework..... | 5 |
| Approaching Winterson’s Text..... | 6 |
| Towards Refigurations of “Home” | 7 |
| Chapter 1 Nostalgic “Home” Narratives | 10 |
| 1.1 Nostalgia: Longing, Remembering, Forgetting | 10 |
| 1.2 Nostalgia: Collective Paranoia | 12 |
| 1.3 The Central Power’s Blue Planet | 14 |
| 1.4 F is for Farm..... | 17 |
| 1.5 The Nostalgic Rebel | 20 |
| 1.6 Nostalgic Investments, Alternative Imaginings | 21 |
| Chapter 2 Realizing Queer Potentialities | 23 |
| 2.1 Orientations: Toward Collective Potentialities | 23 |
| 2.2 Queer as Horizon..... | 25 |
| 2.3 To Arrive Somewhere Else | 27 |
| 2.4 Intentionally Queer, “Lost” Investments | 30 |
| 2.5 Refusing the Imprint..... | 33 |
| 2.6 Holding on to a Lifeline..... | 36 |
| 2.7 Set Adrift..... | 38 |
| 2.8 Remembering That Which Fleets..... | 40 |
| Chapter 3 Detachment, Reorientation..... | 43 |
| 3.1 Different Origins | 43 |
| 3.2 At Home: Space of UnDesire..... | 45 |
| 3.3 Attachment/Multiple Beginnings | 47 |
| 3.4 Potential Beginnings: A Landing Place, Death, the Lover | 49 |
| 3.5 Part 1: Planet You..... | 51 |
| 3.6 Part 2: When Everywhere is Here | 52 |
| 3.7 Part 3: I Was Born | 53 |
| 3.8 Part 4: Always on the Losing Track..... | 55 |
| 3.9 Reorientations: Someone to Love | 57 |
| 3.10 Death of the Lover..... | 58 |
| 3.11 Ending at the Point of Origin | 59 |
| 3.12 Queer Moments at Home | 60 |
| Conclusions Part 1: Dreaming Everywhere, Anywhere Else | 63 |
| Conclusions Part 2: “The What” that Fleets..... | 67 |
| Conclusions Part 3: Wednesday, February 11, 2009 | 69 |
| Bibliography | 72 |

‘You can stay here for a while if you want to. There’s a spare bed.’
‘Thanks,’ I said, ‘but I want to get home.’
‘What’s at home,’ she said, ‘that you want to get to?’

– Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods*

I am trying to learn how to live, to have the speaking-to extend beyond the moment’s word to act so as to change the unjust circumstances that keep us from being able to speak to each other; I’m trying to get a little closer to the longed-for but unrealized world, where we each are able to live, but not by trying to make someone less than us, not by someone else’s blood or pain.

– Bulkin, Pratt and Smith, *Yours in Struggle*

Introduction

One gonna heal my body another gonna heal my pain / One gonna settle me down
then bring me back up again / One gonna put my family back together again

One gonna hold my memory another gonna close the door / One gonna leave me
restless another wanting more / You're gonna keep my soul it was yours to have
long ago

State Radio, *Keepsake*

Thinking “Home”

Having lived in four different countries in the past five years, and with the move to a fifth one to take place almost as soon as I complete this thesis; the experience of thinking and rethinking my relation to the concept of “home” is one that has become almost familiar. My relation to “home” is at times an uncomfortably self-conscious one, at others more relaxed. I find ways to feel “at home” wherever I go, collecting books, random postcards and flyers, stickers, mugs—it is always nice to have a familiar object to drink out of—but perhaps most importantly, by gathering people around me; people who inspire, who annoy, who love, who do queer theory, who argue with me about the institution of marriage, who contribute something valuable to my life in all their quirkiness. More often than not, I have experienced “home” as more strongly related to the relationships I had in that place/town/city/country, but occasionally my strong attachment and relation to spaces comes to fore. At times when I wasn’t doing very well, and didn’t feel sufficiently located or orientated, my immediate living space reflected that feeling of disorientation; I didn’t bother making it feel like home.

As I return again and again to the problem of how to think about “home” in my personal life, I only took myself slightly by surprise when I decided to write about it. As someone who is unable to fully engage in work that is not deeply personal, that I should return again and begin from this problematic of “home” made perfect sense. It was the

personal that also pointed me towards an engagement with Jeanette Winterson's work, although in this present moment her repetitiveness of themes and style tires me somewhat.

In working toward a queer rethinking of "home", I find myself informed by works that continually remind me of various structures of inequality that I neglect to, or am not able to engage with properly in this thesis due to limitations of time/space/resources. As a sort-of "global nomad"¹ myself, my argument/s are no doubt informed by this positioning, as they are no doubt also informed by my first eighteen years spent in Peninsular Malaysia—with a religious Christian upbringing, parents who were educated in the States, and my childhood spent reading British and north American children's fiction. I am not however interested in privileging physical or geographical movement in working towards models of queer-er belonging, even though those positionings at times of course do result in useful knowledge and perspectives. Movement, queering, and valuable refigurations of "home" can as easily arise out of locatedness as well as the lack thereof; I will at some point even argue that it is necessary to be *somewhat* situated or orientated. Queer refigurations of "home" need to *do* things, inform our lives in new ways, and desire different objects and relations. The challenge is: how to create new logics that relate to "home", without repeating known ones that lead us again into unproductive narratives?

Research Question/s

In Winterson's 2007 novel *The Stone Gods*, one of the key themes running through the book is the obsession with the idea of home, or the finding of, as often termed in the story, "a landing place". This "home" obsession is the key concept that I will be dealing with and critiquing. I will examine the character relations and narratives of "home" that are constructed—using these as starting points toward problematizing traditional conceptions of

¹ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, 85.

home and toward developing a queered conception/s of home. How to work with this traditionally conservative concept and synthesize a radically queer reconstruction of it, if this is at all possible? How to relate to “home” and “belonging” while at the same time avoiding the reiteration of normative/conservative/unproductive logics?

An Introduction to *The Stone Gods*

The Stone Gods is a novel in four parts: Planet Blue, Easter Island, Post-3 War, and Wreck City. It is a story of a repeating world, where humans make the same mistakes again and again, collectively sealing the fate of their doomed planet/s. Still Winterson insists that stories can be “written again”, and that human beings have the potential to change the outcome in a quantum world where things are “neither random nor determined.”²

Part 1, Planet Blue, begins on the planet called Orbus. The narrator, Billie Crusoe, lives in one of the cities of the Central Power, a corporate, capitalist democracy; more technologically advanced than the other two governmental systems that inhabit Orbus—the Caliphate and the Pact, which Billie also refers to as “the Believers” and “the Collective”.³ Orbus is dying, and the humans’ only hope is to relocate to the new planet that they have found. It is very similar to Orbus, sixty-five million years ago, except for the presence of the dinosaurs.⁴ Billie, through a turn of events, ends up leaving her farm-home on Orbus to join the exploratory trip to Planet Blue—during which she and the Robo *sapiens* Spike become lovers.

Part 2 takes place on isolated Easter Island in the 1770s; Billy is a crew member of Captain Cook’s voyage who gets stranded on the island following a conflict with some of the Easter Island natives. He is rescued from his attempt to drown himself by Spikkers, a white man whose Dutch father had arrived with an earlier voyage in 1722, and chosen to remain on

² Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 181, 203.

³ Ibid., 7.

⁴ Ibid., 30.

the island. Spikkers' "only wish" is to leave the island for Amsterdam, which he has never seen—"much wood, many houses". The two also begin a love affair, which ends abruptly with Spikkers' death by the hand of a political rival.

Part 3 (and 4) takes place on Earth in the near future, following World War 3.⁵ Billie tells her own story—real or make-believe we do not know. Born and then given up for adoption by her mother, she is unable to "break the shape" of this loss, of being lost.⁶ Billie works for MORE, the same corporation that in Part 1 seemingly controls the Central Power. "Spike is what I do"—Billie job is mainly to talk with the Robo *sapiens* (who exists as just a head), to teach her "what it means to be human."⁷ Spike is being developed to make decisions on behalf of humans, in order to avoid another War.

Part 4 takes us into Wreck City. On the day that Billie is supposed to take Spike for a walk, for "Mobile Data Recognition", on impulse she leaves the MORE building for an "alternative" sort of walk. Wreck City is the space that runs by its own laws; it exists on the edge of the "official part of town."⁸ While in Wreck City they meet the barman Friday, some dinosaur-friendly Lesbian Vegans, and a nun, but things take a bad turn when the Robo *sapiens* is announced to be "stolen" under suspicion of a "terrorist plot."⁹ Spike, who is "programmed to accept new experiences", decides that she wants to defect and "work with an alternative community", to which Billie strongly objects—"I am going to lose my job and my jetons."¹⁰ As with some of Winterson's other works, the ending to this novel is fantastic—as

⁵ The narrative, in Part 3, also performs a self-referencing act that develops into an integral part of the narrative. This little trick in the novel was also apparently turned into a publicity stunt by Winterson and her publishing house. Briggs, "BBC NEWS | Entertainment | Winterson novel 'left at station'."

⁶ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 127.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 176, 180.

in, not based in “reality”—and also somewhat ambiguous in that it allows for the possibility of more than one reading.¹¹

General Framework

“Home” in *The Stone Gods* is strongly associated with a couple different elements. First, the physical home imagery of the stone house that is conjured up; this image recurs at least three times in the novel. There is a second house image that appears in Part 2, that of a (likely) wooden house, but it is used to much lesser effect in comparison to the first image. Second, “home” as associated with a person, or a relationship, is incredibly significant. This happens both in relation to lovers and to the lost mother figure of Parts 3 and 4. And third, there is a strong link to death that is portrayed, as four deaths take place in the novel—two at the end of Part 1, one at the end of Part 2, and one at the end of Part 4. There are various ways in which Winterson’s representations of “home” fail to be at all radical, but there are other representations that I do find to be of value in this narrative—namely, the association of home with the figure of the lover, and with death; and following that, the unsafe, fleeting temporality/spatiality that is created in this representation.

I want to argue for queer conceptualizations of home that break with the traditional logic of home as a safe, comfortable space. Queer conceptions of “home” need to move beyond originary, given narratives that simply serve to justify or explain the present.¹² Fortier argues that narratives in which home is reconstructed as a destination rather than an origin also lack creative potential, as they simply reinscribe the “home-as-familiarity” logic by fetishizing “home.”¹³ Queer-er refigurations of “home” need to be radically different in at

¹¹ See *Written on the Body* for example, and Brian Finney’s discussion of it in “Bonded by Language: Jeanette Winterson’s *Written on the Body*”.

¹² Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 116-117.

¹³ Fortier, “Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 412, 419.

least these two ways: First, they need to move away from logics of reproductive time,¹⁴ reproductive futurism,¹⁵ and the nuclear family, in order to move in the direction of imagining models of queer kinship.¹⁶ By extension, secondly, they need to reject assimilationist LGBT politics, called out by Duggan as “the new homonormativity”—a politics, she argues, that simply serves to reinscribe the very same heteronormative structures and institutions just mentioned, instead of questioning them.¹⁷ The rejection of these originary, normative, and limiting logics serves as the underlying structure of my argument and analysis in relation to this problematic of “home”.

Approaching Winterson’s Text

I will steal a line from Alan Sinfield and state upfront that I am not interested in trying to establish “literary value.”¹⁸ Winterson’s text in this case has been extremely valuable for me insofar as it provided me with somewhere to start from, provoking my thoughts in the direction that they have currently taken form. But I do not place any emphasis on arguing that it is a great, or must-read text (even if I did opine so)—indeed, there would be countless others who would vehemently disagree. In my research for this thesis, I most definitely too came across other texts that address similar themes to *The Stone Gods* in arguably more complex, interesting ways.¹⁹ My general approach however, is to take what one can, whatever one finds to be of value/potential, from any given text. It is extremely easy to criticize any one text, pointing out what it did not do “right”, or failed to do at all—according to one’s own positioning/perspective, of course. Which is the logical possibility, as it is clear that no one

¹⁴ See Chapter 1, Halberstam, *In A Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*.

¹⁵ Edelman, “The Future Is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive.”

¹⁶ Eng, “Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas,” 4.

¹⁷ Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*, 50.

¹⁸ Sinfield, *On Sexuality and Power*, 5.

¹⁹ Friends of mine, when they heard about what I was researching, insisted I watch Ridley Scott’s 1982 science fiction classic, *Blade Runner* (which was based on the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick). I found the film fascinating especially in terms of how it addressed the human/non-human question—a theme that *The Stone Gods*, coming twenty-five years later, also deals with—albeit not in a particularly sophisticated way. Scott, *Blade Runner (Final Cut, 2007)*.

text can do everything or please every reader's politics. However, there might be, admittedly, some theoretical/ethical difficulties in separating a text completely from its author, in the case where the author is a figure as public as Winterson. Still, needless to say, in this novel of hers I have found enough that I consider to be of value and worth engaging with. I try to take what I can out of the text—that which has potential to contribute toward an interesting reworking of the meanings of “home”—while being sufficiently critical of the text's other overly conservative tendencies that reiterate unproductive logics.

In dealing with Winterson's work, certain themes tend to pop up again and again. Sinfield refers to these as “faultline stories”; they are the “narratives which we revisit compulsively (in literary writing and many other forms).”²⁰ In our visiting and revisiting of faultlines, Sinfield suggests that we either then stick to “old shapes”, and end up telling known stories, or we manage to break into “new shapes.”²¹ Winterson herself insists on telling the story again, on new beginnings, on different endings.²² But in her rewriting of the faultline of home/a landing place in *The Stone Gods*, does Winterson manage to change the shape, to tell us something new?

Towards Refigurations of “Home”

In the first chapter I discuss nostalgia as a specific way of “remembering”, which in its conservative form promises a return to, or a rebuilding of, the “ideal home”. I explore how nostalgia functions at the individual and collective level, often promising a “return home” at the expense of the difference that exists within the “home” borders themselves. There are various representations of nostalgia that surface in Winterson's novel; here I limit my discussion to the manifestations of nostalgia in Part 1 of the novel. The Central Power invests

²⁰ Sinfield, *On Sexuality and Power*, 6.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “‘Go home and write the story again’ (...) You can change the story. You are the story.” Winterson, *The Powerbook*, 243.

“Always a new beginning, a different end.” Winterson, *Weight*, 137.

in a certain narrative of nostalgic futurity, while Billie's form of nostalgia largely confines her to her farm-home-space on Orbus. I argue that her positioning fails to effect a productive force, a productive reconfiguration of "home"—and that this is a result of a politics that is (only) reactionary. Forms of "remembering" need to move beyond nostalgia, if they are to develop in ways that have more productive implications towards reconceptualizing "home" in the present and future.

Chapter 2 approaches the concept of orientations as discussed by Sara Ahmed, in order to provide a framework from which we might move beyond nostalgia and the reiteration of normative logics. Developing orientations that are critically queer (enough) will enable one to choose lines of disorientation, to remember differently, and to integrate the past and future differently in relation to the present.²³ I also look at Muñoz's suggestion that we put queer "on the horizon", viewing it as a potentiality for a different world.²⁴ Potentiality on its own, however, is difficult to realize; I follow Ahmed's argument that "queer" needs to exist in community. The development of queer-er orientations—doing the work of walking paths less-trodden and imagining alternative futurities—is crucial toward being able to get to a point where one is able to conceptualize "home" differently.

In my third and last chapter I emphasize the need to "detach" from originary, idealized narratives of "home". Rather than "home" as origin, I take Fortier's suggestion that "home" be conceived of as a site of attachment—one that we occasionally "return" to. By using memory differently, one might effectively "queer" the status of "home". I suggest that detaching from originary narratives of "home" is necessary in order to move toward new attachments and to orientate differently. "Queer moments" that throw us off course might also serve as potential points of departure from which new "beginnings" might take shape. I consider the logic of Winterson's narrative, and look at the associations of "home" with the

²³ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

lover and with death. I also argue that the term “landing place” has potential in its temporal implications, and that it can be a place from which to depart or begin again.

Chapter 1 Nostalgic “Home” Narratives

nos·tal·gia²⁵ [no-stal-juh, -jee-uh, nuh-]

–*noun*

1. a wistful desire to return in thought or in fact to a former time in one's life, to one's home or homeland, or to one's family and friends; a sentimental yearning for the happiness of a former place or time: a nostalgia for his college days.
2. something that elicits or displays nostalgia.

nos·tal·gi·a (nō-stāl'jə, nə-)

n.

1. A bittersweet longing for things, persons, or situations of the past.
2. The condition of being homesick; homesickness.

1.1 Nostalgia: Longing, Remembering, Forgetting

In this chapter I discuss nostalgia as a specific form of “remembering”, a remembering that often projects an ideologically reconstructed form of the past into the present and future. I am interested here in relatively conservative manifestations of nostalgia at both the individual and collective levels, that promise a return to, or a rebuilding of, the “ideal home”. Further on, I explore some forms of nostalgia in Part 1 of *The Stone Gods*, to look at the kinds of narratives and positionings that are created. Nostalgia, insofar as it contains the force of longing/desire, has the potential to be a somewhat productive force; but ultimately, I argue that the form of nostalgia that the main character demonstrates fails to be productive, and doesn’t really provide any useful reconfiguration of “home”.

According to the generic definitions cited above, nostalgia longs for places and times of the “past”. But the question that needs to be asked is: what kind of “past” does nostalgia actually create? Boym points out that nostalgia is in effect, not just about the past, but that it is a reconstruction of the past tied to present needs which can have a “direct impact on realities

²⁵ “nostalgia.” *Dictionary.com*, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nostalgia>.

of the future.”²⁶ She adds an important element by defining nostalgia as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or *has never existed*.”²⁷

There is no straightforward way to remember the past; one reconstructs the same “slice” of the past in different ways at different times, and as Boym points out, because of different present needs. And yes, sometimes one remembers a past that was possibly never in existence to begin with. In my opinion, nostalgia is risky when it “remembers” in a way that too easily erases cracks and fissures—in this manner creating a longing for an overly idealized time and/or place. This version of nostalgia involves forgetting memories that cause cognitive dissonance while carrying forward the ones that uphold an unquestioned satisfaction with the past. It can limit rather than expand, if it rejects any excess that does not agree with its story or logic, and rejects alternative logics that may provide different narratives.

Boym’s argument below illustrates further some of the specificity of nostalgic longing, although she falls into the trap of constructing a too-simple binary in her understanding of nostalgia:

Restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately. Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt.

Restorative nostalgia is at the core of recent national and religious revivals; it knows two main plots—the return to origins and conspiracy. Reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones; it loves details, not symbols.²⁸

Boym splits nostalgia too neatly down the middle, criticizing restorative nostalgia’s negative manifestations, while turning to reflective nostalgia for a form of redemption, arguing that it can be a “creative” force.²⁹ Her separation of the two “forms” of nostalgia in this way is

²⁶ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xvi.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, xviii. Italics mine.

²⁸ *Ibid.*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, xviii, 354.

unfortunate, as it denies many of the complexities of nostalgia even though she does discuss them at other points.

In any case, all forms of nostalgia involve both a certain kind of remembering and a certain amount of forgetting. If we are to invest in minimizing the potentially negative effects of nostalgia, perhaps we should pay more attention to that which tends to be forgotten—to the cracks that are erased, to the gaping mistakes that are glossed over. Why do we forget what we forget, and remember what we remember? What narrative structures and logics are at work here, and what needs and desires are revealed? Boym cites Kamen who calls nostalgia a “history without guilt”,³⁰ and she further elaborates on this as “an abdication of personal responsibility, a guilt-free homecoming, an ethical and aesthetic failure.”³¹ Contemporary nostalgic representations and narratives justify all sorts of action and inaction,³² particularly when it comes to nostalgic narratives of the nation. This point for me raises the question: at what cost, and at whose cost, can a guilt-free homecoming be achieved?

1.2 Nostalgia: Collective Paranoia

In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym traces the history of the emergence of nostalgia in Europe, before moving on to a discussion of nostalgia in the contemporary post-socialist context. The phenomenon of nostalgia—originally diagnosed as a disease—is closely linked to the processes by which our modern conceptions of the nation have literally and figuratively emerged. Boym quotes Johannes Hofer who is credited with coining the term in 1688, in reference to the homesickness experienced by “various displaced people” who were far from home, including Swiss soldiers.³³ Sufferers of nostalgia were said to be consumed by their

³⁰ Kamen, cited by Boym. Ibid., xiv.

³¹ Ibid.

³² I say “action and inaction”, as I would make the argument that any given action or inaction can have an equal or significant impact, whether positive or negative.

³³ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 3.

“longing for their native land” to the extent that they would become out of touch with their present.³⁴ Boym writes:

In the good old days nostalgia was a curable disease, dangerous but not always lethal. Leeches, warm hypnotic emulsions, opium and a return to the Alps usually soothed the symptoms (...) but nothing compared to the return to the motherland believed to be the best remedy for nostalgia. While proposing the treatment for the disease, Hofer seemed proud of some of his patients; for him nostalgia was a demonstration of the patriotism of his compatriots who loved the charm of their native land to the point of sickness.³⁵

The above perception of the connection between nostalgia and patriotism is a key element that is intrinsic to the way nostalgia functions in the present day. Contemporary nostalgia, argues Boym, is “a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values.”³⁶ Clear borders, for example, is a key tenet of the modern nation’s narrative in affirming an illusion of a “safe” land/space/place to call ‘home’. At the same time, contemporary nostalgia is also about the inability to deal with a fast-changing world and a different rhythm of life; it is a “defense mechanism”, says Boym, that manifests itself as a longing for an imaginary that is fixed and as such safely available: it is the articulation of a desire for “a community with a collective memory, (...) for continuity in a fragmented world.”³⁷

As the obsession with “return”—to something, sometime, someone(s), some place—is essential to the way that nostalgia functions, interrogating what it is that the return points toward will be one way of beginning/continuing this discussion. Boym argues that “the promise to rebuild the ideal home” forms the heart of many convincing contemporary national narratives.³⁸ I am interested mainly in a discussion of nostalgia here insofar as it relates closely to a longing for a home/a conception of home that, I will argue, probably never was, never will be, and is an impossibility—at the individual and at the collective level. The

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 4.

³⁶ Ibid., 8.

³⁷ Ibid., xiv.

³⁸ Ibid., xvi.

individual and collective levels cannot be disengaged in a discussion of nostalgia, as nostalgia is primarily “about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory.”³⁹ Far from being mutually exclusive, the individual and collective levels are mutually constitutive. Further, problematizing narratives and conceptualizations of “home” on either level will inevitably relate to the other level.

Contemporary nostalgic narratives of home and nation still posit the false binaries of inside/outside, safe/unsafe, familiar/unfamiliar. The insistent construction of the “stranger”⁴⁰ or foreigner, for example, perhaps is in Boym’s terminology, a “defense mechanism” in today’s increasingly globalized world. Ahmed posits how this defense narrative works affectively; she argues that the logic of “protecting” the national body entails that “nation/national subject must defend itself against “invasion” by others.” This, then, effectively creates an “us” and “them”.⁴¹ Such national narratives construct arbitrary lines and borders that basically deny the experience of many realities and lives that exist within, and also cross/transcend those borders/spaces. The same logics also tend to posit a nostalgic future as the alternative—this is what Boym terms “restorative nostalgia”—obsessed with the “return to origins and the conspiracy”, it promises the nostalgic collective a better “future” in its “paranoic determination” to rebuild the homeland.⁴²

1.3 The Central Power’s Blue Planet

In the following sections I will discuss nostalgic space and representations, exploring particularly the rhetoric that articulates representations of the new Planet Blue—which is the projected collective space of belonging. Following that, I examine Billie’s relation to her

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. 38-54.

⁴¹ Ahmed, “Affective Economies,” 123-124.

⁴² Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xviii, 354.

home-space within Orbus, her bio-dome farm. The question I am exploring is not so much whether any given space in and of itself might be termed “nostalgic”. Although it might be an issue worth addressing, I am more inclined to argue that a space can be “nostalgic” only in relation to a subject(s), whether in the construction or the reception of it. From that perspective then, I am more interested in exploring how the main character relates to, and also constructs, nostalgic space and representations.

Nostalgic imagery and references abound in *The Stone Gods*. The text as a whole could possibly be called nostalgic based on its constant references to canonized literary narratives that themselves portray an irretrievable time (from a present-day linear perspective of temporality). Old stories of voyage and travel are referenced, for example Captain James Cook’s journals from the 1700s are cited—repeatedly⁴³. Winterson plays with repetition, and occasionally with variation of the repetition.

By way of introducing the first part of the novel, “Planet Blue”, the narrator⁴⁴ tells us that we are “running out of planet”, and that “we searched until we found the one we *will call home*.”⁴⁵ (italics mine) The planet that is to be called “home” is described as a “pristine planet” with “abundant natural resources”,⁴⁶ a “*polar-swirled, white-whirled, diamond blue*” world that is still evolving and taking shape.⁴⁷ Planet Blue is the idealized future home, purportedly for all of Orbus’s inhabitants, but in reality is intended to be just for the rich degenerates of the Central Power. The new planet is an image from the past—it is described

⁴³ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 92, 97.

⁴⁴ It is not completely clear whether it is Billie’s own voice/opinion that is narrating at this point. I am inclined to think perhaps yes it is her voice, but perhaps parroting the rhetoric of the Central Power in a slightly ironic manner. My reason for this is that the following sentences sound not quite Billie-like; there is an unquestioning use of “we” in “we’re moving on”, and the fact that the narration refers to moving on as “natural” is suspicious—Billie does not “move on” easily. Further, it seems likely that Billie is performing the “reassuring” persona referred to in the previous paragraph.

⁴⁵ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 30, 202.

to resemble Orbus sixty-five million years before, except for the presence of the dinosaurs:⁴⁸

“Look, our future/new planet looks just like our *old* planet! How wonderful!”

In a cynical tone, the protagonist, Billie narrates how pictures of Planet Blue are being shown on the “smart-skins” of buildings; she describes the representations as “pristine, diamond-cut, (...) and miles and miles of empty beauty.” All the drivers on the highway are watching these scenes, and Billie cynically remarks “We just stay in line and get there some day. Yeah, we’ll get there some day, blue planet, silver stars.”⁴⁹ Billie is critical of the presentations of this new planet that the Central Power is giving to the general population, as she knows enough about the system to be aware that most people are not going to be relocated to this brand-new home. This suspicion is confirmed by Spike later, on board the ship:

‘Spike – what exactly is the plan for Planet Blue?’

‘Destroy the dinosaurs and relocate.’

‘That’s the official story. What’s the real story?’

‘The rich are leaving. The rest of the human race will have to cope with what’s left of Orbus, a planet becoming hostile to human life after centuries of human life becoming hostile to the planet. It was inevitable – Nature seeks balance.’⁵⁰

Despite the plan to eventually let only a select population from Orbus migrate to Planet Blue, the Central Power (who are the ones who have funded the space mission for past 200 years) is seen to put tremendous effort into convincing the general population of a future that will never materialize for most of them.

What seems to be clear, in the casting of Planet Blue as an image of pristine, untouched perfection, is that there is investment in a certain nationalistic narrative of nostalgic futurity. The national (or in this case, planetary) narrative of futurity here goes something like this: “Our nation/home/planet would be perfect, if only we didn’t have these people around, and those people around; they are the ones that are fucking us over, destroying the planet, they are tampering with this great system that we’ve created.” Manfred, for example, who is

⁴⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 60.

Billie's boss and an upstanding citizen (and politician) of the Central Power, rants about "those selfish, greedy, bigoted bastards", accusing them of destabilizing Orbus—"What right have they to do this to us?"⁵¹ Manfred is obviously one of the rich of the Central Power, whose hope is to start a new civilization on Planet Blue (with "infrastructure, buildings, services"!⁵²), minus all the problematic, unwanted "others" that he is forced to co-exist with on Orbus.

1.4 F is for Farm

In this section I discuss Billie's first home-space in Part 1, before she is eventually forced to leave Orbus and lose the farm. This image of "home" is an important one that will also figure later, in my discussion in Chapter 3. What comes through in the introductory pages of the book is Billie's sarcastic criticism of many elements of the world that she lives in. Billie is a history buff and likes the charm of the old-fashioned. For example, she keeps writing in a notebook with a pencil —while everyone else uses a SpeechPad, as the ability to read and write is no longer necessary in this world.⁵³ "Single-letter recognition is taught in schools," she informs us.⁵⁴ Billie lives in one of the twenty-two high tech cities of the Central Power, although her home within that city doesn't belong at all. She lives on a farm—an ancient space that exists within a "bio-dome". We are led to believe that the dome preserves this "natural" space somehow; it exists in stark opposition to the rest of Billie's world: an exhausted planet where there are no forests left, where red dust fills the air, where food is cloned in labs, where reproduction happens outside the womb. Billie's farm is the last existing space of its kind on this dying planet, a "message in a bottle from another time".⁵⁵

⁵¹ Ibid., 31.

⁵² Ibid., 32.

⁵³ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 11.

And in the middle of this hi-tech, hi-stress, hi-mess life, F is for Farm. My farm. Twenty hectares of pastureland and arable, with a stream running through the middle like a memory. Step into that water and you remember everything, and what you don't remember, you invent.⁵⁶

This is a perfect illustration of the (un)realistically nostalgic world that Billie has cultivated for herself. Billie articulates her discomfort with the pace of “modern” life, and dreams of, trying to produce even, a different type of temporality within this space. She reinvents a past that she never really knew, a past that she only knows through archival research. Hence when Billie is actually confronted with the reality of some of her choices, she recoils in horror. For political reasons, Billie had (illegally) chosen not to be genetically “fixed”⁵⁷—in this way running the risk of aging “naturally”. But when she encounters the first aged person she has ever seen, she is not able to look at her. The old woman tells her point-blank: “I am what you will become.” Billie describes her as looking like “a thing with skin like a lizard’s, like a stand-up handbag (...) Her arm was bones and stretched flesh – brown, thin skin pulled over bluish, visible tendons. I looked away.”⁵⁸

The second time in the story that the farm/home image appears, Billie is driving home after her day at work, soon after the encounter with the old woman. She reflects on her physical and political surroundings, and then ends this train of thought with, “whatever I say, whatever I feel, this is home, and I am going home.”⁵⁹ Billie’s narration of her home/farm, which I will get to presently, comes after descriptions of what the rest of her world is like: the deceptively beautiful ocean front, the “shining white towers of the city”, the rest of the sprawling city, “blank and bored”, and the “frightening” red dust and carbon dioxide—the latter two which to her signal “the end of everything”, a dying planet. In the midst of all this, her place to call home:

I pulled off the road to the bottom of the track that leads to the farm.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 79.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁹ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 4.

On my left is the broad, active stream with watercress growing in the fast part, and flag iris on the bank, and a willow bending over the water, and a foam of frog spawn, and a moorhen sailing the current.

The track rises steeply. It's getting dark. Ahead of me is the compact stone house, water-barrel by the front door, apple tree at the gate. *Go in*, I say to myself, *go in*.

And I slept that night, long and deep, like someone who does not dream because she is dreaming already.⁶⁰

This image of the farm is a central one in the novel, appearing several times throughout in a way that carries great weight. As Le Guin has pointed out, it is “essential that we are able to believe in [this image]”, despite the (im)plausibility of a space like this actually existing on the completely exhausted planet of Orbus.⁶¹ This is Billie's space, the one where she feels most “at home” in this city, and on Orbus. Even as she describes her space as “an ancient ancestor”, and as an intact “message in a bottle from another time”, in a way her farm is not that at all. There is no “pure” past existing in the present, there is only the present, and the past as one has recreated it. The farm is a farm, yes, a place that doesn't “belong” in the city or on dying Orbus—but it is still a space of Billie's recreation of the past, in her present.

Some other textual moments from Part 1 might be helpful in piecing together Billie's attachment to this farm, and to interrogate further how she conceives of this “home” space. The following quote is not obviously narrated in Billie's voice, but I would argue that later in the narration Billie confirms her relation to these words:

You dreamed all your life there was somewhere to land, a place to lie down and sleep, with the sound of water nearby. You set off to find it, buying old maps and listening to traveller's tales, because you believed that the treasure was really there.⁶²

On Planet Blue, later, there is a moment in which Billie says, “This was the fairytale, the happy ending. The buried treasure was really there.”⁶³ Both of these quotes reveal Billie's investment and belief in a “happy ending”, in a space where perfect comfort and safety can be found. The earlier quote suggests her belief in tales—nostalgic ones perhaps—that tell this story again and again. Billie's investment (throughout the novel) in a place to land, to call

⁶⁰ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 39-40.

⁶¹ Le Guin, “Review: The Stone Gods by Jeanette Winterson | Books | The Guardian.”

⁶² Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 25.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 73.

“home”, interestingly enough contradicts the narrative’s investment in traveller’s tales, as the figure of the traveller by definition implies movement and temporal association with places.⁶⁴

1.5 The Nostalgic Rebel

Billie’s relation to home here is primarily based on her nostalgic relation to this space. On the whole, her nostalgic disposition doesn’t arise from any discernible “root” or driving purpose; aside from her general criticism of the present system, there is no obvious reason for her obsession with the past. She yearns for a different time—a time that is however clearly not achievable in the present. There are certain clear physical results of her political choices—the bombing of *MORE-Futures*,⁶⁵ for example, and the aging that comes with not being Fixed.⁶⁶ Besides these things, however, Billie’s political-nostalgic positioning isn’t focused in any particular direction, and, I argue, doesn’t result in any particularly “positive” or “productive” force per se.

Billie’s form of nostalgia—which definitely doesn’t fit neatly into either of the two “types” defined by Boym—above all seems to be rather reactionary, and based on a disagreement with how the current system functions. She is, more or less, a rebel without a cause, as she is not fighting for any real alternative. Her rebellion is a rebellion against the direction in which her “nation”—the Central Power—is/has been headed; the type of futurity it offers holds no interest for her. In this way, Billie’s nostalgia is actually very much contingent upon the Central Power’s version of nostalgia—as her rejection is in large part a rejection of the “home” that is offered. Her reaction to this is to construct her own nostalgic version of “home”. In fact, she tries to rebuild the “home” which she largely blames the Central Power for destroying.⁶⁷ She questions the dominant narratives of the Central Power,

⁶⁴ The distinction between the terms “landing place” and “home” will be discussed more in Chapter 3.

⁶⁵ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 58.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7, 31.

but unfortunately (thus far in the story) does not really manage to explore or create more than this one nostalgic way of inhabiting or creating “home”.

1.6 Nostalgic Investments, Alternative Imaginings

I have illustrated in this chapter how nostalgia, in its longing for certain idealized “pasts”, gets played out in several ways. At the collective level, it can be used for political-ideological purposes, to convince individuals within the collective that the imagined “perfect home” is there, is on the horizon, is achievable—while at the same time finding scapegoats, an “other”, to blame for the national home’s current imperfections. The character Billie’s reaction to this national narrative is a start; she is aware and critical of the problems with its logic, and of the structures of inequality that this narrative reinscribes. While her rejection of this logic leads her to build a different one, insofar as she invests in another particularly nostalgic form of “home”, she fails to “remember” and reconstruct the past in a way that is sufficiently radical or that contains more productive implications for the future.

Reconstructions of “home” that are based on a perfect imaginary, or that invest in a return to “origins” are always going to fail in their inherent impossibility. The form of “reflective”, individualized nostalgia that Billie reflects to a certain extent, and that Boym argues can “foster a creative self”,⁶⁸ has some potential—but remains problematic insofar as the individual consciousness is conceived of as separate from the collective. This isolation is a point that I will take up further in the following chapter.

Perhaps we need to move toward different forms of remembering, that turn reactionary and critical energies into something more productive. I want to consider Braidotti’s argument, here, that addresses alternative ways of remembering/forgetting:

Feminism is a philosophy of change and of becoming: it functions through creative mimesis, that is to say by activating counter-memories. Memory thus activated is a time-bomb placed under the driver's seat of phallocentrism; it will undo the main

⁶⁸ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 354.

effects that this system has upon its minority subjects: wilfully instilled amnesia, symbolic misery, lack of self-representation. A counter-memory, the process of refusing to forget, or forgetting to forget, expresses feminist women's desire to develop alternative forms of subjectivity⁶⁹

I want to emphasize the need to remember differently; this can do the work of bringing to the fore these counter-memories; to question the memories that dominate, to explore the ways in which amnesia is instilled. At the same time, I also want to keep in mind that work done in a reactionary manner can only do so much—it tends to get caught in the trap of paranoia, becoming obsessed with exposing, and uncovering conspiracies.⁷⁰ Reactionary and paranoid politics tend to get stuck within the same logics that are the target of criticism.

Bloch argues that it is “only thinking directed toward changing the world and informing the desire to change it”, that does not confront the “past as spell”.⁷¹ How then, to move beyond the past as a spell that binds our narratives of “home”? It is only “knowledge as conscious theory-practice”, he argues, that can render “Becoming”; on the other hand, merely reflective forms of knowledge can only think about that which has already become.⁷² For these reasons I want to move towards different frameworks with the aim of providing alternative logics to work with—logics that might open up different ways to approach “home”.

⁶⁹ Braidotti, “Nomadism with a difference: Deleuze's legacy in a feminist perspective,” 312.

⁷⁰ See Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You,” 123-151.

⁷¹ Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1:8.

⁷² Ibid.

Chapter 2 Realizing Queer Potentialities

In my assessment, one of the central issues at stake in this project is how to reconcile historicity, and therefore agency, with the (unconscious) desire for change. The most difficult task is how to put the will to change together with the desire for the new that implies the construction of new desiring subjects.

This difficulty is due to the fact that inner, psychic or unconscious structures are very hard to change by sheer volition.

Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*

Phenomenology can offer a resource for queer theory insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds.

Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*

2.1 Orientations: Toward Collective Potentialities

In this chapter my aim is to develop a line of thought that moves out of and beyond the traps of a nostalgic disposition. I argue that developing alternative, queer orientations is essential toward the development of new ways of thinking “home”, without falling into hopelessly nostalgic and/or traditional representations of the concept. To this purpose, I want to look at some ways to move toward points where we might find it easier, first of all to break known/conservative/normative logics—where we might then be able to begin (again), and think “home” in sufficiently radical ways. The central question that I want to explore is: How to shape our bodies, lives, and worlds differently, and develop queer potentialities that might eventually materialize?

I will therefore begin this chapter, drawing on Sara Ahmed’s work, with the discussion of the key theoretical concept “to queer”, in order to set a framework within which I develop what it means to be orientated queerly. Developing orientations that are critically queer is one way toward being able to forge queerer ways to relate to “home”, and thereby to forge queerer conceptions of “home” itself. The question is, then, what might be involved in

developing orientations/dispositionalities that are critically queer (enough), that enable one to remember differently, and to integrate the past and future differently in relation to the present?⁷³

Braidotti⁷⁴ and Haraway⁷⁵ both argue that one needs to be situated/located enough in order to say/produce anything of general value. While Winterson's Billie/y is in some ways orientated "queerly", at many other points we get the feeling that she is overly disoriented/lost. While being disoriented or "lost" (as I will argue later) might be a prerequisite to understanding and becoming "queer", remaining lost is not a very productive option. Billie/y more often than not comes across as "just lost." In addition to a relative situatedness, I regard the element of community as an essential element to one's queer production—production of orientations, positionalities, knowledges, etc. Ahmed argues that "queer" is not something that exists in any one body, but that it is "dependent on the mutuality of support."⁷⁶ Challenging "straight" time and space requires a combination of both individual and collective action.

In my arguments I endeavor, as far as possible, not to set up a "queer"/"straight" dichotomy, but to queer the concept of home in a way that bypasses patterns of binary thinking. For this purpose I find it useful to focus the discussion on the concept of "orientation" instead of "subjectivity". I have decided against using the term "subjectivity" because it seems too totalizing—"queer subjectivity", for example, implies that one is either a queer subject or is not, that a line can be easily drawn somewhere between "straight" and "queer". I would like to suggest that the terms "orientations" and "lines" (in the sense of trajectories that are followed)⁷⁷ are located in the dynamic semantic field of a verb and as such are potentially less essentializing than that of a noun which is drawn in relation to the

⁷³ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 27.

⁷⁴ Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, 36.

⁷⁵ Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 196.

⁷⁶ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 170.

⁷⁷ In the sense that Ahmed uses them in *Queer Phenomenology*.

concerns of subjectivity. In this way “orientation” leaves more room for ruptures, change, and imagination, in that it allows for multiple lines and parallel trajectories in several directions at a time. (Some of which may be “queerer” or “straighter” than others.)

2.2 Queer as Horizon

I begin with Halberstam’s definition here in order to establish the basic understanding of “queer” that I will be working with, before integrating Muñoz’s and Ahmed’s ideas into the discussion. In her book *In A Queer Time & Place* Halberstam has defined “queer”—in this one sense at least—to mean “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time.”⁷⁸ Her argument is structured largely in opposition to the heteronormative structures of “reproductive and familial time”, and, by extension, also to capitalist logics and norms.⁷⁹ Halberstam also importantly emphasizes queer subcultural activity and cultural production, that they play a large part in the production of these nonnormative logics.

Muñoz also utilizes a queer problematization of time and space in *Cruising Utopia*, but takes his ideas in a somewhat different direction than Halberstam. His arguments are heavily influenced by the ideas of Ernst Bloch. He understands Bloch in *The Principle of Hope* to be critiquing “straight time”, which Muñoz goes on to define as that which “tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life.”⁸⁰ Muñoz is equally as critical of reproductive time and capitalist logics as Halberstam; he comments that the only type of “futurity” that is promised is that of the “reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction.”⁸¹ His criticism of reproductive futurity agrees with (some of) Edelman’s

⁷⁸ Halberstam, *In A Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, 6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁰ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 22.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

work,⁸² but Muñoz then goes on to position himself very differently by linking “queer” to “utopia”. He refigures “queer” in essence to mean something that hasn’t yet arrived, suggesting that this way of thinking queer enables “greater conceptual and theoretical leverage”.⁸³ For Muñoz, queer is an utopian impulse that can often be seen in everyday moments, in “utopian bonds, affiliations, designs, and gestures.”⁸⁴ He argues that:

Queerness is utopian, and there is something queer about the utopian (...) Indeed, to live inside straight time and ask for, desire, and imagine another time and place is to represent and perform a desire that is both utopian and queer.⁸⁵

Muñoz posits the utopian impulse as excess, as the “extra to the everyday transaction of heteronormative capitalism.”⁸⁶ This “extra” might be thought of as that which is articulated outside of normative structures, logics, or representations. The “extra”, in fact, is necessary—a potential point of departure from these normative imperatives, and a starting point then for creating alternative representations and lives that reject logics of the “majoritarian public sphere.”⁸⁷

Queerness for Muñoz is ultimately about an insistence on potentiality—“a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense.”⁸⁸ To this end, queerness needs to be seen “as horizon”, perceived as “a modality of ecstatic time” that interrupts straight time’s linear progression, encouraging “a greater openness to the world.”⁸⁹ The possibility of and desire for a different world, and complex relation to the present, is that which informs and drives “queer”.⁹⁰

⁸² See Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive.*; also Muñoz’s consideration of it on page 22, and his relationality/anti-relationality discussion on pages 10-12.

⁸³ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 22. In this way Muñoz also positions himself in relative opposition to Edelman’s Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*.

⁸⁴ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 22.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 25, 32.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 27.

2.3 To Arrive Somewhere Else

I turn to Ahmed's work on orientations now; first, to provide a way of understanding how the "majoritarian" and "normative" social structures that Halberstam and Muñoz speak of function; and second, towards ways of developing less conventional, queer-er orientations. Ahmed explores how bodies gain orientation by the ways in which they occupy time and space.⁹¹ Inhabitation is a key point of her discussion, as being orientated, she argues, is really about how intimate bodies are able to be with the spaces that they inhabit, and how well they are able to extend into any given space.⁹² It is a certain "familiarity" with the world that allows one to be orientated, but also, importantly, to "feel at home".⁹³

Ahmed argues that orientations shape the way in which we inhabit space, but importantly, also shape how "we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation, as well as "who" or "what" we direct our energy and attention towards."⁹⁴ One's orientation determines "who" and "what" is within reach, and in turn "who" or "what" is then close enough to have an effect on oneself—in a way that might then alter one's (future) orientation.⁹⁵ Our orientations form and inform our worlds, directing what we see and do not see, or what we turn toward and turn away from. She suggests that a queer phenomenology might begin "by redirecting our attention toward different objects, those that are "less proximate" or even those that deviate or are deviant."⁹⁶

Ahmed also points out that the ability to be orientated, first and foremost, depends upon taking certain perspectives and "points of view as given."⁹⁷ These "givens", that which tends to disappear from sight and be forgotten, become the basis for the construction of collective (and individual) direction. In relation to my Chapter 1 discussion then, in the same

⁹¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 5.

⁹² Ibid., 8.

⁹³ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 14.

fashion, the only possible way in which a nostalgic viewpoint is constructed is by taking certain things as given, by forgetting select information or refusing to remember. Billie doesn't "remember", for example, the downsides to aging "naturally"—a viewpoint which is revealed in her startling encounter with the old woman.⁹⁸ If not for that which is given/unquestioned/forgotten, the nostalgic viewpoint/orientation is impossible. If every orientation requires that some things be taken as given, this suggests that one should pay closest attention to the different "givens" of various ways to be orientated.

At the same time, Ahmed argues that one's orientation, along with one's (past) choices determine the future choices that become available.⁹⁹ Because moving in certain directions inevitably excludes certain options for us:

The lines that allow us to find our way, those that are "in front" of us, also make certain things, and not others, available. When we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach. Such exclusions—the constitution of a field of unreachable objects—are the indirect consequences of following lines that are before us: we do not have to consciously exclude those things that are not "on line". The direction we take excludes things for us, before we even get there.¹⁰⁰

Ahmed then goes on to discuss how spaces are oriented, and in this way how they become more conducive to some bodies than others. The orientation of space, for Ahmed, is always a reciprocal/two-way mutual constitution; bodies "are shaped by their dwellings and take shape by dwelling."¹⁰¹ Bodies also "direct" spaces through their inhabitation of them, and "acquire direction" through this inhabitation.¹⁰² For example, think of the many objects and spaces in this world that are designed for right-handed people. All the right-handed people in the world—who, needless to be said, form the majority—have "directed" these spaces and objects in this way. We can speak, Ahmed says, of "collective direction", for example the ways in

⁹⁸ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 37-38.

⁹⁹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 14-15.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰² Ibid., 9, 12.

which nations or other “imagined communities”¹⁰³ move in a certain direction, or face the same way:

Becoming a member of such a community, then, might also mean following this direction, which could be described as the political requirement that we turn some ways and not others. We follow the line that is followed by others: the repetition of the act of following makes the line disappear from view as the point from which “we” emerge.¹⁰⁴

Speaking of communities and collective direction also implies that there are certain directions and lines that are followed more than others. In effect, being orientated entails being “in line”:

The lines we follow might also function as forms of “alignment,” or as ways of being in line with others. We might say that we are orientated when we are in line. We are “in line” when we face the direction that is already faced by others. Being “in line” allows bodies to extend into spaces that, as it were, have already taken their shape.¹⁰⁵

The experience of dis-orientation then, is the experience of being “out of line”. When the body does not line up with the direction of the space that it is in, or when the body does not line up sufficiently well with other bodies, it is then that the body experiences disorientation. (I will discuss this point further in a moment.)

Recall the contingency inherent in the way that spaces and bodies shape, and take shape, through inhabitation. Ahmed references Butler’s discussion on performativity in order to elaborate on the relationship between the “emergence of lines” and the “following” of lines in a similar way.¹⁰⁶ Think of “the path well trodden”, she says.¹⁰⁷ The paradox is that lines are both “created by being followed and are followed by being created.”¹⁰⁸ It is only through following and treading, through a repetition of lines, that the lines themselves are reproduced. The lines that produce “collective direction” depend on the “repetition of norms and

¹⁰³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6-7.

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition.”¹⁰⁹

This leads us into another key section of Ahmed’s argument which I will use to wrap up this section: To term lines “performative” means that we make a way and direction only “as an effect of work, which is often hidden from view.” Arriving at a certain place involves the previous work of following particular directions and lines; arrivals are not “by magic”.¹¹⁰ To “arrive” at alternative futures, then, we need to do work in the present that entails the work of following non-normative lines—of shaping our bodies such that different potentialities are created. To arrive differently first entails imagining differently, imagining different arrivals. With queer on the horizon, we can then engage in a ““doing” that is a becoming.”¹¹¹

2.4 Intentionally Queer, “Lost” Investments

Although my discussion is largely concerned here with how to move in the direction of orientating more “queerly” in order to create different potentialities, Ahmed points out that the question is not so much what constitutes a “queer orientation”. It would be naïve to suppose that there is one “queer line” that we could follow.¹¹² The more crucial question, she argues, is “asking what our orientation toward queer moments of deviation should be.”¹¹³

We might think of “queer moments” as the “extra”, the “utopian impulse”, moments of disorientation, “the point at which things fleet”.¹¹⁴ “Queer”, then, might open up from those points, from those moments that are inhabited, invested in, instead of being allowed to “slip away”.¹¹⁵ Queer-er orientations, ones that allow these queer moments to open up new directions and possibilities, will result in the following and creation of different lines, paths

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 26.

¹¹² Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 171, 179.

¹¹³ Ibid., 179.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 172.

Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 22.

¹¹⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 172, 179.

less well-trodden. This in turn will create potentialities, make available new objects and lines that might previously have been excluded or out of reach. (Of course, it is also possible that certain “queer lines” might become relatively well-trodden, to the extent that the line in question might become less “queer”—perhaps as it becomes more normatively compelling in its directionality, and harder to deviate from.)

In line with the discussion thus far, it seems to be the case that the work of sustaining relatively queer orientations requires a degree of intentionality and critical awareness. This work involves an awareness of what it means to be “in line” and “out of line”—which basically is an awareness of the normative logics that tend to dictate “activity in space and time.”¹¹⁶ The intentionally queer body is more aware of how bodies get directed;¹¹⁷ necessary if one is to create and forge alternative directions that break with dominant logics/narratives/lines. Bodies that invest in queer-er ways of being oriented in the world, that make a point of “not following”, are in effect investing in different potentialities *by accepting* the experience of “disorientation” or “lostness”.¹¹⁸ Muñoz in fact argues that queerness involves “the intention to be lost”; Queerness is illegible to the logic of heteronormativity, the logic of straight time and space.¹¹⁹

To accept loss is to accept the way in which one’s queerness will always render one lost to a world of heterosexual imperatives, codes, and laws. To accept loss is to accept queerness—or more accurately, to accept the loss of heteronormativity, authorization, and entitlement. To be lost is not to hide in a closet or to perform a simple (ontological) disappearing act; it is to veer away from heterosexuality’s path.¹²⁰

Committing to a “queer politics”, Ahmed argues, is committing to a certain way of inhabitation, a certain way of being (dis)orientated in the world—even if one cannot afford “a

¹¹⁶ Halberstam, *In A Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, 6.

¹¹⁷ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 15.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 177-179.

¹¹⁹ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 73.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

life of deviation”.¹²¹ Disorientation comes about as an effect of “doing” and living queer politics.¹²²

While accepting lostness/disorientation in relation to the space of heteronormativity is crucial toward being able to invest more queerly, queerness cannot exist as “just lost”. It is necessary for queer lives to orientate in relation to something (else)—not just in opposition/reaction to heteronormative logics¹²³—and to be situated or located enough such that one might produce knowledge that is of relative value.¹²⁴ I believe that Muñoz’s view of queer as horizon, in combination here with Ahmed’s work on orientation, point us in the direction of being able to conceive of what this “something else” might be, as their ideas, even as they begin with a move away from heteronormative imperatives, open up multiple potentialities and the possibility of multiple ways/lines/trajectories to explore and move into. Ahmed’s work also, importantly, reminds us that there is work that must be done, in order to be able to imagine, and orientate ourselves, differently.

In addition to keeping in mind the “something else” that queer orientations might relate to, I would like wrap up this section by highlighting Ahmed’s important point that in order for “queer” to be productive, it needs to exist in community. Ahmed argues that “queer” depends on mutual support; it is not a phenomenon that resides “in a body.”¹²⁵

When we tread on paths that are less trodden, which we are not sure are paths at all (is it a path, or is the grass just a little bent?), *we might need even more support.* (...) In refocusing our attention on proximity, on arms that are crossed with other arms, we are reminded of how queer engenders moments of contact; how we come into contact with other bodies to support the action of following paths that have not been cleared.¹²⁶

In my analysis of the novel below, I argue how Billie’s lack of community and support is a major element that halts her movement toward being more productively “queer”. It does not

¹²¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 176-177.

¹²² Ibid., 177.

¹²³ As I argued in the previous chapter, such a disposition is rather limited in its outlook/potential.

¹²⁴ Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 196.

Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, 36.

¹²⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 170.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 170. Italics original.

do to walk a path alone, what more an overtly nostalgic one. For queer potentiality to materialize, to re-imagine, to be creative in its representations, we need to build community networks that will sufficiently situate us, that will provide support and inspiration in the continual work of facing different directions, walking different lines, and imagining different futures.

2.5 Refusing the Imprint

In the last chapter, I discussed Billie's (Part 1) overtly nostalgic disposition. In the following sections I will look at how some of the ways in which she is orientated might still be termed somewhat "queer". She demonstrates some queer potentiality, which does actually result in her life moving in a completely unexpected direction. However, her somewhat queer orientation, though it has direct impact on her life, does not appear to have much of a wider impact— it does not produce any "queer knowledge" that is of more general value. I argue that this failure to more effectively realize her queer potentiality is due to her isolation and lack of community. It is only at certain points, when Billie/y manages to orientate herself in closer relation to at least one other figure (the lover) that she is able to produce a different relation to "home".

I argue that that Billie's life and body on Orbus are indeed organized according to some "non-normative logics", even if her relation to "home" is a nostalgic one. She very much rejects the "majoritarian public sphere"¹²⁷ of the Central Power, and frequently experiences moments of disorientation within it. Billie is overtly critical of the system, and voices disagreement with many of its given, unquestioned logics, while the characters Pink McMurphy and Manfred often serve as the voices of the more "normative" Central Power

¹²⁷ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 56.

citizens. Take, for example, the following exchange between Manfred and Billie (in which he is telling her that she either leaves Orbus or gets arrested):

‘I believe in the system. You don’t.’
 ‘No, I don’t. It’s repressive, corrosive, and anti-democratic.’
 ‘Then you’ll be very happy on Planet Blue. There is no system.’¹²⁸

In another instance, while engaged in a discussion of the bombing of MORE-*Futures*, Billie tries to draw attention to the fact that their “democracy” is largely owned by the MORE corporation. Pink, in response, simply says, “Can’t see why you want to blow a place up for making a woman look good on a date.”¹²⁹

Pink also demonstrates an unquestioning acceptance of genetic science’s progress—specifically of the process known as “Fixing”. People no longer celebrate birthdays, instead they throw G parties that celebrate the date that they get fixed genetically.¹³⁰ This point actually demonstrates how a path that might have previously been “deviant”—the path of being fixed and celebrating G days—over time became a well-trodden one, fitting into the dominant system. Billie, however, looks to the past and questions how “normal” the practice of fixing is, arguing that it makes people “fucked up and miserable.” Pink’s replies by saying, “It is normal...What was so normal about getting old?”¹³¹ Her response, though at first glance a “normative” one that is unquestioning of the current system, in actuality manages to also question what was “normal”¹³² even “back then”—something which nostalgic Billie actually fails to do. Nevertheless, Billie questions a dominant logic of the Central Power in her present time, and in relation to this logic, Billie is a non-normative body within the system. She has illegally chosen to not be Fixed, and has had her data-chip reprocessed to hide this fact.¹³³ Billie’s choice necessarily reroutes her life in a way that rejects the dominant temporal life

¹²⁸ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 45.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 59.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹³¹ Ibid., 58.

¹³² See Halberstam’s discussion of dominant temporality (in the present day), organized by the logics of “birth, marriage, reproduction, and death”—with the privileging of, and emphasis on, longevity and maturation. Halberstam, *In A Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, Chapter 1.

¹³³ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 44.

narrative of the Central Power's society—even if, as I discussed in Chapter 1, her visual encounter with another non-normative body inevitably shocks her.

In another exchange with Manfred, where he blames “them” for “destabilizing the planet”, Billie argues an alternative interpretation of the “facts”, reminding Manfred of the part that the Central Power had to play in global warming and the like. “We made ourselves rich polluting the rest of the world, and now the rest of the world is polluting us.”¹³⁴ Overall, Billie's orientation—unconventional by the Central Power's standards—demonstrates a decently critical perspective. Although she still falls into the trap of nostalgia, she manages to highlight different interpretations of the past and present.

This relatively queer potential, however, stands in contrast to the other ways in which she is orientated in a nostalgic and solitary manner. Billie seems to lead a fairly isolated life—her bio-dome, ancient farm being a case in point. The only hint that we are given of any sort of “community” that Billie is/was involved in, is her involvement with the Resistance—the group that she assisted in the bombing of *MORE-Futures*.¹³⁵ Billie's present orientation on Orbus, in which she seems to invest primarily in her farm-home-space while rejecting many elements of “normal” life in the Central Power, demonstrates a problematic sort of isolation and lack of reflexivity. She exists in a sort of vacuum, resisting the imperative that Spike puts forth: “The universe is an imprint. You are part of the imprint – it imprints you, you imprint it. You cannot separate yourself from the imprint, and you can never forget it. It isn't a “something”, it is you.”¹³⁶

While Billie's isolation is problematic, the progression of the narrative illustrates how the following of certain lines still opens up different potentialities. If we think about Ahmed's points regarding the directionalities of bodies and spaces, and the way in which they are mutually constitutive, it is possible to view Billie's choices as having directed her body in a

¹³⁴ Ibid., 31.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 59.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 87.

certain way. Her refusal to be completely “imprinted” by the Central Power’s norms and directionalities—through her resistance of genetic fixing, and investment in the inhabitation of a nostalgic-nonnormative space—have a direct impact on the lines and objects that become available and within her reach.

2.6 Holding on to a Lifeline

Ahmed’s discussion of lifelines is conducive to a brief analysis of an example from *The Stone Gods*, one that reveals how one’s orientation and past lines can limit, or potentially open up, the choices that are actually available to oneself. Ahmed argues how some bodies can be pressured to reproduce certain kinds of lifelines that follow narratives of familial inheritance and reproduction. She then goes on to say:

How ironic that “a lifeline” can also be an expression for something that saves us. A lifeline thrown to us is what gives us the capacity to get out of an impossible world or an unlivable life (...) And yet, we don’t know what happens when we reach such a line and let ourselves live by holding on. If we are pulled out, we don’t know where the force of the pull might take us. We don’t know what it means to follow the gift of the unexpected line that gives us a chance for a new direction and even a chance to live again.¹³⁷

Ahmed also speaks of lifelines as becoming possible through “accidental or chance encounters” that happen, that might “redirect us and open up new worlds.”¹³⁸ When one is “knocked off course”, what happens next depends oneself, on the resources that we have available to draw upon.¹³⁹

The second part of Part 1 takes place in space, and then on Planet Blue. Billie, whose relatively “queer” orientation has resulted in her stepping out of line within the system of the Central Power, is faced with the choice of being arrested and losing her farm, or being sent to Planet Blue and losing her farm anyway. Billie chooses to go. The chance to go to Planet Blue was a lifeline for Billie, one that she chose to hold on to. While her chosen lines thus far had

¹³⁷ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 17-18.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

been limiting in some ways and perhaps questionable in the (lack of) directionality of her motivations, they still brought her to this point where a specific lifeline opened up. At one point, after leaving Orbus, Billie says, “One word, and a million million worlds close. One word, and for a while there’s a planet in front of me, and I can live there.”¹⁴⁰ In fact, it is only when Billie is forced to leave her nostalgic home-space on Orbus that her life takes unexpected turns and her perspective changes, enabling for her a different orientation and relation to “home”.¹⁴¹

Compare, for example, how Winterson’s different individuals approach such chance encounters. Billie, as we have seen, grabs on to the lifeline and lets new possibilities open up. Manfred however, responds very differently when presented with a different sort of crisis. Orbus is dying, and factually speaking, the humans’ only chance is to relocate to Planet Blue, quickly. Spike points out that human beings will have to “make the best of [their] mistakes” on Orbus, and “begin again...differently.”¹⁴² Starting anew on Planet Blue is the human race’s “second chance”, a lifeline. Manfred, however, says,

We need infrastructure, buildings, services. If I’m going to live on a different planet I want to do it properly. I want shops and hospitals. I’m not a pioneer. I like city life, like everyone likes city life. The Central Power believes that the biggest obstacle to migration will be setting up the infrastructure in time. We can’t go back to the Bog Ages.¹⁴³

Lifelines can only save us if we choose to grab a hold of them and let ourselves be led into the unknown. Manfred seems unable to (theoretically) grab a hold of this lifeline that is Planet Blue. We could argue that his more normatively orientated body is really unable to do so—the choices that he has made thus far do not allow him to say “yes” to this, to step into the unknown. This line, this possibility, is “out of reach” for Manfred. He made “investments” and shaped his body in such a way that this option—going back to the “Bog Ages”—is a non-

¹⁴⁰ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 69.

¹⁴¹ This point will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

¹⁴² Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 32.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

option, is simply impossible for him.¹⁴⁴ Billie's queerly orientated body, on the other hand, and her previous investments, put her in a position where the lifeline was within reach.

2.7 Set Adrift

Strange to dream in the right shape and build in the wrong shape, but maybe that is what we do every day, never believing that a dream could tell the truth.

Sometimes, at the moment of waking, I get a sense for a second that I have found a way forward. Then I stand up, losing all direction, relying on someone else's instruments to tell me where I am.

If I could make a compass out of a dream. If I could trust my own night-sight...¹⁴⁵

Overall, lostness/disorientation is a significant theme in the novel. In this excerpt we get a sense of Billie's disorientation. Her thoughts suggest that she does not have sufficient resources "behind" her, to support the path forward. It is arguable that this is due to her relative isolation and lack of community. While it might be worth noting that at this point in the narrative, Billie is actually in the process of re-orienting herself somewhat differently in relation to Spike—I would argue that this bit of narration is a reflection of Billie's general orientation in Part 1. Billie's inability here to believe enough, to trust her own vision(s), points again to that which is missing—she is a loner who has not gathered sufficient resources around her to support, or to ascertain the validity of her dreams. Despite her ability to hold onto the lifeline which takes her in a new direction—which was a result of her relatively queer orientation—the lack of community support and interaction meant that Billie's potentiality never managed to move beyond a non-normative, nostalgic disposition. She was never really able to imagine anything beyond her nostalgic home-space on Orbus. In her relative isolation, she was unable to imagine a more productive queer futurity.

We see this lostness/disorientation surfacing again in Part 2 where Billy says, "Here I am, little Billy, and nothing round me but the sea."¹⁴⁶ In Part 3, Billie is reading *The Stone*

¹⁴⁴ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 17-19.

¹⁴⁵ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 62.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

Gods: “I am on the Tube, reading a lost manuscript. I am a lost manuscript, surfacing in fragments, like a message in a bottle, a page here, a page there, out towards an unknown shore.”¹⁴⁷ And in Part 4:

So in the not-now, I can say that I was set adrift in an open boat, and after a while learned how to make a rudder and oars, though I never mastered a sail and its wind. The wind blows me where it will, and I have many times arrived at the unexpected. But I never found a place to land.¹⁴⁸

The central problem with Billie’s disorientation in Parts 3 and 4, is arguably the way in which she orients herself toward “home”. In her obsession with (the loss of) an idealized home (an important point which I will discuss more in the next chapter) Billie fails to see the potential in the “unexpected”. Perhaps if she managed to orientate herself differently in relation to her original loss of “home”, she would have been able to move in directions that opened up the possibility of “a place to land”. In both Part 1 and Part 2, Billie and Billy manage to accept the lifelines that are held out to them. It is at this point, when they manage to refigure their conceptions, or locations, of “home”—reorientating themselves in relation to the figure of the lover—that their lives manage to move forward in a new direction. If Billie had managed to orientate herself earlier on in relation to a community, to more than just a single person/*Robo sapiens*, she might have been able to realize her queer potentiality more productively, and move beyond her nostalgic disposition.

As a last example here, by comparison, the character Pink McMurphy is worth paying attention to. As an inhabitant of the Central Power who is quite “normatively” orientated, she deals very well when confronted with the crisis situation on Planet Blue. Billie thinks to herself, “Who could have said that Pink would cope and Billie would not?”¹⁴⁹ This example suggests that Pink had sufficient resources behind her to cope when “knocked off course”,¹⁵⁰ more than queerly-oriented-but-isolated Billie. “We’ll make it,” Pink says confidently, even

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 127.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 204-205.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 79.

¹⁵⁰ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 19.

finding time to speculate about the possibility of an “artic romance” with Handsome.¹⁵¹ Pink’s use of “we”, and hint toward romance, demonstrates that it is her investment in community, mutual support, and interaction, that allows her hope. This gathering of resources allows her to continue moving forward (into the unknown, the path not-yet trodden) despite the difficult circumstances.

2.8 Remembering That Which Fleets

In this chapter I have argued that developing queer-er ways to be orientated are essential to producing queer potentiality. Further, community is a necessary element to one’s “queer production”; without sufficient support, it might be difficult if not impossible to realize the queer potentiality that might be present. Being orientated in a “queer” way also entails maintaining a critical perspective on the past, remembering that which takes place before, in order for something to “arrive”, and interrogating structures that tend to dictate that which is remembered and forgotten.¹⁵² Developing queer-er orientations that are sustained in community is a way to break with unproductive nostalgic logics. Putting queer on the horizon provides us too with another way of thinking about a complex past-present-future relation; further, the imagining and desiring of a different future helps us orient in new ways towards queer moments or utopian impulses in the present.

Winterson, throughout *The Stone Gods*, constructs human beings as agents with free will. Spike tells us that free will is the human capacity to “affect the outcome” in a quantum universe where things are “neither random nor determined.”¹⁵³ It is a universe of potentialities, and “true stories,” Winterson tells us, “are the ones that lie open at the border, allowing a crossing, a further frontier.”¹⁵⁴ To get to the point where the border lies open,

¹⁵¹ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 79.

¹⁵² Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 37-42.

¹⁵³ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 181.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 87, 181.

however, to the point where one is able to reach certain potentialities and choose to make them reality—one first has to choose lines that lead to that border, to that space of possibility. A critical awareness, an intentional disorientation, and intentional queer orientations are needed in order to realize alternative lifelines, alternative stories of space and time, different ways of being in the world, and different ways to orient oneself. The refusal to be mass-collectively-orientated keeps different objects and options within reach, and ensures that the point of how bodies get directed and pressured into certain lines more than others remains in sight.¹⁵⁵

At the same time, I have argued that some form of collective support and orientation is in fact necessary for one to orientate in relation to *something* that might enable us to move beyond reactionary orientations. As “queer” does not reside in any individual body,¹⁵⁶ neither do “queer” collectives reside in isolation from heteronormative worlds. Complete coherence and agreement is not the goal of collectivity; Haraway reminds us that “the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position”, and working within our “limits and contradictions” can promise a relative situatedness—and “views from somewhere.”¹⁵⁷ Our “somewheres” should arise out of positions and orientations that are engaged and accountable.¹⁵⁸

Ahmed warns against the idealization of “queer worlds”, or the attempt to “locate them in an alternative space”:

After all, if the spaces we occupy are fleeting, if they follow us when we come and go, then this is as much a sign of how heterosexuality shapes the contours of inhabitable or livable space as it is about the promise of queer. It is given that the straight world is already in place and that queer moments, where things come out of line, are fleeting. Our response need not be to search for permanence, as Berlant and Warner show us in their work, but to listen to the sounds of “the what” that fleets.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 170.

¹⁵⁷ Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 196.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 106.

Here, Ahmed points again toward the ephemerality of queer moments. While the work of orientating differently toward the utopian impulse might be aimed at producing queer spatialities and temporalities that stick around for a tad longer, perhaps we should always remember to pay attention to that which “fleets”—and to remain critically aware of the “givens” in our own orientations. In this way we might collectively cultivate queerer pasts, presents, and futures—and move in the direction of imagining different ways to orientate ourselves in relation to “home”.

Chapter 3 Detachment, Reorientation

The past is not there to explain the present; it is there to encourage forms of becoming.

To begin again. For some, at times, a dreadful thought, a Sisyphean enterprise. For others, at other times, a project of hope. For if the primary sense of beginning is the time or place at which anything begins, nothing says that those times and places are fixed, no one orders us to start again from where we began the time before, and no one can say where or when the next beginning will occur, or where it may lead.

Elsbeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings*

3.1 Different Origins

In the previous chapter I suggested that one of the reasons Billie (in Parts 3 and 4) was unable to find a “landing place”, was that she was stuck in her idealized conception of what that landing place should be/look like. In this chapter I explore further the inherent problems with an idyllic conception of “home”. I emphasize the need to move “home” away from (singular/normative) originary, idealized narratives. “Origin” should not be thought of as only geographical of course, but rather, should be conceived of also in terms of psychic space/relations. Eng¹⁶⁰ and Fortier¹⁶¹ have both done much with this already, in their respective work on queer and diaspora, which they both relate closely to the problematic of “home”. Their arguments disrupt an uncomplicated relation to a geographic place of origin, and complicate the relation to home by taking into consideration multiple trajectories of time, space, and place.

In line with some of their arguments, I invest in lines of thought that move away from simple origin/destination narratives,¹⁶² and instead move towards thinking about the

¹⁶⁰ Eng, “Out Here and Over There: Queerness and Diaspora in Asian American Studies,” 32.

Eng, “Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas,” 4.

¹⁶¹ Fortier, “‘Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 405-408.

¹⁶² Ibid., 410.

potentiality in multiple “beginnings”.¹⁶³ In conceiving of “home” as a point of “attachment”, Fortier suggests that remembering “what it used to be” might be a point of departure from which we might then move on. In line with her argument, recalling the discussion from the previous chapter, I suggest that the “extra”, our queer moments, or perhaps queer realizations (that things are not what they once were, or what we thought they were) might also be points of departure, points of new beginnings. For “queer” to move into a desire for “something else” these points of departure are necessary. In rethinking “home”, departing from an obsession with (and idealized conception of) origins, then, is a starting point toward being able to conceive of different ways of belonging.

I will examine the logic of Winterson’s narrative in terms of the associations with home that are created, and in terms of its larger overarching structure as well. Despite much of the conservativeness of Winterson’s text, there are several elements that I find to contain more subversive potentiality. The elements I am referring to are: (1) the association of home with the figure of the lover, (2) the repeated figuration of death, and (3) the language she chooses to use, namely the emphasis on a “landing place” rather than “home”. I am interested in the different temporalities and spatial configurations, and narratives that these elements have to offer in building queer-er conceptions of “home”.

Importantly (and I suppose this is an unavoidable point that I need to mention), I choose not to use psychoanalysis as a frame of reference. Psychoanalysis is such a given beginning, starting point, especially in terms of this subject matter of home and belonging, that I think it is important to sometimes “forget” this “origin” and try to begin in other ways.¹⁶⁴ In the framework of my discussion I also find that psychoanalysis will not contribute too much to develop my argument in queer-er directions; in its investment in “origin” it

¹⁶³ Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 121.

¹⁶⁴ When doing research for this thesis, for example, it was extremely difficult to find any literature on Home that did not involve a psychoanalytic frame of reference. While I do find psychoanalysis to be of interest occasionally—and am aware of course of its importance in many feminist (and other) theories of today—I do not want to utilize it here for the reasons mentioned above.

remains with (indeed, has structured many of) the dominant logics that I am trying to move away from. Rather, I want to conceive of new and multiple beginnings that may start from the “extra”, from the queer moments, rather than the “origin”. Although Grosz is speaking about “lesbian desire” in the following quote, I think it can apply similarly here, in the queer search for “home”: “I am much less interested in where [this desire] comes from, how it emerges, and the ways in which it develops than where it is going to, its possibilities, its open-ended future.”¹⁶⁵

3.2 At Home: Space of UnDesire

In her paper on queer migration narratives, Fortier presents a complex analysis and critique of some queer narratives (and theorists), in terms of the versions of “home” that they invoke. She is critical of queer “homecoming” narratives in which home is simply constructed as a destination rather than an origin.¹⁶⁶ While these migration narratives perform a “noteworthy reversal”, they still shy away from a further questioning of home as a given space of comfort/safety.¹⁶⁷ Her problem with some of these queer migration narratives is that, in their reiteration of home as a space that one moves *towards*—whether diasporic, dislocated, subcultural, or otherwise—they unfortunately “reinstate the boundaries of ‘home’ as an incontestably desirable site, reinforcing the idea of home as familiarity, comfort and seamless belonging.”¹⁶⁸ She is critical of Sinfield, for example, arguing that his narrative maintains a linear form as he constructs the entry into lesbian and gay subcultures as the “home” destination. This entry into subculture too easily “puts an end to the sense of loss; it brings an end to migration.”¹⁶⁹ Linear narratives such as these are obviously too simple and unproblematized versions of what a queer relation to “home” might look like. The point is

¹⁶⁵ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, 68-69.

¹⁶⁶ Fortier, “‘Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 410.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 405.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 420.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 410.

that any narrative that posits a perfect, comfortable “home” needs to be questioned; at the very least such narratives are misleading in their impossibility, and unproductive in their limited outlook and potential.

Ahmed, in turn, talks about how home is constructed as a “purified space of belonging”, a space that is “too familiar, safe and comfortable”.¹⁷⁰ She goes on to point out the danger and downside to this:

Home is associated with a being that rests, that is full and present to itself, and that does not over-reach itself through the desire for something other. To be at home is the absence of desire, and the absence of an engagement with others through which desire engenders movement across boundaries.

In such a narrative, home and away are divided, not only as different spaces, but as different ways of being in the world. Home is constructed as a way of being by the very reduction of home to being, as if being could be without desire for something other. Such a narrative of home assumes the possibility of a space that is pure, which is uncontaminated by movement, desire or difference.¹⁷¹

The undesiring subject is the antithesis to any queer model that would place value on excess, desire as productivity,¹⁷² engagement with difference, and the crossing and questioning of boundaries. Such a simplified construction of home and belonging, then, although apparently tempting, turns out to be very problematic. Indeed, most conservative ideologies try to uphold such a false narrative—the fullness to be found at home, within closed borders, where the stranger and immigrant and homosexual are intruders that represent and embody a feared form of difference.¹⁷³ Ahmed goes on to argue that this pure construction of home is impossible; she deconstructs the opposition between “home” and “away”, and posits “strangeness” (and queerness¹⁷⁴) within the home, and the nation-home.¹⁷⁵ As Georgis suggests, “Queering the space of home might be what wakes us up from the sleep of compelling origin stories.”¹⁷⁶ In fact, the movement away from these compelling origin

¹⁷⁰ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, 87.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 87-88.

¹⁷² Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 13.

¹⁷³ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, 50-54.

¹⁷⁴ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 176.

¹⁷⁵ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, 88.

¹⁷⁶ Georgis, “Cultures of Expulsion: Memory, Longing and the Queer Space of Diaspora,” 13.

stories, and reconceiving “home” as a site of attachment/detachment as I will discuss below, might be one way to begin queering “home”.

3.3 Attachment/Multiple Beginnings

One of the central questions in Fortier’s piece is whether it is “possible to conceive of being ‘at home’ in a way that already encounters/engenders queerness, but without deploying an originary narrative of ‘home’.”¹⁷⁷ Following Probyn’s piece “Suspended Beginnings” which views childhood as event,¹⁷⁸ Fortier explores the potential in a different approach to one’s past. An originary narrative, insofar as it tends to serve simply as a form of knowledge to “justify or explain the present”¹⁷⁹ doesn’t really do much besides retell the past in a way that confirms the logic of one’s present. Probyn argues that it fails to “yield anything new in the present”.¹⁸⁰ Fortier looks at how the use of memory in approaching the past differently, might effect “home”, and challenge the “home-as-familiarity” model.¹⁸¹ Her argument is aimed toward opening up multiple ways of thinking about and relating to “home”—positing ways of remembering that “do” things, that queer the “absolute status” of “home”.¹⁸²

To this end, Fortier makes a move to consider home as a “situated event”, as a “site of attachment”.¹⁸³ Acts of returning/remembering home might reveal or help us come to the realization that “home” is not the same space that one left. Following this, then, she suggests that the act(s) of remembering “what it was like” might be a point from which to then move forward—“into another place, another becoming.”¹⁸⁴ She writes:

I not only consider ‘home’ as a site of intersecting lines of movements – one bending towards the past and back into the present, and the other contracting the past into the future to ‘encourage forms of becoming’ (Probyn, 1996: 121) – but that I also

¹⁷⁷ Fortier, “Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 405.

¹⁷⁸ Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 95-123.

¹⁷⁹ Fortier, “Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 415.

¹⁸⁰ Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 117.

¹⁸¹ Fortier, “Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 416.

¹⁸² Ibid., 420.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 413.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

contemplate home as site of attachment: a site where one attaches herself, even momentarily, by way of grounding who she is, or was, in her process of becoming. This; then, has implications on the space of place in remembrances of home.¹⁸⁵

In line with Fortier's argument thus far, I would like to suggest then that in order for movement "forward" to take place—i.e. in new directions that break with originary logics—we also need to consider home as a site that one needs to *detach* from. A certain amount of detachment from this key point of attachment that has served to orientate oneself is necessary if one is to be open to "something else"—to the discovery of new points of attachment, new ways to be orientated.

Fortier discusses some ideas of Schimel's, who suggests "the possibility of moving between multiple points of *attachment*,¹⁸⁶ sites of belonging that are not necessarily coterminous with sites of residence, but which nonetheless act as 'points of suture'." This way of mapping belonging breaks the easy link between "location of belonging, and location of residence or location of origin."¹⁸⁷ Insofar as it undermines the "single home/origin" logic, it also implicitly suggests that we consider multiple beginnings—points of attachment (and perhaps detachment) that serve to orientate us in crucial ways.

So instead of thinking of "home" as the originary site of perfection, remembering it as a "site" that one might detach from opens up more potentiality. In cultivating different ways of returning and remembering that, as Probyn points out, do not simply do the work of explaining the present with the past, we might be able to produce something new in the present.¹⁸⁸ If detaching from "home" as a singular narrative of origin is one point from which we can begin again, then I am interested in exploring too other points from which one might

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 412-413.

¹⁸⁶ In considering the potentialities to be found in forms of movement, Ahmed reminds us to be wary of privileging nomadism and (physical) movement as inherently transgressive—as the contingencies that structure the world "grant some subjects the ability to move freely at the expense of others." In her use of Schimel's work Fortier also discusses the rural/urban divide that tends to figure in queer narratives, and the privileging of queer movement to urban spaces highlighted in Halberstam's writing on Brandon Teena. Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, 86.

¹⁸⁷ Fortier, "Coming home': Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home," 412.

¹⁸⁸ Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 117.

“begin”, and the potentiality in multiple points of attachment that might serve to orientate and re-orientate oneself. I want to think of the “extra”, the queer moments, the utopian impulse, as potential points for “queer” beginnings.

3.4 Potential Beginnings: A Landing Place, Death, the Lover

I want to return again briefly to the three points mentioned earlier which I find to hold some queer-er potentiality, before engaging in an analysis of Winterson’s text. I will begin with analyses of the four parts to the novel separately, and explore the meanings and associations with home that are present (and perhaps lacking). Following that, I will provide a more overarching analysis of the novel, looking at the various lines and logics that structure its narratives of “home”, and the resulting potentialities and shortcomings that might be found.

Winterson uses both the terms “home” and “landing place”, or “a place to land” throughout the novel. I argue that the term “landing place”—as used in the context of the novel, but also as a term that might stand on its own—creates associations that are helpful towards this project of thinking “home” differently. In association with the figure of the traveller and the metaphor of travelling that are very present in the narrative, “landing place” implies a fleeting temporality, a lack of permanence—indeed a place that one might “take off” from again. At one point the narrative also suggests that a “landing place” is very much a site of attachment that might be returned to when necessary. In Part 3 Billie tells Spike that “loneliness is about finding a landing-place, or not, and knowing that, whatever you do, you can go back there. The opposite of loneliness isn’t company, it’s return. A place to return.”¹⁸⁹ A “landing place” still contains the implications of safety and security, stability, but arguably minus the dangerous idealization of it. Most importantly, perhaps we should think of a

¹⁸⁹ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 145.

landing place as a site from which we might “begin again”¹⁹⁰—somewhere that allows a temporary space to rest, reside, perhaps, but still with the potential of detachment and new beginnings.

Death figures importantly in the narrative as well; there are four deaths in all. I want to suggest that we think about moments of loss and death, in effect, as queer moments—in line with Ahmed’s discussion where she argues that encountering death, and experiencing profound loss, are often moments that “knock us off course”.¹⁹¹ These are moments that rupture our current narrative, and bring into question the line that we are on. Loss is often experienced as the “loss of an imagined future.”¹⁹² These queer moments in fact have immense potential; they might present us with a “fork in the road”, with the opportunity to “change course”, to alter the line that we were on.¹⁹³ When we encounter these queer moments of loss/death, Ahmed suggests that what happens next depends on what we do with them. Do we desperately try to get ourselves back on track, to repair or recreate a past that might be impossible to find again? Or do we have sufficient resources behind us to reorientate, somehow?

One of Winterson’s mantras in *The Stone Gods* is “Love is an intervention”.¹⁹⁴ Ahmed, too, suggests that “love is also what gives us a certain direction”—something, or someone that we can orientate in relation to.¹⁹⁵ I will develop this point further in my analysis below—but for now we might consider too, how love can result out of chance encounters, out of queer moments that we choose to pay attention to, or invest in. The act of loving in itself can be a powerful queer force that opens up new beginnings and orientations—that have the potential to redirect our lives, and the spaces that we move in.

¹⁹⁰ Winterson does actually suggest this specifically at the ending of one her short stories. Winterson, “Message In A Bottle.”

¹⁹¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 19.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 68, 183, 205.

¹⁹⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 19.

3.5 Part 1: Planet You

In Part 1, we do not hear anything about Billie's past, with the exception of references in bits and pieces to her past political involvement. Billie's story here is much more about her present, and her journey towards Spike and Planet Blue, towards the finding of "a place to land". Before she moves in this direction, Billie lives a fairly unremarkable,¹⁹⁶ nostalgic existence with Cast-Out Farm as her home. When Billie is forced to leave Orbus she unexpectedly finds a landing place in her relationship with Spike, the Robo *sapiens*. Billie's articulation of this "landing place" at times demonstrates a tension between familiarity/unfamiliarity—"She is a stranger. She is the strange that I am beginning to love."¹⁹⁷—and at other times points towards wholeness and safety—"She is the place that I am"¹⁹⁸, and further on, "This cave is your mouth. I am inside you, and there is nothing to fear."¹⁹⁹

Billie does, in any case, manage to alter her nostalgic conception of home somewhat (that is associated with a space) to reorientate herself in relation to Spike. At the point where she was knocked off course and lost most—if not all—of her previous investments, Billie managed to detach, and to embrace the potential that the queer moment opened up for her. "I want to look out on this new-imagined world."²⁰⁰ The comfort that Billie finds with Spike is a self-aware one, a love that is intertwined with the awareness of its temporality, of the approaching death.

Spike is generally the more "queerly" orientated subject who problematizes temporality (among other things), and the "human" conceptions of life and death. (Spike accepts it as a natural process, as "recycling".²⁰¹) As they are slowly dying Spike tells Billie that death will be painless, that the cold will put her to sleep: "it is only a dream." Billie's

¹⁹⁶ Although, as I have discussed in previous chapters, relatively "queer" by the Central Power's standards.

¹⁹⁷ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 88.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 92.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 88.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 30.

response is an insistence on a (straight) conception of life: “It wasn’t a dream. It was life. And you were life, are life.”²⁰² By the ending of Part 1, however, Billie is dying, and in this moment we hear her articulate a queer-er temporality and spatiality. “Is this the universe, lying across the knees of one who mourns? Things dying...things new-born.”²⁰³ She seems to accept the inevitability of loss, the ephemerality of this “place” that she found to land: “Her head is light, so light it weighs nothing. This new world that I found and lost weighs nothing at all.”²⁰⁴

3.6 Part 2: When Everywhere is Here

In Part 2 there is very brief mention of where Billy has come from; he had, in fact, left home to follow his love interest, First Mate James Hogan.²⁰⁵ The explicit association of “home” with the lover follows the pattern set in Part 1. For Billy, “anywhere is a life, once there is a love”—“I took to sea in that I could not stay at home, in that I could not stay at home for James Hogan had took to sea.”²⁰⁶ “Everywhere” is where the beloved is, and there is no need for further travel. Billy’s narrative, even as it runs the risk of over-idealizing his lover/home, still demonstrates some potentiality in his ability to reorientate himself when faced with loss and the unexpected.

When he gets stranded on Easter Island, his ship (along with James Hogan) leaving without him, Billy’s response is “So be it. Life is all partings.”²⁰⁷ His detachment seems to come easily, but soon after he tries to drown himself. Again, the story makes a turn, and Billy unexpectedly finds a different love to call home—he reorientates himself toward Spikkers who threw him a “lifeline”.

²⁰² Ibid., 90.

²⁰³ Ibid., 92.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 102.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 114.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 102.

When Spikkers dies at the end of Part 2, he enters the house that he must “make ready” until Billy rejoins him.²⁰⁸ The house in question is not the same stone house that figures in Parts 1, 3 and 4, but rather, a nostalgic construction of Spikkers’ imagination based on the stories his father had told him about Amsterdam. (I will come back to the discussion of the entry into the house further on in the analysis.)

3.7 Part 3: I Was Born

To cut to the chase here, the excerpt below just about sums up Billie’s orientation and relation to “home” in Part 3 (and most of Part 4):

The line that is the first line of this story – *I was born*. The line that had nothing to read between it – being only one, one only, my lifeline.²⁰⁹

The “lifeline” that Billie speaks of here means something completely different than how I have been using it as a term from Ahmed. Here, rather than opening up a new direction, this line seems to be the one and only thing that Billie holds on to, the only thing which orientates her. Given up for adoption by her mother after a month, Billie spends her whole life unable to “break the shape” of this loss.²¹⁰

Much of Part 3 is occupied with Billie narrating the story of her origins. The most likely scenario, in my reading, is that most of the story is of Billie’s invention,²¹¹ based around a few “facts” that she had access to (for example, the amount of time that her mother spent with her before giving her up). Billie’s conversation with Spike later on in the narrative also points toward the likely made-upness of her story: “Who were your parents? I don’t know. I lost them.”²¹² Nevertheless, Billie constructs a completely idealized version of love

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 116.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 120.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 127.

²¹¹ Ibid., 121.

²¹² Ibid., 136.

and home, a construction/reaction that is clearly based on her attachment to (the idea of) her lost birth mother:

Keep me in the mop bucket or the slot where the grill pan goes, but don't let me go because I love you.

Love without thought. Love without conditions. Love without promises. Love without threats. Love without fear. Love without limits. Love without end.

I think she did love me, for a minute, for a second, for the time it takes to remember, for the time it takes for forget. We had twenty-eight days together and then I was gone.”²¹³

Billie's narration of “love” above suggests that this unconditional, eternal version of it is the ideal, the landing place that she lacks, that she is searching for. Although she admits her uncertainty about her mother's love for her,²¹⁴ she goes on to construct/narrate a version of her mother's “love” and attachment to her. Her mother “wanted her too”,²¹⁵ Billie claims. She also emphasizes her mother's struggle with giving her up for adoption: “love is not easy to leave behind”.²¹⁶

Billie, throughout Part 3, demonstrates her inability to let go of her attachment to her (idealized/imagined) home/mother. She is never able to do something different with the queer moment of loss; instead it paralyzes her, binding her to an “echo” of a life:

You never stop looking. That's what I found, though it took me years to know that's what I've been doing. The person whose body I was, whose body was me, vanished after twenty-eight days. I live in an echo of another life.²¹⁷

I always believed that I would see her again.²¹⁸

I know you're there, I know where you are, I can track you because we are the same stuff.²¹⁹

Similar themes in terms of Billie's orientation continue through Part 4, with slight variation. Perhaps if Billie had been able to detach, somehow, or conceive of different lines, a different place to land, her story might have been able to tell us something new.

²¹³ Ibid., 121.

²¹⁴ See excerpt above, and page 122: “I suppose you have to believe there is something worth salvaging, and with me it seems that nobody did.”

²¹⁵ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 121.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 124.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 125.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 128.

Lastly, as it is integral to my discussion later on, I need to mention that the nostalgic image of the stone house figures once in Part 3—as a place that Billie (in the womb) and her mother used to pass by on their “walks”. It is also cast as the idealized home-space—a space where Billie and her mother would be together; “this is our house,” her mother says.²²⁰

3.8 Part 4: Always on the Losing Track

In Part 4 Billie comes ever so slightly closer to “breaking the shape”, to reaching out to touch and orientate herself differently. She doesn’t, however, manage to change direction.

He looked at me. I nearly touched him. There are so many things that we nearly do and they don’t matter at all, and then there are the things that we nearly do that would change everything.

He looked at me. He turned to clear the plates.²²¹

At another point when Billie is reflecting on her life “before the War”, she tells us that her life had been “coming together”, and that for the first time “I began to trust what I had made.”²²² There is a hint that she did briefly reorientate herself in relation to a lover—but again, that was before the war began.²²³

Part 4 demonstrates Billie’s clear focus on the experience of loss, and her insistence on dwelling on it, instead of trying to create a new beginning. Her only “beginning” is her mother; “love’s image and love’s loss.”²²⁴

Then I started running losing track of time, losing track of purpose, losing track. Is that me – always on the losing track?²²⁵

Billie insists that she cannot “keep starting again”. In contrast, Spike, who is “programmed to evolve”, decides to “begin again”.²²⁶ It might be possible to argue that Billie’s reluctance to

²²⁰ Ibid., 130.

²²¹ Ibid., 167.

²²² Ibid., 179.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 197.

²²⁵ Ibid., 182.

²²⁶ Ibid.

start anew is based on the fact that she had, previously, and that it never “worked out”.²²⁷ However, I would argue that the problem lies more with Billie’s idealized conceptualization of “home”. She admits, “I have many times arrived at the unexpected. But I never found a place to land.”²²⁸ Perhaps if Billie had managed to conceive of a different “place to land”, she might have found it; she might have let the unexpected take her down a new path. She reiterates, here, what she was really looking for the whole time:

And perhaps I have to say that the landing-place I am really looking for isn’t a place at all: it’s a person, it’s you. It’s the one place they can’t build on, buy, or bomb because it doesn’t exist anywhere where they can find it.

But it doesn’t seem to exist anywhere I can find it either.²²⁹

I think all my life I’ve been calling you, across time. Steadily sending the signal, sure that, one day, you will hear.²³⁰

It is only in the queer moment of death that Billie seems to accept an element of loss. In this instant she catches herself, making a distinction between “reality” and the story that she had been telling:

There was blood, a lot of blood, a surprising amount of blood, was what I thought – *so much blood that they had to burn the sheet*. No, that was a long time ago.²³¹

However, whatever queer potential is to be found in this moment is erased immediately after, as in “death”, Billie finally reaches what she has been searching for all this while—the stone house, with the figure that awaits within:²³²

There’s a noise – the door of the house opens. It’s you, coming out of the house, coming towards me, smiling, pleased. It’s you, and it’s me, and I knew it would end like this, and that you would be there, had always been there; it was just a matter of time.²³³

²²⁷ Ibid., 173.

²²⁸ Ibid., 204.

²²⁹ Ibid., 169.

²³⁰ Ibid., 185.

²³¹ Ibid., 205. Italics original.

²³² This narrative technique that Winterson uses to conclude the novel is discussed by Rubenstein—where “the return home is accomplished through a *reparative imaginative vision*, not in the actual world.” This employs a reparative form of nostalgia as discussed by Rubenstein, a device which I view as unproductive; its investment is in “fixing” the past in ways that remain too close to logics of the “ideal” home.

Rubenstein, *Home Matters: Longing and Belonging, Nostalgia and Mourning in Women's Fiction*, 66.

²³³ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 206-207.

The identity of this figure that greets Billie is ambiguous. I will return to this point slightly further on, to discuss the problematic conflation of the lover and the mother figures.

3.9 Reorientations: Someone to Love

In the novel, the only points where Billie/y manages to reorientate is when s/he manages to detach from the lost “home”, and walk a different path that opened up in a queer moment. The figure of the lover, in both Parts 1 and 2, provide a new beginning, a new way to orientate. In Parts 3 and 4, however, when Billie is unable to detach from the loss of “home”, when her only orientation draws a line from the past to explain her present, she remains bound to a singular narrative of origins that renders her unable to invest in any “queer moment”. At one point, after Billie has been accused of stealing the Robo *sapiens* and is in danger of being arrested, Alaska offers Billie a place to stay:

‘You can stay here for a while if you want to. There’s a spare bed.’

‘Thanks,’ I said, ‘but I want to get home.’

‘What’s at home,’ she said, ‘that you want to get to?’²³⁴

What is “at home”, is in fact what holds Billie back. For her, dwelling reflectively on her loss and origin as a way to explain her current inability to “break the shape”, has perpetuated an unproductively circular narrative—effectively keeping the past as a “spell” that binds her.²³⁵ The experience of loss has become her “home” instead of a fork in the road; refusing the potentiality of the queer moment(s) has become easier and safer than venturing out to possibly begin again, to possibly “lose” again.

Reorientation that happens in relation to a lover is a decent start as far as “beginnings” go, although potentially problematic if “home” with the lover gets recast as the idealized space of unquestioned belonging. Both narratives in Part 1 and Part 2 do fall into this trap to a certain extent. Still, Ahmed argues that orientating also involves a constant negotiation of

²³⁴ Ibid., 179.

²³⁵ Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1:8.

familiarity and unfamiliarity, and the questioning of what it is that is supposed to be strange, or familiar.²³⁶ In Winterson's narrative we do see Billie/y negotiating the "strange" and "familiar" that is found in the lover that they orientate towards.²³⁷ In the act of loving, and the negotiation of difference, Billie is forced to question things that she had previously taken as "given". For Billie of Part 1, her reorientation also changes her perception of her past, and she remembers differently, with an emphasis on the times that she "began again":

When I look back at my own life – and in circumstances like these, who can blame me?
– what is it that I recognize?
Not the stories with a beginning, a middle and an end, but the stories that began
again, the ones that twisted away, like a bend in the road.²³⁸

Is it the ability to detach that allows new attachments, that allows that new stories be told, new lines followed, and new "landing places" found.

3.10 Death of the Lover

As I pointed out, there are two clear points of new beginnings, when Billie and Billy reorientate themselves in relation to the lover, changing their perceptions of "home" in the process (especially for Billie in Part 1). However, at the end of Part 1 both Billie and Spike die, and at the end of Part 2 Spikkers is killed. The way that death/loss enters the narratives point toward the inevitable ephemerality of this landing place that they found. In this way the temporal potentiality of the term "landing place" is realized in the novel. However, the narrative does not develop too much in terms of its potentiality as a place from which to begin again. The only way in which one might argue for the queer moment of death as triggering new beginnings in *The Stone Gods*, is in the story that is told again—at the end of Part 1 we

²³⁶ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 7.

²³⁷ In Part 1 the human/non-human distinction is often questioned. In Part 2 Winterson's portrayal of "difference" is actually very problematic, as Spikkers is cast as a sort of half-Native, half-European man that Billy has superior "western" knowledge to. The metaphor of "an animal that has run too far" is also used to refer to Spikkers.

Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 106, 115.

²³⁸ Ibid., 87.

are told: “This is one story. There will be another.”²³⁹ However, none of Billie’s narratives in the rest of the novel progress in any new direction or orientation, neither before nor after death. In line with my argumentation for the realizing of queer potentialities, one could say that the narrative in fact “regresses”—as the nostalgic home image that is successfully detached from in Part 1, is returned to in Part 4.

3.11 Ending at the Point of Origin

For me, the narrative fails most spectacularly at the end of Part 4. Although Parts 1 and 2 provide us with narratives of a new beginning, of a way to reorientate and move beyond an originary narrative of “home”, the ending of the novel in many ways brings us back to square one. That the longed-for, idealized home is found in death is an important point to be considered; that death figures before the return “home” does suggest that the idealized home and return is an impossibility. But Winterson does little with the potentiality of this queer moment of death; instead of taking the narrative in a different direction she has it return to originary representations of a nostalgic, unachievable home. Far from being a “landing place”, the final image that Winterson leaves us with is one of Home, with all the associations of idyllic comfort and safety and simple “being” that go with it.

The other questionable event that takes place is the conflation that happens between the figure of the lover and the figure of the mother. At the end of Part 2, the figure of the lover enters the house, after death—“And in the house he must make ready till I have finished my business here and come back to him.”²⁴⁰ When Billie dies at the end of Part 4, she approaches the house where an ambiguous figure awaits: “It’s you, and it’s me, and I knew it would end like this, and that you would be there, had always been there; it was just a matter of time.”²⁴¹ Based on Part 4’s narrative, it is most likely that the waiting figure is that of the mother. But if

²³⁹ Ibid., 93.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 116.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 206-207.

we take into account the rest of the narrative, the ambiguity present—and the fact that it was the lover who had entered the house to wait and “make ready” at the end of Part 2²⁴²—points toward a conflation of these two figures in Part 4’s ending.²⁴³ In some instances where Billie is speaking about her mother (in Parts 3 and 4), the language/imagery that is used is also conducive to a lover/mother conflation: “There’s only one face, only one smell, only one voice. Where is she?”²⁴⁴

This employment of narrative logic that allows for the lover/mother conflation to take place unfortunately points readings of the story in an unnecessarily Freudian direction. But more crucially, it serves to undermine some of the other potentialities in the text that I have argued for. Instead of developing some of the potentiality in refiguring “home” in orientation to the lover figure, and working further from the queer moments—the new “beginnings”, reattachments, and deaths that happen—Winterson’s narrative simply draws us back to the impossible return to origins.

3.12 Queer Moments at Home

I have argued, here, against conceptions of “home” that stick to originary narratives—narratives that posit “home/origin” as a space of perfection, where there is no desire for anything more. I do not intend to suggest that we should easily discard with our narratives of origin or the spaces and places that we come from. Winterson’s text insists that “everything is

²⁴² As I mentioned earlier, the house that the lover enters in Part 2 is not the same house. For the other reasons that I argue here, however, I maintain that the lover/mother conflation is probable and problematic. In addition, Part 2’s language and imagery is distinct from that of the other three parts—it would make sense that the “house” image is also altered.

²⁴³ There is also a possible conflation with at least one other lover that is vaguely referred to in Part 4. Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 173, 179.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

This conflation of the mother-lover is not confined to Winterson’s narrative in *The Stone Gods*; Jeffries points out a similar instance here: “At the end of *The Powerbook*, Winterson writes a passage that reads like Arthurian romance: “The woman I love rode this way, carried off by horsemen. If I do not find her, I will never find myself. If I do not find her, I will die in this forest, water within water.” This ostensibly erotic quest for a lover readily reads as the search for a lost mother.” Jeffries, “Jeanette Winterson: ‘I thought of suicide.’”

imprinted forever with what it once was,”²⁴⁵ and I am inclined to agree. While acknowledging that origins, and that which is “behind” us, leaves marks and traces—I also want to argue for the importance of being able to detach from some of these imprints, to let different things, moments, and people create new imprints, new attachments, and new ways to orientate ourselves. In order to do this we need to engage the past differently; Probyn and Fortier suggest ways of approaching the past that encourage “forms of becoming”, returning in order to begin again.”²⁴⁶ “Home” as a site of attachment can be returned to when needed, but we also need to conceive of it as perhaps just a temporary “landing place”, a point from which we might begin again, orientate again.

Billie’s example in Parts 3 and 4 actually illustrate how dangerous “home” might be, especially if it becomes caught in repeated associations of loss. Anzaldua suggests that “home”, after all, is an inherently unsafe, liminal space, always under the threat of “constant transition”.²⁴⁷

“Home” can be unsafe and dangerous because it bears the likelihood of intimacy and this thinner boundaries. Staying “home” and not venturing out from our own group comes from woundedness, and stagnates our growth. To bridge means loosening our borders, not closing off to others. Bridging is the work of opening the gate to the stranger, within and without. To step across the threshold is to be stripped of the illusion of safety because it moves us into unfamiliar territory and does not grant safe passage. To bridge is to attempt community, and for that we must be open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded.²⁴⁸

The challenge is really that of “venturing out” from our fears. Instead of being “protected” and inhibited by our “safe” constructions of home, we have to bridge, to risk intimacy, and to risk experiencing loss again.

Lastly, Fortier discusses a narrative that does not sentimentalize or fetishize “home”; rather, “home” here exists as “a place of disjunction, of un-belonging, of struggles for

²⁴⁵ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 87, 119, 207.

²⁴⁶ Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 121.

Fortier, “‘Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 412-413.

²⁴⁷ Anzaldúa and Keating, *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*, 574.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 3.

assimilation/integration, thus a space that *already* harbours desires for homeliness.”²⁴⁹ A desire for something else, something more, can already be found in the space of “home”—because “home” is already a construction, “already fantasized, even when we are ‘in it’.”²⁵⁰ We might find the “queer moments” within “home” once we acknowledge that Home—home as familiar, as safe, as bounded, as whole, as a space where one need not desire anything more—does not exist. We must always desire something different, something more, if we are ever to change our lives (and others’) in the present. By taking risks, by beginning again, by sometimes letting queer moments redirect our paths, we might chance across places to land that do not disappoint.

²⁴⁹ Fortier, “‘Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 419.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

Conclusions Part 1: Dreaming Everywhere, Anywhere Else

Dream work is important for queer identities. It is crucial to think about why nightmares take over.

Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

Nobody has ever lived without daydreams, but it is a question of knowing them deeper and deeper and in this way keeping them trained unerringly, usefully, on what is right. Let the daydreams grow even fuller, since this means they are enriching themselves around the sober glance; not in the sense of clogging, but of becoming clear. Not in the sense of merely contemplative reason which takes things as they are and as they stand, but of participating reason which takes them as they go, and therefore also as they could go better. Then let the daydreams grow really fuller, that is, clearer, less random, more familiar, more clearly understood and more mediated with the course of things.

Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*

“There are two questions: where have you come from, and where are you going?”²⁵¹ In this thesis I have tried to explore how we might more effectively deal with the “where have you come from”, in a way that then better addresses the question “where are you going?” To say “nowhere”, to halt it here and now is a possibility—that is the no future that Edelman argues for.²⁵² But insofar as we might want a more relational model that helps us rethink how we conceive of “home” and the desire to belong—and insofar as we want to use “queerness” as a productive force that has the potential to create change in the present—then perhaps the answer to “where are you going?” should be, instead: “Everywhere.”

Using “queer” to rethink the problematic of “home” opens up multiple potentialities—the potential for multiple belongings, the potential for detachments as necessary, the potential for new beginnings, the potential to conceive of home outside of the imperatives of locational origin, biological family, national identity—in short, the potential to conceive of landing places that defy straight time and space, that create new logics to live by.

²⁵¹ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 204.

²⁵² Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, 31.

To this end, I have engaged in a discussion that addresses the importance of engaging the past, present, and future differently—in ways that might avoid the reiteration of heteronormative, conservative logics that bind us to paths well-trodden. I have argued against the reconstructions, or the promise of “the ideal home”, that tends to surface in nostalgic narratives and narratives of singular origins. Narratives of futurity that promise a “pure” home, untainted by the presence of strangeness/strangers and difference, are dangerous especially in their manifestations at the collective (and often national) level. And as I have argued, the individual/collective levels are mutually constitutive, rather than mutually exclusive. Tropes of “home” and “family” find widespread use for political purposes, in addition to the trope of the “body”. Ahmed, for example, discusses how foreign bodies come to signify the threat of violation faced by “pure bodies” through images like rape; these too pose threats to the “body of the nation” which are in turn represented as “the vulnerable and damaged bodies of the white woman and child.”²⁵³

It follows then, from the inextricability of the nation-home and the nuclear-family-home, that problematizing the meanings of “home” on either level should relate to the other level. Queering relations to “home” at the individual/family level lends itself to queering conceptions of the national “home”. It means questioning borders, rupturing the binaries of inside/outside and public/private, questioning that which is supposed to be strange/familiar, known/unknown, safe/unsafe. It means questioning “origin”, wholeness, and the idea of a “pure” form of belonging. It means questioning the foundations upon which many identities are grounded—which might bring us back to the question: where do I come from?

How to develop different ways of approaching the place(s) that we come from? I have argued for “remembering” differently—approaching past homes as “sites of attachment” that we might, then, detach from to begin again. I have also argued for critically queer

²⁵³ Ahmed, “Affective Economies,” 118-119.

perspectives on that which is “behind”, that which structures logics of the present, dominant logics that imprint and direct bodies toward the following of certain paths. Developing queer-er perspectives and orientations are essential if one is to get to points where new directions open up, and where different objects are within our reach. At times, a new direction might present itself when the unexpected blindsides us, as in moments of death or loss; but more often, queer moments appear as the “extra”, the utopian impulse in our everyday.²⁵⁴ The ability to take paths unknown, to reach out for the lifeline, or to invest in queer moments depends on the past lines we have chosen—is this a “real” option for me?—and the resources we have at our disposal. The work of materializing queer potentialities is not work that can be done alone; the creation of queer-er paths that redirect (some) spaces, that become viable options, requires that more than one walk the same path.

Putting “queer” on the horizon, as Muñoz suggests, provides us with a way to reorientate ourselves. We might orientate towards the desire, in fact, for something different. Probyn argues that it is desire that moves bodies, that propels them into “forms of living with ourselves and with others.”²⁵⁵ Desire, in fact, is where we “start from and what we go with”;²⁵⁶ it is a point from which we might also begin again. Desiring a different future pulls the utopian into the present, directs us towards new paths that might lead to new forms of becoming and belonging. It is the desire for something else, that which is not on our current path, that renders us more likely, and more able, to choose different ones. Probyn too, reminds us that bodies need to “engage with others”, this is the only way that queer, and queer forms of desire, become relevant and productive.²⁵⁷

Desiring different forms of belonging, then, different narratives of “home”, lead us into engagement whereby we might chance across new things and people to orientate towards,

²⁵⁴ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 22-23.

²⁵⁵ Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 23.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 62.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 49.

ways to detach, reattach, begin again. New ways to reorientate, and new “things” that provide us with “something else” to orientate in relation to, are crucial especially in light of my argument (in agreement with Ahmed’s and Muñoz’s work) that an investment in queer logics and lines necessitates a degree of *disorientation* in relation to the normative logics that organize the majority of spaces and temporalities that we might otherwise inhabit. Reorientating, locating ourselves differently, allows us to produce knowledge that comes from a different place, a different perspective—that ideally would manage to make a break with (1) normative logics, and (2) with solely paranoid/reactionary²⁵⁸ forms of knowledge. What sorts of queer “home” knowledges, then, will we be able to produce?

²⁵⁸ Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You,” 123-124.

Conclusions Part 2: “The What” that Fleets

Simply put, I want to figure the desire that individuals have to belong, a tenacious and fragile desire that is, I think, increasingly performed in the knowledge of the impossibility of ever really and truly belonging, along with the fear that the stability of belonging and the sanctity of belonging are forever past. (...) I think that the desire to belong lives on, placing us on the outside. And in a climate marked by a widespread politics of polarization, it is of the utmost urgency that we take into account this desire to belong, a desire that cannot be categorized as good or bad, left or right—in short, a desire without a fixed political ground but with immense political possibilities.

Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belonging*

To queer “home”, finally, is to lose it from its origins, to open up multiple ways of thinking “home”, to admit that there is no one way to “belong”, no one line to follow on which that belonging might be found. By arguing that forms of queer homes/belongings/landing places need to break with unproductive logics of safety and familiarity, and move beyond the limiting logics of heteronormativity and reproduction, perhaps we might get a glimpse of what they have the potential to become.

To bring this back to where I began—queer-er conceptualizations of “home” need to begin with a detachment from the logics of straight time and space, and reproductive futurism; and by extension, also reject homonormative ways of doing politics that simply serve to reinforce these structures. In rejecting singular, originary and idealized narratives of “home”, we might also move then toward conceptions of “home” that admit, or even embrace its inherent liminality—home as always imagined even when we are “in” it, as a space that is already queered, that contains a desire for something other,²⁵⁹ where there is no clear line to be drawn between the strange and the familiar, between the safe and unsafe, between what is “home” and what is “away”.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Fortier, “‘Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 419.

²⁶⁰ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, 88.

Queer utopian visions of “home” that function by alternative logics, might accept that along with the desire for belonging, comes the fear that one might never truly “belong” anywhere.²⁶¹ Citing Sinfield, Fortier suggests a version of “home” that is “always in the making, endlessly deferred.”²⁶² The fear of not arriving, of never finding “home” might mark for ourselves the question of what it is that we are trying to “find”. Perhaps what we need is to cultivate an openness toward different forms of belonging, different ways that we might find ourselves situated, orientated. “Queer homes” might take many shapes and forms, no one better or less than another.

Queer modes of belonging can, and will result out of an investment in queer moments, of letting our lines and lives “deviate”, of turning toward lifelines and the fork in the road that might lead us somewhere else. Beginnings can arise out of love, out of loss and death, out of movement, out of a desire to stay. Perhaps all beginnings originate with desire, a desire for something other, something more than what is already present.

*Here is a moment in time, and my choices have been no stranger than millions before me, displaced by wars or conscience, leaving the known for the unknown, hesitating, fearing, then finding themselves already on the journey, footprint and memory each imprinting the trail: what you had, what you lost, what you found, no matter how difficult or impossible, the moment when time became a bridge and you crossed it.*²⁶³

What kinds of stories are we going to tell, what kinds of stories are we going to live by? To build a bridge again, to risk intimacy, difference, and losing again²⁶⁴—this is the fear that might hold us back, the fear that might provide a place to start from.

The places that we find to land may not be safe ones, and they may not be permanent—indeed, they might *fleet*²⁶⁵—but still we might search them out, chance across them, dwell in them for a while, depart again, return when necessary, begin again when we are able to.

²⁶¹ Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 8.

²⁶² Fortier, “‘Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home,” 409.

²⁶³ Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, 80. Italics original.

²⁶⁴ Anzaldúa and Keating, *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*, 3.

²⁶⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 106.

Conclusions Part 3: Wednesday, February 11, 2009

reminder, patterns, reminders, patterns,
emotions.
affect theory. paranoia. politics.
I'm texting you during that class I don't care all that much about
the conversation starts with "hey you."
hi. :)
still --
you were the one who made me smile like I've never smiled before,
cry like --
and give more than I've ever given before.
I called it love.
five thousand miles or so apart,
and we are connected, distant, connected.
entangled in other people's presences --
the way it should be. the way we should be.
/
break apart because you can, because you needed to, wanted to.
break into new things, lives, loves, moments, temporalities.
develop a depressive/melancholic/reparative position and
leave doors open, as many as you can [afford to].
loosen, lose control, let life surprise you in good ways.
in good ways, I tell myself.
/
fall[en] for all the wrong[?] people
and there are
reminders, patterns, reminders, patterns
worth taking note of.
birthdays, people from another life
yet the same
names, all over the place
all over my world(s).
/
time for theory, oh lots of time for theory
cause there's not much time for
everything else --
and so in the lack I practice
life, theory, life, theory
when I think it enough sometimes I get
to the point where I actually
do it.
/
you spoiled me silly I
spoil myself rotten yet
keep myself stark
sensitive stark sensitive
stark --

and shaven.
repeat. pause. repeat.
/
waiting on fickle streams to
settle.
/
move beyond,
into.
/
dream imaginary narratives
with [no] future
give me a second skin I will walk with it
run with it play with it
in it I will live sleep long time
love you

“Literature has to take us beyond. If it cannot take us there, it is not good literature.”

– Elif Şafak

Bibliography

- Ahmed, Sara. "Affective Economies." *Social Text* 79 (Volume 22, Number 2) (Summer 2004): 117-139.
- . *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press, 2006.
- . *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. Routledge, 2000.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London and New York: Verso, 2006.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria, and AnaLouise Keating, eds. *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*. Routledge, 2002.
- Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight. Vol. 1. 3 vols. 1st ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books, 2001.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- . "Nomadism with a difference: Deleuze's legacy in a feminist perspective." *Man and World* 29 (1996): 305-314.
- Briggs, Caroline. "BBC NEWS | Entertainment | Winterson novel 'left at station'." News. *BBC News*, March 8, 2007. Accessed August 16, 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6430775.stm>.
- Bulkin, Elly, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith. *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism*. New York: Long Haul Press, 1984.
- Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.
- Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004.
- . "The Future Is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive." *Narrative* 6, no. 1 (January 1998): 18-30.
- Eng, David L. "Out Here and Over There: Queerness and Diaspora in Asian American Studies." *Social Text*, no. 52/53, Queer Transexions of Race, Nation, and Gender (Autumn - Winter 1997): 31-52.
- . "Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas." *Social Text* 76 21, no. 3 (2003).

- Finney, Brian. "Bonded by Language: Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*" (2000). Accessed August 25, 2010. <http://www.csulb.edu/~bhfinney/winterson.html>.
- Fortier, Anne-Marie. "'Coming home': Queer migrations and multiple evocations of home." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, no. 4 (11, 2001): 405-424.
- Georgis, Dina S. "Cultures of Expulsion: Memory, Longing and the Queer Space of Diaspora." *New Dawn: Journal of Black Canadian Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 4-27.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Halberstam, Judith. *In A Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: University Press, 2005.
- . "Male Fraud: Counterfeit Masculinity and the Case of Brandon Teena." Institute for Women's Studies, University of Lancaster, Autumn., 2000.
- Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Jeffries, Stuart. "Jeanette Winterson: 'I thought of suicide'." *The Guardian*, February 22, 2010. Accessed August 17, 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/feb/22/jeanette-winterson-thought-of-suicide>.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. "Review: The Stone Gods by Jeanette Winterson | Books | The Guardian." *The Guardian*, September 22, 2007. Accessed July 19, 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/sep/22/sciencefictionfantasyandhorror.fiction>.
- Muñoz, Jose Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: University Press, 2009.
- "nostalgia." *Dictionary.com*. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nostalgia>. Accessed July 17, 2010.
- Probyn, Elspeth. *Outside Belongings*. New York & London: Routledge, 1996.
- Rubenstein, Roberta. *Home Matters: Longing and Belonging, Nostalgia and Mourning in Women's Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.
- Şafak, Elif. "Elif Şafak: The politics of fiction | Video on TED.com." *TED*, July 2010. Accessed August 19, 2010. http://www.ted.com/talks/elif_shafak_the_politics_of_fiction.html.
- Schimmel, Lawrence. "Diaspora, Sweet Diaspora: Queer Culture to Post-Zionist Jewish Identity." In *PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions about Gender and Sexuality*, edited by Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimmel, 163-173. San Francisco, CA: Cleiss Press, 1997.

Scott, Ridley. *Blade Runner (Final Cut, 2007)*. Warner Bros., 1982.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You." In *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, 123-151. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003.

Sinfield, Alan. *On Sexuality and Power*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

State Radio. *Keepsake*. Massachusetts, 2004.

Winterson, Jeanette. "Message In A Bottle." *guardian.co.uk*, August 11, 2007. Accessed August 17, 2010.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/aug/11/originalwriting.fiction4>.

———. *The Powerbook*. London: Vintage, 2000.

———. *The Stone Gods*. Hamish Hamilton, 2007.

———. *Weight*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005.

———. *Written on the Body*. New York: Vintage International, 1992.