monster-terrorist-fag

RAJAH

I WEAR A
TURBAN
DON'T
SHOOT!

DECOLONIZING SEXUALITIES

TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES
CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS

Sandeep Bakshi
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Decolonizing Sexualities

Edited by

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and Silvia Posocco

to all
intersectional/insurrectional
interventions
living and silenced
we stand together
in love

FOREWORD

Decolonial Body-Geo-Politics at Large

Walter D. Mignolo

> Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.
>
> — Frantz Fanon (The Wretched of the Earth)

I

'Transnational queers of colors' is a recurrent expression in the introduction and in the rest of the volume. For Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Silvia Posocco 'transnational' means building the communal beyond the lack of complacencies that nation-states show towards queers of color. Playing the legal aspect of the State but disobeying (epistemic and aesthesic disobediences within legality) the State concept of Nation. 'The transnational communal' is formulated at the same time as decolonial. It makes sense: the nation-state is a constructed modern/colonial institution. It is embedded in the Spirit of modernity that unavoidably carries the Evil of coloniality. You see and feel modernity, it is announced, it is promoted, it is celebrated, it is full of promises. Coloniality is more difficult to see. Modernity's storytelling hides it. But it is felt, it is felt by people who do not fit the celebratory frames and expectations of modernity.

When you felt coloniality, you felt the colonial wound. Then the question is what to do: to live with it in silence or to find ways to heal colonial wounds. Decoloniality is a path to heal the wounds of coloniality. And since colonial wounds are not physical but mental (which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o clearly understood in the expression 'decolonizing the mind,' as well as Frantz Fanon in the epigraph), and mental wounds are inflicted by words and assumptions that sustain the words, colonial wounds are perpetrated by epistemic weapons. In the imaginary of the modern/colonial world (1500 to now), the two basic epistemic weapons

are racism and sexism. Racism and sexism always work together for 'people of color,' whether they/we are or are not queers.

However, the racist and sexist perverted logic of coloniality ontologizes both in such a way that it is not unusual to find hetero-normative beliefs among men of color and among white woman. And I mean hetero-normative belief not to be confused with heterosexual conducts. Hetero-normative beliefs transcend gender differences and the racial color spectrum. That is the power of social classifications: a method by which actors installed in specific institutions create and preserve knowledge imbedded in the narratives of modernity, in the very act of building the idea of modernity as an inescapable march of history, social progress, and economic development.

Coloniality you do not see; it is felt by many people who do not fit the Spirit of modernity as perpetrations of wounds inflicted by invisible (until decoloniality made visible) colonial differences. Decolonial healing requires building to re-exist rather than energy to only resist. Resistance implies that you accept the rules of the game imposed upon you, and you resist. Re-existence means that you delink from the rules imposed upon you, you create your own rules communally and, therefore you re-exist affirming yourself as a human being who does not want to be Man/Human (see below my reflections on Sylvia Wynter). This is what I understand is being proposed in these sentences:

> Developing the *transnational decolonial critique* of existing relations in the domain of sexualities can bring to the surface the possibility of our imagined, collective 'different' worlds. And yet, we do not know in advance what these communities, these multiple worlds will encompass. (Bakshi, Jivraj, and Posocco in the introduction to this volume; italics mine)

Transnational queers of color march parallel to transnational decolonial critique for the simple reason that, decolonially speaking, the modern distinction between theory and praxis is gone. *Being* (assuming oneself) transnational queer of color means to engage in transnational decolonial critique. That is living queer/thinking queer or vice-versa, thinking queer/living queer. Thinking is living/doing and doing/living is thinking.

II

At this point, I need to sincerely and openly express my thanks to Sandeep Bakshi and the editorial team for their invitation to write this foreword. I often said on occasions like this that I am a heterosexual

man, born and educated in Argentina, of Italian descent and, therefore, off-white. My encounter and embracing of coloniality/decoloniality comes from sensing what being a Third World person means (particularly when you went to Paris in the early seventies and then to the United Sates in the mid-seventies). Even if you have white skin you are seen as a person of color, both in France and the US, because of your accent, because in Europe you are a Sudaka, because in the US you are, in Anglo-eyes, a Hispanic or Latino (often confused if you have not been made to belong, by dominant discourses, to the said category).

Thus, I am writing the foreword from my experience of coloniality as a Third World, heterosexual male and off-white person. Once in the US, in a workshop, I identified myself as off-white. A young African American lady addressed me asking not without discomfort and lack of politeness (as I remember her words and tone): 'What do you mean by off-white? There is only White and Black, Black and White!' Dialogue was cut-off. I remembered at that moment Frantz Fanon's sociogenesis. I remembered also an anecdote told often by my Haitian friend Jean Casimir. Jean's story is the following: 'If a person like Walter knocks at my house door looking for me, and it is not me who opens the door, the person opening the door would come into the house and say: Jean, someone is looking for you. Who? I would ask. The person would say, "I do not know, a black guy."' As we know, according to the Haitian Constitution, in Haiti everyone is Black. Madina Tlostanova also frequently tells her story. She has white skin and blonde-red hair. In Moscow she is considered Black because she is from Caucasus and also a Cherkessian.

Blackness in Russia and Haiti mean different things than in the US. In Haiti, everybody is Black, your skin color doesn't matter because Black means 'person.' In Russia white Caucasians (an oxymoron indeed, for Caucasians are supposed to be the 'essence' of whiteness) are Black. You cannot explain this ontologically. What accounts for it is: *a)* that there is a racial classification made by Man1 and Man2 assuming their whiteness and their Christianity, and *b)* and that the enactment of the classification depends on local histories. Often ontology is confused with epistemology. Particular racial distributions in one place or another are responses to a belief in racial and sexual ontologies. But what is ontological is not the 'implementations' but the categories of fictional classifications (I sustain the oxymoron—ontology refers to existing entities while fictional refers to invented entities here to break away from racial naturalized ontologies). The enactment of classification depends on circumstantial local histories, as the examples above illustrate.

I understand that many of us are living our lives re-existing, although

we (the many of us) do it following different paths; paths each of us found by reflecting both on living our lives enduring the system of classification (foundational of the colonial matrix of power) and from/on our disciplines. Even when each of us does, thinks, and acts beyond the academy, the common ground of our doing is disciplinary, epistemic, and aesthesic (sensing, emotioning) disobedience. That is, decolonial.

III

Storytelling of how this book came about, together with personal narratives inserted in different chapters and re-stated in the prologue, makes us (readers) reflect on what has been done before the book, what will continue to be done after the book, and the doing of the book itself. The book itself is just one moment in a march of non-return: what matters is not only the struggle of 'anti-' racism and sexism (two aspects of Patriarchal Christianity and White Masculinity, encapsulated in the concept of Man/Human) but, above all, the celebratory work 'for, towards' the affirmation of what Man/Human imaginary and epistemic management devalued, demonized, disavowed, marginalized, downplayed. I, and many others, owe to Sylvia Wynter her powerful argument undraping the perverse logic of coloniality that traps all of us on the planet in the racial/sexual cage (whether you are in the racialized/sexualized side of the line or you are in the racializing/sexualizing space).[11] Wynter's argument in a nutshell is the following: Human is an overrepresentation of Man invented in the European Renaissance and established during the European Enlightenment. She calls Man1 the Renaissance overrepresentation of Man as Human; Man2 the Enlightenment version. The first is weaved in the theological imaginary, even when Man/Human was the first effort toward secularization. Heretofore, Man1 is akin to Patriarchy. Man2 was born when secularization moved away from theology by de-goding reason. Reason moved from Man1 (Patriarchy) to Man2 (Masculinity). Both share Man overrepresentation as Human. Therefore, I write Man/Human. He is the one who classifies racially and sexually. And He is the one who embedded in Christianity, whiteness, and heterosexuality sees His 'imagination' of the world as 'representations' of the world. 'Representation' is a deadly concept of modernity for it makes one believe that the world is there and what Man/Human does is to represent it. Coloniality of knowledge established once the rhetoric of modernity managed to impose the idea that signs represent the world and that modern knowledge (with all its internal skirmish in Christian theology, science, and philosophy), 'represent' what there is.

So that racial and sexual classifications are not fictions, in this view, but 'representations' of what there is.

We, and I mean all of us, queer or not, of color or not, are trapped. The difference is that the creative energy for transformation is coming and will continue to grow, from people racialized/sexualized, not from the side of racializing/sexualizing. And even when it comes, when white and heterosexual (men and women) of consciousness, from and in the former First World, realize that their thoughts, behavior, belief, knowledge has been imposed upon them and they further realize the injustices that such classificatory social fictions have caused, still they cannot sense, know, and experience the colonial wound. And that is fine because there is no, cannot be, universal experiences. When Wittgenstein referred to 'living experiences,' he did not have in mind the experiences either of an African from Zimbabwe or the experience of a lesbian Latina in the US. The reverse also obtains, of course. No African from Zimbabwe and a lesbian Latina could experience what Wittgenstein was experiencing in Austria.

'People of non-white color' cannot feel, sense and know what 'people of white color' feel, sense, and know. I am intentionally talking about 'feeling and sensing what you know,' which alerts you to the inverse: you feel and sense in relation to what you know and your knowing is a different dimension of your sensing. 'People of white color and heterosexual people' can *know and understand* colonial wounds, but *cannot experience* them. That is what experience means: experience is constituted by your reflections on what you remember or acknowledge in your own course of living. At stake here is not only the racial/sexual bio-political (canonical knowledge, the State, the main-stream media), but also the geo-political racialization of regions and areas of the world (e.g. Asia, Africa, Europe, and America; First, Second and Third World; Western and Eastern Hemisphere; Global South and Global North). The responses to these compound classifications are decolonial geo-politics confronting imperial geopolitics, and decolonial body-politics responding to imperial bio-politics. All of these come together in the felicitous formula 'transnational queers of color.'

Therefore, white, heterosexual sensibilities from the former First World, can accompany decolonial healings, support them, but whom-ever did not experience the colonial wound cannot heal others even when becoming aware and cognizant of how colonial wounds are inflicted. But they can of course heal themselves, reducing to size the privileges that whiteness, heterosexuality, and First Worldness bestowed upon them. Briefly, we are all involved in the messy situations provoked by imperial (cf. modern/colonial) racial/sexual classification. However, the fact remains that the strong belief of white supremacy, heterosexual

normativity (that is, the moment in which heterosexuality equals hete-ro-normativity) and First Worldness are well entrenched in institutions and actors who run such institutions, from universities to mainstream media. However, it is important to remember that people of color are not excluded from confusing heterosexuality with hetero-normativity and assimilating to First World beliefs and behavior living behind their former Third or Second Worldness.

For all these reasons, there is no safe place when it comes to racism and sexism: it is a constant struggle between forces of regulations and energies of liberation. This volume is a single case of the latter, not only for what is said in the volume but for what is being done beyond the volume by all contributors and editors involved.

The hope of the present towards the future is the growing decolonial Spirit of delinking to re-exist (a basic decolonial move), accepting that Eurocentric fictions in all spheres of life, but above all, racial and sexual fictions embedded in the economy (capitalism), politics (the State), epistemology (the university, museums, schools, the church), and authority (the army and the police) manage and control emotions and sensing of the world.

IV

The volume invites reflections on the concept of 'politics' if not 'the political.' If politics in Western traditions refers to engaging with issues of the 'polis,' it has been restricted to engaging with issues of government and its institutions, the various State-forms. 'The political' in Carl Schmitt's formulation, divides the camp between friends and enemies. Although he restricted his formulation to the sphere of the State and of inter-state law, currently politics and the political needs to be understood in all spheres of living: religious, economic, political, epistemic, artistic, racial, sexual, aesthetic, pedagogical, scientific, disciplinary, philosophical. More than friends/enemies 'the political' emerges in the entangled forces of regulation and liberation: controlling and managing on the one hand, and the refusal to be controlled and manage by the arrogance of Man1 and Man2.

The political is at stake in racial/sexual energies of liberation from the forces of regulation. Connecting scholarly arguments with current events that request both politics and the political, the essays in the volume make singular calls to secular State racism confronting religious anti-racism (*Charlie Hebdo*); to sexual/racial civil society violence against gay people (*Latinx Gay Club* in Orlando Florida); to, what could be added, the police 'serial killing' of Black People in the US,

and many others. Notice, however, that all these events, and several others, are taking place in the former First World. Engaging with friends-enemies in these spheres of life means to engage the political but also the ethics of racial and sexual decolonial liberation.

The nation-state is a form and structure of governance created by Man/Human in the sense Sylvia Wynter defines the term; and Man/Human who created the nation-state form of governance in former Western Europe (now the heart of the European Union), during the historical process that went from the Treaty of Westphalia till—*grosso modo*—the end of the nineteenth century, were just that: Man/Human. It is all condensed in one expression: 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen.' After Wynter's argument we know who is Man/Human and who can be Citizen. Notice also that the declaration is 'of the rights of Man,' in singular: Man as overrepresentation of Human. This was Man2. Man2 was/is heterosexual, and because He was heterosexual He assumed that it was the way it is and it should be. He continued, with modification, the racial/sexual classification initiated by Man1. They both belong to a monotheistic cosmology in which God is conceived in the image of Man and, during the Renaissance, updated to fit the needs of Man1. It was not, and it is not like that in many co-existing, non-modern cosmologies.

V

Let's take one example—Nahuatl speaker's cosmology, also known as Aztec cosmology. In it, *Ometeotl* was understood by Spanish missionaries and described as God, as if *Ometeotl* was a second-class equivalent of Christian's God. Well, it so happened that for Nahuatl speakers, *Ometeotl* was not a God as Spanish missionaries thought. *Ometeotl* was conceived as Energy, the Energy that created all that exists, including *Tlacatl* and *Cihuatl*. The Energy that created the world was the energy that implanted in the world the feature of both *Tlacatl* and *Cihuatl*. One could say that *Tlacatl* and *Cihuatl* are not entities defined by their features, but words that indicate distinction between features that are embedded in everything that was created by *Ometeotl*. Thus *Tlacatl* and *Cihuatl*. Are not two distinctive and opposed entities, but fluid moieties that invade all of what exists, all entities in their constant movements (*ollin*, in Nahuatl)? The logic of moieties and the experience of living in a world of moieties and fluidity is that day is not the opposite of night, but that there is no night without day and no day without night. *Tlacatl* and *Cihuatl* more than entities, material entities, were two types of energies dispersed and embedded in any

existing entity in the universe created by *Ometeotl*. *Ometeotl's* energy was *Tlacatl* and *Cihuatl's* energies.

The Spaniards translated *Tlacatl* as man and *Cihuatl* as woman. By so doing they shattered the fluidity between, and complementarity of, moieties, the movement (*ollin*) and harmony between moieties, and ontologized each moiety into the rigidity of the body. Spaniards, contributed to the affirmation of Western cosmology by putting entities (bodies) before features, fluidity, and movement. They needed to do so because they believed that man and woman are two distinct and opposed entities, each of them defined by well-established ontological features. Briefly, Spaniards did not understand Nahuatl's way of living and understanding. After the Spaniards came the French and British, and Western cosmology was grounded in the epistemic, economic, political, and military Westernization of the world. One of the major difficulties of Western mentalities to understand many non-Western cosmologies is the privilege of the Noun over the Verb. In many cosmologies it would be impossible to reflect on Being and Time (the time of entities), as Martin Heidegger did. If you start from the Verb instead of Noun, you would easily understand fluidity and energies flowing and inhabiting different entities.

By so doing Spaniards, and all who came after them in the relentless Westernization of the world, managed to impose structures of governance and knowledge that demonized fluidity and complementarity overall. In gender/sexual matters the result was the uncontroversial 'reality': a man is a man and a woman is a woman, and that is that. Who was successful in establishing His narrow conception of reality and the world was Man/Human (Man1 and Man2). For this reason Man/Human consolidated His conception of the world not only in the sphere of ethnicities and sexualities but in all spheres of social organization. Man/Human was (and still is) the Christian and White heterosexual, who inhabits the West and later on the First World. Man modeled the State; Man/Human was the supreme epistemic authority manifested in theology and secular sciences (including social sciences) and philosophy (including all the humanities and Western poetic/artistic expressions). Man/Human was and is the one who assumes the privileges and the rights to manage and exploit the living planet to His benefit and for that reason invented the concept of 'nature' and of 'natural resources,' which spilled out to 'human resources.' Man/Human is the master of 'human resources' of which He is excluded.

Nahuatl's cosmology is similar to many cosmologies of indigenous people in what came to be known as the Americas and the Caribbean. Indigenous people from Europe inhabiting Christian cosmology invented these names. Indigenous cosmologies of the Americas have

not been lost. Today they are re-emerging, resurging. *Two-spirits or two-spirited* (as the contributors to this volume very well know) are the expressions used by Native Americans to refer to and describe a person who feels simultaneously in their body the energy of, in Nahuatl terminology, Tlacatl and Cihuatl. When translated into Western imperial languages, the limitations are obvious: imperial language speakers have only two words to indicate closed circuits (man or woman; masculine or feminine). But it is not only the limitations of the nouns. It is the syntax: man or woman; masculine or feminine. If instead it were written man and woman, masculine and feminine, the translation would get closer to two-spirits.[2] However, we are all experiencing racist and sexist imperial geopolitics.

<h1 style="text-align:center">VI</h1>

The nation-state is the overall and dominant structure of governance today on the planet. There are differences however between secular nation-states founded in Western Europe, and the monarchic states before the French Revolution. There are also differences between the nation-state founded by the Founding Fathers (the United Nation-States of America), the European nation-states, and the nation-states that emerged in the rest of the Americas and the Caribbean, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the one hand, and the nation-states that emerged in Asia and Africa from the process of decolonization during the Cold War, on the other. European nation-states were found by the emerging ethno-class known as bourgeoisie. The Founding Fathers were not bourgeois like in Europe. The European bourgeoisie detached itself from the monarchic state and the church. There was no monarchic state and church to detach from in the foundation of the US. The forces to vanquish were the 'wilderness,' the land, the Indians and the existing African enslaved population.

Moreover, Western European nation-states and those formed after independence from European colonialisms are linked and divided by geo-body *colonial differences*. Colonial differences make visible power differentials hidden under the idea that the nation-state form is a global institution that secures democracy and brings into shining light power differentials between imperial state-forms and modern/colonial state-forms that emerged after independences. Colonial differences is a decolonial concept highlighting the irreducible cultural, political, and economic dependencies in the inter-state system and, therefore, between nation and nationalities. The point is that geo-political power differentials are not unrelated to bio-political power differentials:

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that is of racism and sexism. Bio-politics is, in the last analysis, the mutation of a system of classification from monarchic-theological states (sixteenth to eighteenth century in Europe) to secular-bourgeois states (from eighteenth century on). Bio-politics, in short, is the secular face of theo-politics: the classification of people by blood and religions instead of by biology and skin color. All the furniture in the basement comes to light when one considers the magic illusion that the nation-state form of governance created. The illusion is that to each state corresponds one nation. It so then happens that 'nations' were imagined as a homogeneous Man/Human, an imagined community in which Woman was a surrogate of Man/Human although, at the same time, differentiated from non-European women of color. It was also assumed, *non-dit*, that Man/Human and Woman were heterosexual. States are legal-administrative institutions. Nations are indeed a heterogeneous mix of 'proper' nationals and 'quasi' nationals because of how the 'nation-state' classifies them/us, by gender, sexuality, ethno-racial, and other nations and languages and religions (thus, the conflicts with immigrants and refugees from the former Third and Second Worlds migrating to the former First World.) In other words, each State 'represents' one nation among the pluri-nationalities under a given state.

I bring these considerations forward for several reasons—one of them prompted by Nawo C. Crawford's Prologue. The Prologue captures from the first paragraph the spinal column of the entire volume: the question of Man/Humanity, that is, the normative fiction of Humanity grounded on the overrepresented image of Man as Human, which is precisely Sylvia Wynter's groundbreaking argument. Groundbreaking because Eurocentrism is grounded in the colonial matrix of power, an overarching conceptual imaginary upon which knowledge, understanding, politics, economy, religion, art, and the very fictional concept of 'nature' and 'natural resources' has been established. And the mastermind of the colonial matrix of power was and is Man/Human—His knowledge, His political and economic organizations, His educational regulations; His values and expectations of what humans have to be or become if they are not. All of that (e.g. the colonial matrix of power) was built up by Man/Human, the powerful fictional world of modernity, progress, civilization and development that has done more damaged than good. What are the tasks then?

> It is of a great importance to challenge all the walls and barriers that society has built to keep us in the same mental/ emotional space then when they colonized our ancestors. The construction of who we are as LGBT people of color in France is very problematic because we are stuck in the frame of assimilation. **Assimilation** is the form of oppression that considers 'whiteness' as the model, the universal model of humanity.

In order to be considered civilized and not 'racaille,' to be seen as their equals and not barbarians, we have to adopt their notion of humanity, **of universality, and since we are living and/or born in France, we have to adopt their unique notion of 'Frenchness.'** Which means accepting to be silenced and to never ever question the unique model, the unique standard of values, identity, etc. (Prologue, bold letters mine)

'Assimilation' is one keyword. Whoever doesn't fit the fictional edifice built in the image *of* Man/Human *by* Man/Human, has either to assimilate or to pay the consequences: humiliations of all sort, colonial wounds of all sort. These are cases in which colonial wounds are the consequences of the invisible work of 'colonial differences.' Colonial differences are not ontological; they are not the outcome of 'natural' eruptions of the living. It is the work of actors, institutions, and languages. Colonial differences are fictional ontologies epistemically invented. That is, fictions that become ontological appear as having nothing to do with actors and institutions, knowledges, and languages creating them. Man/Human is the fiction upon which normalcy is established and defended, even when 'change' appears as a key word reproducing the normalcy of Man/Human. And that is the decolonial struggle at hand: to delink from the fictional categories and classifications installed and instilled in the narratives of modernity and the violence of coloniality. And that is what this volume attempts to do; not by itself of course, but as a single moment in the large march of decolonial liberations.

Two major problems, visible today, emerge from the nation-state form. One that is being explored in this book addresses here Nationals modeled on Human/Man. Therefore, humans (with small letters) are less nationals, quasi nationals or non-nationals (illegal immigrants and displaced refugees). Nationals are accepted in the sphere of the Man/Human imaginary. Queers of color, refugees, immigrants, 'terrorists' (yesterday's communists), are all kept at bay by material and mental borderlines that justify police (domestic) military (inter-state) forces when 'necessary.' The other problem with the nation-state has been that it has increasingly neglected the nation in its heterogeneity, in favor of inter-state relations. States struggle to survive in the increasing conflictive power struggles in the inter-state system. Cutting health and education budgets, supporting banks and corporations, increasing military budgets are all measures that are making the 'nation' (even in the former First World or developed countries) increasingly dispensable. The target enemy, to use Schmitt's conception of the political, is Man/Human. And this is not a material and physical giant to be destroyed with bombs. No, Man/Human is an epistemic and fictional construct that can only be dismantled with research and argumentations, creating

institutions (as most of the contributors here are doing), working towards rebuilding the communal, engaging decolonial love, and turning our backs (delinking) from the radiations of Man/Human.

All these issues are addressed in the volume at hand with clarity, scholarly poise, conceptual insights, dignified anger, and majestic dignity.

Notes

1   Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom. Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,' *New Centennial Review* 3/3 (2003), 257–337.

2   For a list of terms in Native American languages and translation into English, see *NativeOUT*, accessed 11 November 2016, http://nativeout. com/twospirit-rc/two-spirit-101/two-spirit-terms-in-tribal-languages/. The translations cannot get out of the English semantic and syntactic trap. If you worked in the etymology of each Native America language, you would find out how different it is. And if you go into the syntax, you would become more acquainted with the limitations of imperial languages as well as their arrogance and pretended universality.

PROLOGUE

Paris Black Pride 2016

Nawo C Crawford

I have been a Black lesbian activist for many years in different organizations: feminist, lesbians of color, pan African. I have fought against sexism, homo and lesbophobia, against racism but also for the freedom to express ourselves, to be completely visible *as we are* as women, lesbians, black women, and black lesbians, in the white, black or LGBT community, etc. So when a friend asked me to be part of the first Paris Black Pride (PBP) project, I saw it as a continuity but also as something different that was missing.

It is of a great importance to challenge all the walls and barriers that society has built to keep us in the same mental/ emotional space than when they colonized our ancestors. The construction of who we are as LGBT of color in France is very problematic because we are stuck in the frame of assimilation. Assimilation is the form of oppression that considers 'whiteness' as the model, the universal model of humanity. In order to be considered civilized and not '*racaille*,'[1] to be seen as *their* equals and not barbarians, we have to adopt their notion of humanity, of universality, and since we are living and/or born in France, we have to adopt their unique notion of 'Frenchness.' Which means accepting to be silenced and to never ever question the unique model, the unique standard of values, identity, etc.

That's why LGBT people of color are not meant to question the Eurocentric notions of sexualities. And when we do, we are seen as the enemy from within who are 'communitarists,' against the Republican ideal of equality.

Those are some of the critiques the team (three gay men and one lesbian) heard when we decided to build PBP.[2] We also heard that we were being racist, etc. The usual stuff, heard it before and will hear it again, and so on. But even so, that didn't stop us from organizing in only two months the first *Fierté des* LGBT people of color in Paris. It was quite challenging. We wanted a Pride that would be more than just about partying. Though it is important to party and some did party every night during the weekend, we know how important it is to have fun and be very loud and proud of who we are. Nonetheless, we also

wanted moments of reflection, activities that would allow us to question the system, society, ourselves, etc. We wanted a space where all LGBT of color could feel safe to exchange on certain issues and also a space where we could imagine OUR future.

The event lasted three days, during which there were workshops such as the one with videos of Black French or Africans followed by discussions about our sexualities in France, the Overseas Departments, and in Africa; activism, community, family, and solidarity; the Eurocentric vision of our reality which tends to see us as victims, though our realities are much more positive and empowering than that. We also held round tables on the second day. We had activists and scholars from different backgrounds and countries talking about the situation in France, UK, and in Europe concerning the rights of LGBT people of color. They also shared their views about identity or identities, solidarity local/ transnational, what kind of network, what kind of partnership. The third and last day was a picnic in a park, organized by another Black LGBT group. The artists were also present such as painters, interdisciplinary artists, and other performers.

The major challenge to realize such an event came from inside. We were a team of four who didn't know each other that well. Since we had a very short time to get things done, we were more in a 'doing mode' than in a 'reflective mode' which was really frustrating because I noticed quite quickly that there were in the team two different attitudes as activists which would impact the choice of our strategies but also our goals. The three other members considered that reforming society would be enough to bring the major changes we need to deconstruct the European concepts of sexuality and sexual identities; and myself who wanted a more radical approach, a decolonial approach freeing ourselves from the need of being recognized by Europeans in order to empower our communities.

I wanted to build a Paris Black Pride in a way that would transcend the LGBT Eurocentric standard of activism and solidarity. I don't believe that fighting for acceptance from the dominant part of society or the LGBT community will solve our issues of the multiple exclusions we experience whether socio-economic, political, concerning citizenship, etc.

I do believe that we can be more imaginative and build a PBP that can revolutionize the model of activism, that can decolonize activism. Build an organization, build local and transnational networks with a broader perspective based on radical decolonial theories or inspired by radical actions from the LGBT of color in Europe, the Americas, or Africa. To use these perspectives to question, through different sorts of activities during the weekend, the 'modern/colonial' system, model

of knowledge or activism. To question the world wide capitalist/patri-archal system and see how it affects our lives and our experiences as LGBT people of color. I wanted this first PBP to lay the foundations of a new frame of knowledge, activism, solidarity, to allow ourselves to be more creative in the desire to decolonize our minds, our bodies and alliances, our frame of references.

Though the four members of this PBP team are from the oppressed side of power, three of us thought that the best strategy was to focus on the politicians and the institutions in order to become an essential organization they would have to deal with in the future. What is important and essential for me is to detach ourselves from those who represent the colonial/Eurocentric power. I want us to use decolonial strategies, to rethink our alliances, etc. which doesn't mean that we must ignore the institutions and those who represent them but it has to be only after we acknowledged our need to decolonize our minds. Our struggle is not about gaining a few reforms of the modern/ colonial, western/ Christian centric system but to be part of this larger network of LGBT of color who are fighting for a broader transformation of sexual, gender, race, spiritual, economic, political, and linguistic hier-archy of power.

The team would take into account the postcolonial theories as such as intersectionality which is absolutely necessary to have a better understanding of how the different hierarchies are connected. But from my point of view, the first organization of its sort in France had to be built on 'decolonial' foundations. Changing laws in France to make the situation for LGBT people of color a bit more viable can be of some use in the short term. Nevertheless, the PBP must be a network uniting LGBT of color as individuals or representing organizations or associations and whose long term goal should/will be to decolonize our practices, deconstruct identities, sexualities, create new strategies and struggles by building transnational networks, local and transnational solidarity through which we can re-imagine and work on a world in which we, LGBT of color, would want to live.

Though my experience of this first PBP was very challenging, it was, in many ways, also a very enriching experience, but since this contribution is meant to be a prologue I will not elaborate on all the great and empowering moments for myself and those who came to the event. I will only say that it has given me the will to stay and continue to fight for the LGBT people of color from within this organization. We had our major differences, but this didn't stop us from listening, understanding, and respecting each other. I do see all the potential and where change is possible in the very near future. It was a very small team and we only had two months but we did wonders for this first PBP

weekend in July 2016. I am very happy and proud of what we've done.

The team will grow larger (new members are already joining us) with different political views: reformists, revolutionaries, those who will want to use postcolonial strategies and others decolonial strategies. We will take time to reflect, understand, and mostly question knowledge, actions, allies, theories and step by step in the year to come and the following years build a PBP that will be a space where *all* LGBT people of color can imagine and work towards a world that would not be universal but, as many have said before me, *pluriversal*; where we can all be accepted with our own uniquenesses.

Notes

1   *Racaille* is the French word for thug, usually used against Arabs or Africans.
2   Paris Black Pride (PBP) is not only for LGBT people of African descent. In French, it's called *La Fierté des LGBT de couleurs en France*. The name can and should evolve with the development of the organization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

Against Equality is an online archive, publishing, and arts collective focused on critiquing mainstream gay and lesbian politics. As a transnational collective of queer thinkers, writers and artists, we are committed to dislodging the centrality of equality rhetoric and challenging the demand for inclusion in the institutions of marriage, the military, and the prison industrial complex via hate crime legislation. Against Equality has produced three widely circulated anthologies on these topics, and our archive can be found at www.againstequality.org. We want to reinvigorate the queer political imagination with fantastic possibility.

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alQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society is a civil society organization founded in grassroots activism that works toward social change with regard to sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and aspires to create a more vibrant and just society. At individual, community, and societal levels, alQaws disrupts sexual and gender-based oppression, and challenges regulation of our sexualities

and bodies, whether patriarchal, capitalist, or colonial. See: http://www.alqaws.org

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João Gabriell is an Afro-Caribbean trans blogger and writer based in South of France. He grew up in the Caribbean and came to Europe nine years ago. He is involved in local anticolonial struggles in Marseille and writes mainly on race, colonialism and their intersection with working class queer and trans people of color.

Inclusive Mosque Initiative began in 2012, in London and now has international branches (in Pakistan, Malaysia and Switzerland). It is a grassroots activist organization working toward 'Establishing places of worship for the promotion and practice of inclusive Islam.' IMI is characterised by female-leadership, inclusion and a justice-based ethos.

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Lesbiennes of Color (**LOCs**) are a group of lesbians of color identified as political activists fighting against multiple oppressions: lesbophobia, sexism, racism, neoliberalism and neocolonial policies. Their struggle takes place in different spaces: streets, debates, cultural events, parties, public statements, filming archives, gathering solidarity.

Moruni is the co-founder of the LOCs. She is an Indian-origin lesbian feminist, based in France. Her activism is centred on anti-fascism and anti-racism. Connected to her country of origin, she is fighting the caste system, feminicidal oppression, danger of fundamentalism and LGBTQI discrimination by supporting movements of minorities.

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Mia Nikasimo is a creative writer, essayist, poet and playwright currently working on a novella and other stories entitled Trans..She has also contributed to Queer Africa and the blog, Blacklooks. Mia's work explores issues relating to transgendered experience, gender politics and disability as seen through a mental health lens.

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INTRODUCTION

Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj,
and Silvia Posocco

The long processes of decolonization from imperial powers in the 20th century in the Global South have been accompanied by the insidious appearance of neocolonial and neo-imperial geopolitical strategies in the 20th and 21st centuries. An ongoing critical reflection on decolonial readings of queerness is necessary since heteronormativity is sustained upon epistemic categories, among others, of race, gender, and sexuality.[1] Decolonial queerness entails querying the workings of neo-colonial epistemic categories, systems of classification and taxonomies that classify people. Queering coloniality and the epistemic categories that classify people according to their body configuration— skin colour and biological molecular composition for the regeneration of the species—means to disobey and delink from the coloniality of knowledge and of being. At this intersection, decolonial queerness is necessary not only to resist coloniality but, above all, to re-exist and re-emerge decolonially.[2] As such, decolonial queerness speaks directly to the larger spectrum of decolonial thinking and doing. Whereas today decolonization and decoloniality are invoked in many contexts, one particular frame—modernity/coloniality/decoloniality—is especially apposite for delineating the field of decolonial queerness. Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, Prasenjit Duara, María Lugones, Enrique Dussel, and Arturo Escobar, among several others, have signalled the emergence of the critical category of decolonial analysis that interrogates systems of dominance and their authority to produce a 'coloniality of power.'[3] The singular force of such coloniality that follows from western colonial encounters regulates the inegalitarian worlds that we inhabit through a mono-epistemic organization around the modern west and its capitalist/heteropatriarchal/Christianized productions.[4]

An examination of the impact of the erasure of diverse ways of being becomes crucial in queer contexts, since the west is construed as the progressive champion of queer subcultures globally. Cultural racism within queer circuits functions in tandem with the cultural imaginary of the Global South as a necessary homophobic site and produces hegemonic codes of coloniality that garner support for

neo-colonial and neo-imperial ventures by positing the Global North as the sole guarantor of human rights for all peoples including women and queer subjects. Although a burgeoning body of rigorous critical work is gaining momentum in various strands of decolonial scholarship, a comprehensive study with particular reference to transnational non-normative sexualities is still largely unavailable. Within the wider context, the works of María Lugones, Gloria Anzaldúa, Walter Mignolo, and Fatima El-Tayeb among others have placed 'race,' gender and sexuality—and their intersections—as pillars of the colonial matrix of power. Decolonial queerness is therefore gradually being placed at the centre of scholarly critique of western conceptions of sexuality, and the chapters in this book are a further important contribution towards this.[5] Also relevant for our project is the work of María Lugones, especially the essays titled 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System' (2007) and 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism' (2010),[6] where Lugones builds from both Peruvian sociologist and activist Anibal Quijano's seminal article introducing the concept of coloniality as the darker side of modernity and from the lesbian Chicana thinker and activist Gloria Anzaldúa.[7] Lugones elaborates on, and revises, Quijano's rendering of sexuality within the colonial matrix of power. From Anzaldúa, Lugones takes the concept of 'borderland,' which is at once geopolitical border (between Mexico and the US), a sexual border (between heteronormativity and homosexuality), a racial border (between whiteness and people of colour), a linguistic border (between Spanish and English), and a cosmological distinction (between Aztec cosmology and Western cosmology). These critiques unsettle the longstanding assumption about the European origin of modernity, knowledge, and knowledge production. The discussion that we wish to develop within this collection is premised on an informative critique of western queer formations and the need for a critical inquiry into alternative and, more importantly, radical forms of existence, which aim to destabilize entrenched hierarchies of our times. A decolonial perspective interlinked to our queerness should, in our view, inform our own orientations such that the beginning of a transformative process can be imagined.

It was from these positionalities that 'Decolonize Queer,' as it was then, was loosely formed. In the usual way we were a bunch of queer/trans people of colour and allies already involved in local anti-racism work, brain storming around a kitchen table in an inner city overfilled co-operative house.[8] From there our connections grew bringing other like-minded people together to share their experiences of working on the diverse ways in which sexualities can converge with religious and racial identities to produce multiple exclusions and

socio-economic disadvantage as well as political marginalization. Our solidarity with each other, transcending national boundaries, became increasingly important in struggling and in creating activism to respond to the similar issues we were experiencing. Thanks to stray bits of funding we were able to obtain, we were first able to come together as 'Decolonize Queer' at a transnational workshop held in Berlin in December 2010. The aim of the workshop was to develop links and conversations between ourselves as various constituencies working across similar issues. At that workshop, we continued the online discussions we had been having, doing the essential work of re-mapping some of the specifically local issues as well as the common ones affecting us all transnationally; producing and contributing knowledge on how sexuality, race and religion intersect within state law and policy, as well as within civil society developments in different transnational settings.

Since 2010, we have continued to share knowledge and experience from our different localities with each other primarily to support each other and inform our own work, but also for wider policy and public dissemination. We have done this through a number of online activities and with the aid of an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Networking grant and other funding were able to formalize the project as the Decolonizing Sexualities Network. This enabled us to organize a further set of events including an international workshop, a roundtable panel, an activist event (Safra Project conference) and guest lecture panel as well as another separate roundtable and book launch that took place in the UK between July and December 2013.[9] The two broad thematic priorities have continued to revolve around re-mapping the urgent questions in our local contexts and facilitating transnational queer people of colour (QPOC) conversations across the Global South and Europe. This edited collection is a result of this collaborative work together taking place since 2008. We would like to acknowledge the efforts of those who have been part of the network and whose work is not represented in this collection.[10] The contribution of these scholars and activists' work has been critical to the emergence of what is now a field on decolonial sexualities that did not previously exist particularly in Europe. The relatively new field of decolonial queer studies has gradually materialized over the last decade in Europe. Activist and academic conversations have enabled a unique critical dialogue that defines what it means to think decolonially in queer and transnational contexts. Parallel to the articulation of queer of colour critique specific to Europe, such as the works by Stacy Douglas, Suhraiya Jivraj and Sarah Lamble (UK), Paola Bacchetta (France) and Fatima El Tayeb and Jin Haritaworn (Germany), various grassroots movements in Europe have developed a particularized version of decolonial queerness

to which our work is indebted. These activist organizations include the Safra Project (UK), the Lesbiennes of Color (LOCs) (France) and Suspect (Germany). This collection finds its locus in these ongoing and overlapping decolonial exchanges that extend beyond the constraints of queerness as the key signifier of our experience.[11]

The trajectory of this collection has been an intersecting collage of three erstwhile colonial centres: Berlin (2010), London (2013), and Paris (2015). As stated above the completion of the book has been subjected to a view from the borders/borderlands, in the Anzaldúan sense.[12] Our contributors from Palestine and other diasporic, disenfranchised communities in Western Europe and North America experience the reality of physical and imaginary borders in specific ways that give the concept of 'border thinking' its contours. They write, to use Mignolo's perceptive observation, 'think and do decolonially, dwelling and thinking in the borders of local histories confronting global designs.'[13] In Berlin, communities of colour hosted our event and their participation and sustenance of our joint efforts attested to the decolonial connections that transform collective experience positively. One such example was the groups' support for Professor Jasbir Puar, invited to speak at Humboldt University, and yet accused of being anti-Semitic in the German academy when talking about pinkwashing.[14] Yet this was one instance of the warmth of queer communities of colour being together becoming a decolonial moment of connection, solidarity, and alliance.

The claims to production of knowledge through apparatuses of formal and institutional education, writing, critical thinking, research, universities, and other forms of normative and normalizing reflective inquiries have long-standing narratives of Euro-American domination that are co-imbricated with violent histories of colonization, territorial aggrandizement, and military occupation of non-Euro-American spaces. These hyperbolic proclamations operate through persistent repetitions—reproduction, perhaps—of carefully articulated discourses that present occidental epistemological practices as scientific, detached from objects of inquiry and thus bearing 'objective' gravitas, and, as inextricably tied to the advancement of humane and philosophical inquiry. Coloniality, or the colonial matrix of power, is constitutive and not derivate of modernity. For this reason, we write 'modernity/coloniality.' The slash (/) that divides and unites modernity with coloniality means that coloniality is constitutive of modernity: 'there is no modernity without coloniality.'[15] In this regard, decoloniality constitutes the de-linking from discourses of knowledge that Euro-American-centric thinking proliferates. In Berlin, the delinking from the site of production of knowledge that the university represents transformed the way in which our transnational group related to ideas of space, time and more

importantly, community organization, particularly in the face of the racism apparent in white queer organizations which was surfacing as one of the key aspects of queer of colour experience.[16] The larger challenge that our collective organizing represented in Berlin was spurred by non-academic discussions that proliferated after the Pride events. In Berlin, London, or Paris, the food, community care of children, and our relation with the political-activist context of the hosts participated in defining the decolonial moments that (are) separate(d) from Euro-American concepts of knowledge. The transnational organization that our network has evolved into incorporates the falling in and out of institutional academic spaces that willingly obfuscates knowledge production and the consistent calls to knowledge production.

The collection is divided into four sections: 'Challenge,' 'Create,' 'All Power Activism,' and 'Now.' These sections are merely to denote some key thematics, tensions, and potentialities as these emerge in the writings and artwork. The contributions are not delimited by traditional academic style but rather draw on creative inspiration to produce knowledge and insight through various styles and formats, including poetry, essays, statements, manifestos, as well as academic mash-ups. The first section of the collection, 'Challenge,' opens with Ekine's discussion of anti-LGBTQI legislation in Africa, the processes of criminalization and the resulting denial of citizenship. In particular, Ekine argues Africa is a place 'where queers are caught in the inbetweens.' These include western imperialism, patriarchy, religious fascism, western aid conditionality; what she summarizes as 'a spectacular homosexuality and a spectacular homophobia.'[17] In turn, Mia Nikasimo's poetry makes a strong case for decolonizing the domain language and its neocolonial hegemonic functions. She continues the discussion of the theme of neocolonialism and gender identity, moving from Africa to the African diaspora. In her prose and poetry, Nikasimo asks what role can the LGBTIQ African diaspora play in grappling with the historical shifts in the queerness moves and shifts between and across continents. Nikasimo eloquently articulates her experiences in both the imperial language as well as the language of the everyday. Her language mirrors the fluctuations and mutability of gender and queerness and the ways these are perceived by others, especially our families and our neighbours. To all of this she demonstrates a moving defiance.

Raju Rage's contribution discusses two artworks, also included here, namely, 'Monster, terrorist, fag' and a still of a performative installation. This work was part of an exhibition staged in Berlin, 'What is Queer Today, is not Queer Tomorrow.' Rage's intervention, 'Dilemma of the Diaspora to Define,' speaks to the theme of shifting and mutability

of identity also present in Nikasimo's work and echoed in other con-
tributions in the book. Raju Rage focuses specifically on South Asian
transgender queer identity as coming together in the persona 'Monster
Terrorist Fag,' inspired by a range of critical race/subaltern/queer theo-
rists. In seeking to disrupt fixed essentialized categorizations of identity,
through the installation Raju Rage creates an anti-performance. In
doing so, fixed binaries like male or female or racial categories are
highlighted as objectified and fetishized through the dominant western
gaze.

In the next chapter, João Gabriell emphasizes the specificities of
having a genealogy of French community of colour struggles that are
erased by the overarching reference to the US context. What emerges
from Gabriell's piece are the differences between the state actors in
France and the US when thinking about trans marginalization. Colonial
and imperial histories in the two settings have markedly different
implications. Gabriell shifts the focus of race theorizing to the French
context by looking at the erasures of transwomen and transmen in
queer activist circuits. For Gabriell, the 'overkill' of transwomen of
colour in France does not register as spectacular or worthy of media
attention.[18] Locating their discussion in the Transgender Day of
Remembrance event, Gabriell centres their reflections on developing a
trans perspective in order to critique the marginalization of transgender
bodies (Gabriell terms this 'transmarginalization') and the silencing of
transwomen and transmen in allegedly radical queer spaces.

The politics of knowledge production within an 'imperial univer-
sity'[19] emerges in Humaira Saeed's essay. Saeed critiques the structural
frame of this space as being saturated by whiteness. This saturation
encompasses unequal division of labour, representational excess, and
more invisibilized harassments that burden queer scholars of colour.
Postcolonial scholarship by white scholars is often read as an expression
of commitment to social justice. This is not, however, validated by the
hiring practices in the academy. At the same time, Saeed courageously
notes the collusion of certain people of colour with systems of power.
This important piece not only challenges pedagogical norms, it also
reminds us of the uneven distribution of risk and liability which is
highlighted in relation to other contexts by other contributors to this
volume, but here it forcefully emerges in relation to the academic
industrial complex.

The next section, 'Create,' focuses on imaginative decolonial
interventions in theory, analysis, critique, ways of being in the world,
and modes of existence. Sandeep Bakshi's piece focuses on the re-ar-
ticulation of gender performance, as it intersects with narratives of
modernity and the re-signification of the field that is already marked by

the coloniality of power. Within this context, Bakshi refuses to take an oppositional stance and negative labour, but rather, asks how can we create an option—an availability— rather than the labour of critique of the dominant formation. Instead of critiquing the dominant, Bakshi stresses the labour of creation, of relation, of kinning, and love.

Similarly, Diriye Osman beautifully and poetically explores these themes and the need to create connections with one another. In 'This is How We Soften our Hearts,' Osman calls for creating intimate connections within a frame that foregrounds significant transitions. In 'Femininity in Men is a Source of Power,' Osman seeks to rearticulate femininity through a daringly cross-gender re-appropriation of European sartorial practices that work to accentuate/highlight effemiphobia. Osman's dialogues with young gay Africans show how these conversations take place with different audiences, constituting new publics and networks.

The need for connections is equally important in Sirma Bilge's piece, 'Theoretical Coalitions and multi-issue activism: "Our Struggles will be intersectional or they will be bullshit".' Bilge seeks to establish a conversation between feminists working on intersectionality, indigenous resistance, and trans activism to reimagine alliances and the constitution of communities of struggle. To imagine alliances and 'deep coalitions,' Bilge returns to Black, Chicana, and Indigenous feminisms, recovering/reconstituting the political impetus and affective thrust beyond the processes of abstraction that have engulfed these theorizations as they have been restaged. Bilge re-centers the relevance and the importance of violences of colonial domination upon 'interpersonal and communal governance and land-based epistemologies and pedagogies.'[20] Bilge calls for an ethics that is deeply embedded within 'social politics.' Ignoring the colonial domination and its proliferation through knowledges chips away at how we can sustain and nurture ourselves.

Creating connections through theoretical conversations and story-telling gives rise to conversations and actions. Contributions in the next section, 'All Power Activism,' are examples of these processes in different locations. Alqaisiah, Hilal Nassar, and Maikey, in their piece 'Dismantling the Image of the Palestinian Homosexual,' explore the role of AlQaws, a civil society organization founded in grassroots activism that works towards social change with regard to sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender.[21] The critique of settler colonialism by Indigenous Studies scholars/activists noted above resonates with the AlQaws piece, which highlights how Zionist colonization of Palestine is underpinned by racial, sexual, and gendered discourses. AlQaws seeks to dismantle the image of 'the Palestinian homosexual' and the rescue narratives associated with it. In order to challenge these narratives, they call for

unpacking 'pinkwashing logics' and imagine a decolonized Palestinian identity within the Palestinian queer community and a decolonized Palestine'—decolonizing the self and the territory simultaneously.

The organization Lesbiennes of Color (LOCs) reflect upon the political context in France with a view to organizing resistance and mobilization against what they view as a racist state and hegemonic feminism. Similarly to Alqaws, LOCs' emphasis on 'building actions' is a crucial and daring standing up to continuities between colonial and neocolonial processes and practices in a diasporic context where FranceAfrique is an enduring reality. The implications of this for those construed as 'migrants' are that they become the focus of racist violence in contemporary Europe. El-Tayeb shows how racism as an analytical category is not only virtually absent, but constructs 'race' as something that is imported, is 'foreign' and located in 'Europe's non-white outside.'[22] Therefore, following on from Sirma Bilge's piece, El-Tayeb calls for scholars, particular the 'European left,' to engage in theorizing racialization, drawing out the nuances of theories of class as deeply racialized in Europe.

The exaggerated display of solidarity in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks unleashed a new wave of Islamophobia in France in particular and in Europe more generally. By refusing to endorse the nationalist position, the LOCs expose the pretense of an international alliance which in fact extends the circulation of neo-imperialist and neocolonial frames and sentiments. This rotten and pernicious conjunction has resulted in heavy militarization of public spaces, violent policing and the heighted surveillance of Muslim bodies. Jun Zubillaga-Pow's piece on guarding against terrorism in the Singaporean context also highlights the global reverberations of the response to terrorism. Zubillaga-Pow explores how these global processes play out for individuals, in this case, a middle-aged Malay-Muslim lesbian in Singapore. Zubillaga-Pow also points to the impact of decolonization and the insufficiency of western theoretical models to address self-configuration through a moving testimonial account of working within LGBT organizing in Singapore. Organizations often lack the critical vocabulary to describe the complexity of lived experience. The experience of the Malay-Muslim woman is both made exceptional and marginal.

In turn, Jivraj takes on the theme of Muslim queers having to carry this heavy burden: having to unpack the complexities of the QPOC conjunction, the racist logics and practices of state actors, as well as surrounding LGBT movements. It often feels like there is very little space or hope. Jivraj argues that the invisibilization of 'race' and its material realities also often produces a sense of suffocation. This affective impact is spatial, but also dislocates activism. However, drawing from an

example of activists from disparate backgrounds and groups coming together to respond to and stop a far right march in London's East End, Jivraj highlights the enduring capacity and potential of spontaneous action from liminal positionalities. Clearly, there is crucial engagement at both the individual and collective levels, in the face of complex, adverse transnational, and local backlash against activist enunciation.

The first piece in the next section, 'Now,' by Shannahan and Tauqir is an exemplary case of such enunciation on a number of levels. The Inclusive Mosque Initiative is a collective action that facilitates an individual experience. It simultaneously provides an inclusive space within the context of the effects of exclusionary practices and policies of some mosque establishments. As with the contributions above, the authors highlight the importance of feminist and liberationist scholars such as Amina Wadud, as excellent examples of how theorizations have been so important to increasingly embracing and developing activist and spiritual practice.

The intervention by Against Equality takes issue with what they refer to as 'the holy trinity of gay and lesbian politics: gay marriage, gays in the military, and hate crimes legislation.'[23] As an anti-capitalist collective, they draw out the need for a theory and praxis that intersect class and 'race.' Their analysis highlights the detrimental effects of the neoliberal logics underpinning its institutional structures. Like all the other pieces, Against Equality call for a rounded analysis of how these institutions are 'embedded in a long history of sexism, misogyny, and racism.'[24] The issues that they raise speak to current debates around capitalism and the effects of neoliberalism.

Sánchez García offers another perspective on the issue of gay marriage, focusing on the 2010 legislative assembly of Mexico City's approval of extending the right to marry to lesbian and gay couples. He explores the challenges to the constitutionality of this marriage reform to explore the utopian potential of 'thinking about the world we want' and particularly in grassroot activists' imaginaries.[25] This provides an interesting interjection into currents debates among queer scholars on the anti-social turn in queer studies and key responses by José Esteban Muñoz.[26] Within a shared critique of equality paradigms, there is nevertheless a contrast here between utopian visions and the everyday material costs and violence of allegedly progressive politics.

Following on the theme of the circulation of different types of progressive politics, Silvia Posocco addresses dynamics within academic/activist assemblages. Posocco draws on Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's work as an Aymara intellectual committed to challenging how epistemic appropriation often works in conjunction with a disregard for the specific political contexts, relationalities, and ontologies of action that

produce resistant knowledge. What emerges for Posocco is the way this analysis speaks to how leaking wounded whiteness occupies space, while displacing the efforts of those precariously positioned individuals and collectives who bear the brunt of backlash. Posocco calls for a renewed relational attentiveness as a strategy to counteract the uneven fallout that the pieces above have also painstakingly described and documented. The final chapter in the collection by Paola Bacchetta does the important work of mapping the history and trajectories of QTPOC activism and theory in France, which are all too often sidelined in mainstream literature. This archival work critically demonstrates the creative ways in which QTPOC come together with others to struggle against different cross cutting issues arising from race, forms of segregation and capitalism. It expands the theoretical horizon of decolonial sexuality studies by foregrounding critical and analytical interventions, most notably that of queer women of colour in the French context.

The work featured in the four sections of the book marks many conversations that have taken place over a number of years. It extends and re-stages some of these exchanges with novel mutuality and juxtaposition. And yet, as we bring the book to completion in the UK in July 2016, a mere ten days after the reality of Brexit (23rd June 2016), it is dawning on us how tenuous the connections between us and our localities (Berlin, Paris and London) are becoming. Our editorial meeting in Paris was held in the morose atmosphere of demands to hypernationalism in France following the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* (December 2015). Even though our meeting focused productively on the reading and selection of the drafts of our contributors, the immediate context attested to the ephemeral stature of collective organizing that could be comfortably displaced by erecting national(-ist) boundaries of allegiance.

 A subsequent meeting in Canterbury, in the United Kingdom, took place in the aftermath of the shooting in a Latinx gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in which forty-nine people were killed. As Che Gossett argues,[27] the Orlando shooting event enacts visibility of the lives of those whose existence is already survival, alongside the complex invisibilization of routine and spectacular violence inflicted against these same queer of colour subjects and communities. In turn, the shooter is characterized by racist and Islamophobic coding that participate in rendering Muslim and people of colour into suspects that can be swiftly and extra-judicially dispatched. Further, a deviant sexuality or repressed desire is also imputed to the shooter, firmly within the Orientalist fantasies through which communities of colour, immigrants, and Muslims have been framed.[28]

Similar frames of representation were echoed in the wake of the

Nice attack, where the man who killed eighty-four people driving a truck into crowded streets on the day of national celebration that is Bastille Day in France, was also marked as sexually deviant.[29] We have worked on the manuscript in such contexts deeply marked by these and similar ongoing events, spurring each other on to establish a sense of critical distance and reminding ourselves of the problems of appealing to a sense of 'new' vulnerabilities. This is occurring in the face of the all too often erased backlash of such events that are entrenched in the racialized workings of structural violence that occur routinely particularly on bodies perceived 'foreign.'

As in this entire collection, then, our reflection centred on narratives of solidarity and alliance and these connections appear newly vulnerable today. In other words, we wonder how terms such as solidarity can gain meaning, when demands to national solidarity stand in explicit contrast to solidarity and alliances of queer of colour and other migrant communities. Not defining these terms is perhaps, from our perspective, a form of decolonial disobedience that is worth developing.[30] What these terms may look like, sound like, or even smell like in the pieces collected here, perhaps brings forth a fragment of the 'different' worlds, a renewed sense of precarious and yet constitutive emergence. As these worlds are constantly being made and re-made, we have taken this decolonial turn to reflect, deconstruct, and reconstruct. Developing the transnational decolonial critique of existing relations in the domain of sexualities can bring to the surface the possibility of our imagined, collective 'different' worlds. And yet, we do not know in advance what these communities, these multiple worlds will encompass. Neither do we know the outcome of such a critique. Rather, what events all over the world like the Orlando mass shootings in June 2016 make us realize is that we are living on shifting grounds. The pieces in this collection speak to such displacements and will inevitably continue to have enduring resonance nonetheless. This collection gestures towards their/stories, accounts, and knowledges of those others whose narratives remain unattended in the escalation of ultra-violence of our times. These are *our* stories, *our* fictions, *our* meanings despite the measure of difference between all of *us*.

Notes

1   We are grateful to Walter Mignolo for his generous engagement with our ideas and for actively steering us in the framing of decolonial queerness

offered here (personal communication with Walter Mignolo, August 2016).

2   Within the context of Indigenous studies, Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes consider decolonial queer praxis as an engagement in the 'complexities of re-orienting ourselves away from White supremacist logics and systems and toward more respectful and accountable ways of being in relation to one another and the lands we live on, while not appropriating Indigenous Knowledge.' Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes, 'Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics,' *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19/2 (2015), 154–72, 168. In 2010, María Lugones had already considered the significance of land in the framework of coloniality of gender. See, note 6.

3   See the extensive bibliographical review available here: 'Oxford Bibliographies,' accessed 18 August 2016, http://www.oxfordbibliographies. com/view/document/obo-9780199766581/obo-9780199766581-0017. xml?rskey=s3JPCf&result=1&q=mignolo#firstMatch.

4   We use 'the west' as shorthand for different geo-political configurations and are conscious that other terminology such as Euro-America and Euro-Atlantic might be more appropriate in some instances.

5   See DSN bibliography, accessed 18 August 2016, https://www.kent.ac.uk/ law/dsn.

6   María Lugones, 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System,' *Hypatia* 22/1 (2007), 186–209; María Lugones, 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism.' *Hypatia* 25/4 (2010), 742–59.

7   Anibal Quijano, 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,' in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, eds. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (Abingdon and New York: Routlege, 2010); Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderland/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (USA: Aunt Lute, 1987).

8   Jin Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), ch. 1.

9   See 'Decolonizing Sexualities Network (DSN)', *University of Kent*, accessed 18 August 2016, https://www.kent.ac.uk/law/dsn.

10 Works by people present at Berlin include: Paola Bacchetta and Jin Haritaworn, 'There are Many Transatlantics: Homonationalism, Homotransnationalism and Feminist-Queer-Trans of Color Theories and Practices,' in *Transatlantic Conversations: Feminism as Traveling Theory,* eds. Kathy Davis and Mary Evans (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011); Sarah Bracke, 'From "saving women" to "saving gays": rescue narratives and their dis/continuities,' *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19/1 (2012) 237–52; Stacy Douglas, Suhraiya Jivraj and Sarah Lamble, 'Liabilities of queer anti-racist critique,' *Feminist Legal Studies* 19/2 (2011) 1017–18; Jin Haritaworn, 'Loyal repetitions of the nation: Gay assimilation and the "war on terror".' *Dark Matter* 3 (2008), accessed 1 August 2016, http:// www.darkmatter101.org; Jin Haritaworn, 'Women's rights, gay rights and anti-Muslim racism in Europe,' *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19 1/2 (2012) 73–8; Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Jennifer Petzen, 'Sexualising the "War on Terror": Queerness, Islamophobia and globalised

Orientalism' in *Thinking through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, eds. S Sayyid, and Vakil Abdoolkarim (London: Hurst/New York: Columbia Press, 2010); Rasha Moumneh, 'Global LGBT Movement not Inclusive of Other Rights Issues' (2009), accessed 1 August 2016, www.menassat. com/?q=en/news-articles/7040-global-lgbt-movement-not-inclusive-other-rights-issues; Jennifer Petzen, 'Contesting Europe: A call for an anti-modern sexual politics,' *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 19/1 (2012) 97–114; Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). See other examples on the DSN bibliography, https://www.kent. ac.uk/law/dsn.

11 See, Stacy Douglas, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Sarah Lamble, 'Liabilities of Queer Anti-Racist Critique,' *Feminist Legal Studies* 19 (2011), 107–18; Paola Bacchetta, 'Décoloniser le Féminisme: Intersectionnalités, Assemblages, Co-Formations, Co-Productions,' ['Decolonizing Feminism: Intersectionalities, Assemblages, Co-Formations, Co-Productions'], *Cahiers du CEDREF* (2015); Fatima El Tayeb, *European Others Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Jin Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

12 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

13 Walter Mignolo, 'Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing On (De)Coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience,' *EIPCP*, September 2011, accessed 1 August 2016, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0112/mignolo/en.

14 See ch. 11 in this volume. Also, Haneen Maikey and Mikki Stelder define pinkwashing as 'a powerful means to make Zionism and Israel more appealing to gay people around the globe, but particularly to those who have assimilated Islamophobic, racist, and anti-Arab messages into their vision of "progress".' Haneen Maikey and Mikki Stelder, 'Dismantling the Pink Door in the Apartheid Wall: Towards a Decolonized Palestinian Queer Politics,' in *The Global Trajectories of Queerness: Re-thinking Same-Sex Politics in the Global South*, eds. Ashley Tellis and Sruti Bala. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 83–104, 93. On pinkwashing, see also Scott Long, 'Why gay Middle Easterners can't stand GayMiddleEast.com,' 28 January 2012, accessed 1 August 2016, https://paper-bird.net/2012/01/28/why-gay-middle-easterners-cant-stand-gaymiddleeast-com/ and http://www.pinkwatchingisrael. com/2012/01/28/why-gay-middle-easterners-cant-stand-gaymiddleeast-com/; Heike Schotten and Haneen Maikey, 'Queers Resisting Zionism: On Authority and Accountability Beyond Homonationalism, 12 October 2012, accessed 1 August 2016, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7738/ queers-resisting-zionism_on-authority-and-accounta; Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Jasbir Puar, 'Rethinking Homonationalism,' *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 45 (2013) 336–9; Jason Ritchie, 'Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel–Palestine: The

Conceits of Queer Theory and the Politics of the Ordinary,' *Antipode* 47/3 (2014), 616–34.

15 Walter Mignolo, 'Global Coloniality and World Disorder: Decoloniality after Decolonization and Dewesternization after the Cold War,' World Public Forum: Dialogue of Civilizations (January 2016), http://www.wpfdc. org/blog/society/19627-global-coloniality-and-theworld-disorder.

16 SUSPECT, 'Where Now? From Pride Scandal to Transnational Movement,' *Bully Bloggers*, accessed 1 August 2016, https:// bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2010/06/26/where-now-from-pride-scandal-to-transnational-movement/.

17 Ekine, 'Beyond Anti-LGBTI Legislation,' ch. 1 in this volume.

18 See Eric Stanley, 'Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture,' *Social Text*, 107 29/2 (2011), 1–19.

19 Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, eds., The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissen (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2014).

20 Bilge, 'Theoretical Coalitions,' ch. 10 in this volume.

21 'alQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society,' *alQaws*, accessed 1 August 2016, www.alqaws.org/about-us.

22 El-Tayeb, ch. 13 in this volume.

23 Chávez et al., 'Against Equality,' ch. 17 in this volume

24 Chávez et al., Against Equality,' ch. 17 in this volume.

25 García, 'Reasons for Optimism,' ch. 18 in this volume.

26 Re the anti-social turn in queer studies, see, for example, Leo Bersani, 'Is the Rectum a Grave?,' *October* 43 (1987) 197–222; Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004); Judith Halberstam, 'The Anti-Social Turn in Queer Studies,' *Graduate Journal of Social Science*, 5/2 (2008),140–56; Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press), 2005. For Muñoz's responses, see José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

27 See Che Gossett, 'Pulse, Beat, Rhythm, Cry: Orlando and the queer and trans necropolitics of loss and mourning,' *Verso*, 5 July 2016, accessed 1 August 2016, http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2747-pulse-beat-rhythm-cry-orlando-and-the-queer-and-trans-necropolitics-of-loss-and-mourning

28 Sima Shakhsari, 'After Orlando,' *MERIP*, 17 June 2016, accessed 1 August 2016, http://www.merip.org/after-orlando; See also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1977). Karma Chávez summarizes the inter-relation of queerness, raciality and terrorism in mainstream media. She argues that in the case of racialized queers, especially for Muslims, queerness is perceived as the underlying cause of their terrorist impluse. See, Karma Chávez, ‹The Precariousness of Homonationalism: The Queer Agency of Terrorism in Post-9/11 Rhetoric,' *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 2/3 (2015), 32–58, see especially, 37–41.

29 'Pourquoi la ''bisexualité" du tueur de Nice est primordial,' *Brain*, 18 July 2016, accessed 1 August 2016, http://www.brain-magazine.fr/article/page-president/31453-Pourquoi-la-bisexualite-du-tueur-de-Nice-est-importante.

30 In light of Mignolo's notion of 'epistemic disobedience' that works 'as de-linking from the magic of the western idea of modernity, ideals of humanity and promises of economic growth and financial prosperity,' we suggest that non-definitions serve to de-link from the coloniality of power that imposes naming, labelling, and defining concepts. Walter Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom,' *Theory, Culture and Society* 26/7–8 (2009), 1–23, 3.

CHALLENGE

— 1 —

Beyond Anti-LGBTI Legislation: Criminalization and the Denial of Citizenship

Sokari Ekine

There were approximately five weeks between the passing of the Nigerian Same Sex Marriage Bill (NSSMB) on 14 January 2014,[1] and the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Bill (AHB) on 25 February 2014.[2] The legislations were built on existing laws which were part of the civilizing mission of colonialism, reinforcing heterosexuality as the natural order, to exist without contradiction or complication.

One glaring fact about these bills is that, not only have they resulted in mass arrests,[3] but these laws have actively encouraged vigilantism, mob violence, and in the future, could be used for extortion and bribery.[4] By declaring LGBTI persons illegal, they have made them non-citizens and bait for sexualized violence—rapeable, beatable, and killable.

In the immediate weeks following the passage of the two bills, reports emerged that Kenya, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Liberia, the DRC, and Ethiopia were planning similar bills, though to date none of these have materialized. Alongside the media frenzy around the bills, LGBTI activists were in demand as NGOs and western media grew frenzied over the search for the authentic African Queer Spokesperson. They were soon found in the person of Kenyan celebrity writer Binyavanga Wainania, who came out publicly around the same time with an article entitled 'I Am Homosexual, Mum.'[5] A market was being created and African sexuality was the product.

Somewhere in all of this, there is a place called Africa where queers are caught in the in-betweens of western imperialism, African patriarchy, and religious fascism; between aid conditionality and commodification; between the pre-colonial mantra 'homophobia is UnAfrican' and the post-colonial 'homosexuality is UnAfrican'; between a spectacular homosexuality and a spectacular homophobia.[6] Our histories are

muddled and contested as we search for proof that we existed from time immemorial. But as Neville Hoad notes, more important, beyond the 'assertion and counterassertion' of the existence of homosexuality in Africa, is how these arguments are used by opposing voices to justify their positions.[7] Surely what is important is that we exist now!

African religious and political leaders fail to realize, or choose to ignore, the ideological contradictions which they use to support the policing of queer citizens. For example, the willingness of Museveni of Uganda to accept religious imperialism,[8] but not, as he recently put it, 'social imperialism.'[9] Similarly, the irony of a tyrant like Robert Mugabe being excited over religious imperialism whilst in the presence of US evangelicals and at the same time being the poster child of Anti-Imperialisms.[10] The hypocrisy is not limited to African leaders. For example, President Obama on the one hand invokes LGBTI rights, whilst on the other failing to hold US evangelical organizations to account for their role in exacerbating homophobia in the US and across the global south. The duplicity is being spun on both sides of the Atlantic.

This brings us to the question of the motivation (who/what is) behind these legislations of hate which allow African queer bodies to be destroyed with impunity. Certainly there are multiple possible answers. In this exploratory essay, I attempt to identify and critique some of these possibilities and in doing so show the relationship of two specific 'zones of contact,' surveillance and citizenship, between 'the embodied subjects and the political state apparatus,'[11] which manifest themselves differently but equally in the African post-colonial state and the western imperialist state, through the denial of citizenship.

The most obvious reason is homophobia, but this in itself is inadequate. If we begin to look beyond the 'hate' we find an underlying colonial self-consciousness through perceived impositions from the west. This leads to defense of a fixed 'African' culture and fixed biblical (or Koranic) notions of the sanctity of the heterosexual. The irony of the Bible as possibly the most insidious and accepted western import, is lost. Queer Kenyan writer Keguro Macharia writes of 'the fantasy of homosexuality, heterosexuality and heteronormativity—ergo, "All men desire women, all women desire men—this is natural, the only state of things."'[12] He argues that to call such statements homophobic is 'wrongheaded.' Rather they are heteronormative and heteronationalist, that is, they 'not only presume the naturalness of heterosexual desire but traffic in a sense of rightness'—an important distinction.[13]

The second explanation is that the legislations are a way of distracting the populace from more urgent needs such as unemployment, health care, corruption, and in the case of Nigeria, the very real terror

unleashed by Boko Haram. Whilst there is a strong element of populism surrounding the anti-homosexuality bills, there is no evidence that the passage of such bills will have the staying power to detract from socio-economic and political concerns. For example, anti-homosexuality laws and sentiment in Nigeria have had no impact on the rage of Nigerians over the March 2014 abduction of 230 school girls by Boko Haram and the complete failure of President Goodluck Jonathan's policies in addressing either the poverty and underdevelopment in the north or the slaughter of people. More recently, Jonathan's March 2015 election campaign introduced the NSSMB into the political arena by claiming his primary opponent, General Muhammed Buhari, intended to repeal the Bill if elected.[14] Buhari did not respond to the accusations and the Bill was never discussed. He has since won the 2015 election.

Over the past ten years, African LGBTI people have become increasingly visible and outspoken as they have forced debates on dangerous and unwanted conversations such as rights, sex and reproduction, and sexuality and gender. This increased visibility leads to a third explanation which concerns the moral panic underpinned by extremist Christian fundamentalism, and to a lesser extent, Islam. There is sufficient evidence to show that the moral panic against LGBTI people is systemic and a well-organized campaign across the continent which exposes the relationships between religious, cultural and nationalist fundamentalism, corrupt leadership and strong international ties to US evangelicals who espouse the same vitriol against queers in the US and anyone who does not fit their heteropatriarchal order. The involvement of US evangelical groups is well documented, specifically groups such as Exodus International, Prison Fellowship, the Family Research Council, and the American Center for Law & Justice, all of which have actively promoted anti-homosexual legislation in multiple countries. To grasp the full implication of US evangelical influence, a 2014 survey quoted in Foreign Policy in Focus found that Pat Roberston's Christian Broadcasting Network was watched by 74 million Nigerians, nearly half the population and 90% of Christians![15]

The surveillance of intimacy between consenting adults by legislation is not limited to queers. Prior to the passing of the AHB in February 2014, the Ugandan parliament passed the Anti-Pornography Act (APA),[16] and Nigeria, Malawi, and Uganda have attempted at different times to regulate women's bodies though dress codes. And as Keguro Macharia points out, the regulation of women's clothing and bodies has historical precedent in both African nationalist movements and colonial dictates.

Colonial archives depict threatened male ethno-national leaders who

wanted to impede women's mobility and dictate their clothing options—what to wear and when. Simultaneously, colonial leaders and missionaries similarly wanted to direct women's lives. Combing through the archives, one finds patriarchal collusion between ethno-national leaders and colonial administrators, both of whom focused on controlling how and when women occupied and traveled through space.[17]

Whilst women's bodies are policed, violence against women remains both implicitly and explicitly sanctioned. Failure to prosecute rape or to recognize marital rape and continuing to blame rape victims for their rape are just a few examples. Happy Mwende illustrates how the APA, like the other bills, extends its reach to explicitly allow for the surveillance and punishment of service providers such as ISPs and other media establishments.

> Other aspects of the Act that are particularly heinous are the provisions that require Ugandan ISP providers to enforce the recommendations of the Committee to ensure the suppression of pornography. In the event that the ISP provider fails to control and suppress the passage of pornography through their services, they could face the suspension of their business. Furthermore, through this Act, there shall also, be the creation and maintenance of a Register of Pornography Offenders.[18]

It is no coincidence that the passing of the Anti-Pornography Act and the two Anti-Homosexuality Bills were weeks apart. Misogyny and homophobia/heteronationalism sit well together in the everyday policing and imagining of queer and women's bodies.[19] The imaginings are deep and are reflected in the scale of definition which is so broad they reach absurdity. Referring to the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, Macharia writes:

> To use an absurd example: my touching a friend's sex toy—be it a cock ring or a dildo—might, in a very strict reading of this definition, be considered a 'sex act.' One notes the proliferation of 'any' and the strategic use of 'anything,' which has the overall effect of giving the state and its agents control over the meanings of 'sexual act,' 'sexual organ,' and 'touching.'
>   This absolute—if absurd—control over meaning is central to how the state imagines homosexuality. [20]

A third explanation provides additional context for an inclusionary state of being, specifically in relation to the US and UK. In Nigeria and Uganda and other countries in the global south, one of the mechanisms of managing citizenship is through the regulation and surveillance of sexual intimacy and gender identity. These mechanisms are replicated in different ways in the global north, for example through the regulation

of border control and national security. Citizenship is usually discussed in terms of inclusion and a politics of individual and collective rights. However, the reality is that citizenship is based on a set of mores and rules created by the state that can be described as technologies of control. Sometimes these may be negotiated but more often than not they are conditional. Even where citizenship, and specifically sexual citizenship, is negotiated and granted in the most explicit inclusionary terms, as for example in the constitution of South Africa, the reality is that the parameters are limited and the cost, a 'dangerous visibility.'[21] In 'Murderous Inclusions' (Haritaworn, et al.) argue that the cost of inclusion is it works 'hand in hand with violent regimes of coloniality, racism, 'wars on terror,' criminalization, border enforcement and neoliberalism.'[22]

In the UK, citizenship is denied through racialized immigration and national security policies.[23] The UK 2014 Immigration Bill allows the government to revoke UK citizenship even where this may result in an individual becoming stateless, for example, where the person does not have dual citizenship.[24]

This raises the question as to how different this form of denial of citizenship is to the ones taking place in Nigeria, Uganda, and other countries in Africa, where queer people are policed and criminalized. In both situations people become non-persons, with no rights and very often, no possible recourse. The same can be said of the US immigration laws which are also racialized, gendered and queered. Black bodies, bodies of color and queer bodies are denied citizenship through a discriminatory prison industrial complex or imprisonment in Guantanamo or being placed on the 'no fly list.' No one is ever formally told they are on a no-fly list, so there is no way to challenge this or get removed as we are not allowed to even speak of it.[25]

The denial and deprivation of citizenship in whatever form or country is underpinned by invasive technologies of surveillance,[26] and wrapped up in notions of nationalism, homeland security, family values and public good—we are keeping you (the honest upright normative heterosexual) safe from Muslims, queers, the homeless, and the poor. The story we are sold by governments and other institutions of the state, is one which tells us citizenship is based on 'community cohesion, political participation, social responsibility, rights and pride in national belongings.'[27]

In 'Violence, Power and Citizenship' Egbert Alejandro Martina, writing in the context of the colonial racialized subject, argues that the non-normative body (the queer and/or black body), a figure of 'excesses and extremes,' emerges as a site of abandonment, always viewed as 'suspect, transgressing against the norm, the law, life itself.'[28] Not only

are they unworthy of citizenship, they are a constant threat of terror and therefore in need of constant surveillance.

One of the measures of citizenship is the institution of marriage which has been used to distinguish between 'legal and criminalized sexual expression.' Jessica Scott argues that the move towards 'the regime of same-sex marriage is itself a "murderous inclusion."'[29] The incorporation of LGBTI rights into South Africa's post-Apartheid Constitution, including legalized same sex marriage, is presented to the world as radical and progressive. However, when we shift the focus from the promise of inclusion in citizenship, through marriage for example, to the reality of everyday Black queer lives, we are presented with layers of 'contradictory and complex' racialized and gendered violence. The disjuncture between constitutional rights and 'terrifying gender-based violence' in South Africa can, as Scott and Matebeni remind us, be understood in the sphere of public opinion which views homosexuality as 'unAfrican' and a 'western import.'[30] But even here this is not clear-cut. For example, in Scott's research she interviews a lesbian-identified woman (Wendy) in Soweto in the presence of her family as well as other non-conforming individuals and notes that they were fully integrated into their community.[31] Nonetheless for Wendy the potential of 'violent homophobic encounters' with 'straight guys' were very real, especially at night, and therefore she needed to be vigilant and aware of her surroundings. So whilst marriage might be seen as a route towards 'respectability' and inclusiveness in the metaphoric light of the day, nights are not so welcoming.

> So, I always make myself, you know what? I must be aware where I am. I don't lose my awareness. No, I don't because I know things are happening in the dark out there. Daylight, no, you are safe. But in the dark, the devil will come out.[32]

Matebeni acknowledges these contradictions when she points out that whilst the South African LGBTI community is part of the progressive movement, there are limits to diversity in the rainbow nation as sexual orientation and gender identity are often challenged.

> Those who transgress the boundaries of diversity often get punished in the most gruesome ways. In particular, the existence of minority groups (including women and female persons) is often under threat. Among South African black lesbian women specifically, one is considered lucky to escape rape, or even murder before their 30th birthday.[33]

One who did not make their 30th birthday was Thapelo Makhutle. It is important to name those who have been murdered, raped, beaten, and so in 'A Dangerous Visibility' (Ekine, 2012) I document the social

and physical death of Thapelo, hoping to bring him back to life. The following is an excerpt from A Dangerous Visibility.

> Thapelo was murdered in the early hours of the 9th June in the town of Kuruma in the Northern Cape Province. His was the second homophobic hate crime in South Africa in just one week—Neil Daniels, 36,[34] was found burned and mutilated on Monday 4th June 2012, in Milnerton in the Western Cape. Nor was Thapelo's murder the first in the Kuruman area. By the 9th July 2012, the total number of murders in that four week period would reach 6 with possibly another 4 suspected—hate crimes
>
> Phumeza Nkolonzi,—Sasha Lee Gordon, —Sana Supa,—Hendrieeta Thapelo Morifi,—Neil Daniels,—Thapelo Makhutle.[35] Less than a year before Phumeza Nkolonzi had attended the funeral of another murdered lesbian sister, Nontsikelelo Tyatyeka whose decomposed body was found in a rubbish bin near her home in Nyanga. As in many murder cases, the murderer was known to the victim and the community. Many of the victims' bodies are mutilated, significantly, their genitals were either cut off or burnt; others were shot in their homes or as in the case of Sizakele Sigasa and Salome Masooa in July 2007, tied up, raped and left for dead.[36]

Thapelo was found by a friend in the room he rented at Seodin, lying on the floor under a blanket with his throat slit and his genitals removed. It was at the mortuary they found his tongue cut out and his testicles stuffed into his mouth. Commenting on her experience of visiting the crime scene, South African visual activist Zanele Muholi wrote:

> Speaking as a human being now before anything else, the perpetrators and victims are born by mothers and fathers and I think the issue of hate crimes now needs parental intervention. Speaking for myself as I don't want to speak for others—these hate crimes are beyond the powers of the LGBTI communities[37]

There are historical connections which can be made between times and spaces of celebration and remembrance and times of hurt. The 16 June is a time claimed by South Africans as a time to remember the struggles of Apartheid and specifically the Soweto Uprising of 1976. What does it mean that these deaths and funerals take place at a time when an independent and free South Africa is supposed to be remembering past struggles for freedom?

Muholi continues:

> If I had stayed in Cape Town I would have wasted my time to celebrate this June 16. The saddest thing is that during this week, we find ourselves standing at the cemetery bearing the coffin of a young gay man of 24

years old due to a hate crime. In April 2011, Noxolo Nogwaza from KwaThema, Springs was brutally killed in Tsakane. She left behind two young children. A year later, her killers are still at large. Eudy was also killed in April 2008, the anniversary month of the first free post Apartheid elections. I try to juxtapose these two deaths and when they happened. Is this how we are supposed to remember these special or supposedly special days?[38]

Busi Sigasa, who survived a rape which left her HIV-Positive, was buried during Human Rights month, March 2007, after falling into a diabetic coma whilst trying to hold down a job in the city, travelling two hours a day, back and forth to her home in Soweto. So these young people who are barely in their thirties are being killed and the question is who will be the next and will it happen before the mothers and the fathers of the perpetrators speak? And when we speak of mothers and fathers we are not only talking about parents. We are talking of a community that has given birth to all and is therefore responsible to all.

Thapelo, like Wendy, was out and visible. His family were supportive, no one hidden during the funeral which was packed with family and friends including LGBTI people. No one had to run away or be in fear. In this moment, grief enabled a space that was safe and free. But for Thapelo and others who have been murdered and or raped and those who live under the constant threat of becoming victims, safety is unpredictable, citizenship is never guaranteed and always subject to race, gender, and class and hetero/homonormative performance. Theirs is a murderous inclusion.

In the above narrative, Muholi describes the violence against lesbian and trans people as 'hate crimes.' At other times, the rape of lesbians and trans people has been described by some, including Muholi, as 'curative' or 'corrective' rape. These terms are in themselves problematic and contribute to the exclusion of Black lesbians living in townships. Matebeni is critical of these terminologies in that they victimize Black lesbians whilst erasing the fullness of their lives.

> By framing black lesbians as special victims of a form of rape, the language of corrective rape locates black lesbians in the townships of South Africa outside the wider gender, class, sexuality and racial struggles of social justice in South Africa. The language of rape as curative in this regard, I argue, does more harm than good to black lesbian groups. Marking certain groups as victims of a special kind of crime can make them vulnerable to unintended further victimization. Knowing that a victim has experienced curative rape immediately identifies her as lesbian, a category many (including certain institutions) still treat with disdain. In this sense, this language and terminology can unintentionally work

against what it set out to do… There is nothing corrective or curative about rape.[39]

Despite the challenges and exclusion from full citizenship as described earlier, African queers have been at the forefront of challenging local patriarchies, opening and broadening discussions on what it means to be 'African' (a citizen of Africa)—our cultures, belief systems, our sexualities and genders, all those beings that make up The Africas. One example cited by Matebeni is a response by Phumi Mtetwa to the term 'corrective rape.' She suggests alternative ways the term 'corrective' could be used so as to empower rather than victimize Black lesbians. Mtetwa's analysis is important not just because it broadens the discussion on sexual violence and black queer lives but because it dares to imagine a different way of countering the emphasis on the performance of violence by focusing on the structural aspects of violence:

> Mtetwa inverts the term correct by redirecting it away from lesbians (or rather in relation to rapes committed on lesbian bodies) and to homophobes. Her piece 'Correct the homophobes' leaves the term 'correct' permanently in inverted commas throughout to show her own ambivalence to it. She does not shy away from problematising the term in this piece and further challenges those who are against homosexuals, and those who are yet to join the struggles of all the members of our society, to be correct. She argues that they must 'correct' their ways by directing our society towards social transformation and justice and not towards damaging individual lives.'[40]

African feminists and queers have called for a collaborative strategy with an emphasis on joint commitment in addressing anti-homosexuality legislation across the continent and placing it in the broader global context of sexual citizenship and development politics.[41] Nonetheless, this has largely been ignored by the US and Europe. For example, LGBTI activists have spoken repeatedly against the use of 'Aid Conditionality,' expressing both concern about the effectiveness of aid in general and as a response to the persecution of LGBTI people in particular. In her essay 'Aid, resistance and Queer Power' Hakima Abbas articulates the feeling of many African social justice activists when she argues:

> Aid, as it is currently constructed between the West and Africa, is therefore not sufficient to redress the conditions that maintain the levels of poverty in Africa despite the continent being one of the richest in raw materials. Rather the aid and debt crisis is a reflection of the historical and present relationship that Africa and the rest of the world maintain. In short, it is about power—a relationship based largely on dependence

and exploitation.

So if aid is not in the interests of African peoples, why would aid conditionality be a tool for African social justice? The language of human rights has been lauded by liberal western democrats who assume that they must coerce Africa into understanding notions of equality and justice without acknowledging the devastating effects of globalized neo-liberal economic policies and the limitations of elective democracy as practiced by two party states with only one acceptable ideology.[42]

Our position as transformational actors leads to a number of questions about how change happens and who can make those changes: What does it mean when queerness is appropriated and becomes part of capitalist hegemony? What does that mean for anti-capitalist critique, what does mean for critiques of patriarchy? What does it mean for a transformational political movement? Another question we have asked ourselves as African queer and trans folks is: Do I matter, does my life matter when every single day and in many ways we are told we are irrelevant, useless, and dangerous, when our inclusion becomes a murderous one?

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— 2 —

A Post-colonial Perspective / Neocolo Chop Chop / Speak Out! / The Rabid Virus / The Oh My God Farce! / As If I needed a Reason / Nollywood What?

Mia Nikasimo

1. A Post-colonial Perspective

Neo-colonialism is everywhere one turns so much so abstractions in themselves can be frustrating. However for this new project I will make an attempt to offer one from a post-colonial perspective. In an age of high consumerism, despite the worst of the credit crunch, the LGBTIQ academic world is attempting to dig deeper and scrutinise previously held so-called concrete truths. Unavoidable questions have arisen.

What is transgender? Why is gender identity so cosily ensconced in sexual orientation by the traditional LGB community? Is it possible to work together in an environment so divided? What significant role can African diaspora members of the LGBTIQ play in the resistance movement towards realising a level playing field between the old guard and contemporary landscape of sex sexuality and gender identities?

To answer some of these questions I have written an essay and five poems for this project. The poems are as follows: 'As If I Needed A Reason,' 'The Oh My God Farce,' 'Neo-colonial Chop, Chop!' 'The Rabid Virus,' and 'Nollywood What?' respective. All touch on the issues posed by neo-colonialism from a post-colonial perspective.

While preparing this abstract the Internet has been explored to get a sense of current trends of transgender queer resistance which posed questions such as, 'What is a real man?' 'What is a real woman?' 'What does queer look like?' 'What does TGQ look like?' while bearing in mind that at times the answers to these questions is not simply achieved by preconceived responses to them.

From a post-colonial perspective diversity of responses is more likely than not. An essay or a review? Perhaps a reading of all the poems followed by a period for Q & A may lend itself to this project?

2. *Neocolo Chop Chop*

As A look u so u be gay
Dis na my chance to chop &
Chop & chop sotay dem no
Go say A no work, A no put
Food for table, A no put roof
Over ma family head, dem.
U see say a be gay wetin be
Conductor's palava for driver?

As A look u so u lesbian
Goodoulucku don give us the
Starting point the rest dey una
Hands if u see dem make
U show dem say kaki no be
Leather; leather self no be
Kaki, no be so? Na so oh…
A be lesbian wetin na kaki
Palava for latest leather?

As A see u so u be bi
Na so na. Wetin do dem dey
Hala dem gay dem lezzy dem?
Na waa oh. Make we do some
Ting now. Sabi u dey play
Me a dey play u? Ern now.
Wetin be una lezzy gay? Na waa.
Na so oh. Na bi a be a no be
Bai, bai. "Ewo n'ti 'e l'oro mi"?

As A see u so u be "Aparinda" (?)
Wait ma a laugh first… sey una
Na man or woman or na hala
Be dis oh make una com see
Pancake for face nna una eye-
Liner take u na bag Miss World
Na only u dey? A beg, a beg
U see say a be trans who you dey
Call "aparinda (sex change)"?
Na wetin be colomental palava for ma tori?

As A see u so u be intersex
Water do pass gaari for dis obon
Oyinbo. No bi Naija we dey?
Wetin u say u be both, oloun
Walai Chineke gaari don pass water
Mae a go come a go show una pepper
Way u dey go wait na. u dey fear?
Me a no dey oh a no sabi five prison
Chineke poku! A be intersex, so?
A send u? Make u na cool temper.

As u dey so u be queer
See me see trouble oh una too get
Mouth. If no be dis na dat how
Person go sabi pikin for dis colo?
See me see trouble wetin god do una?
E put u for dis una life no bi so?
Ah beg oh ah no fi shout. Giv me chop
U know say a dey queer wetin na
Una own for anyting goes; amebo?

Wetin dey chop u na for ma palava?
Ah no say ah be a minority of one
Tell me how dat wan take kill u?
Na so so "a see say, a see say" u dey
Peddle; wetin dey bite u for body?
Wake up chop, wake up chop, wake up
Wetin tell u say sacrifice wey u na
Cook no go nuke u sooner or later?
A beg bo lef tori wey no be una palava.

3. Speak Out!

The very abberration of not doing this deed
Constantly cornered in frost straits of disorder
No one gave permission 'cept to impose on...

I am trans I said fed up of being set up man
I am trans I said fed up of being set up woman
I am trans I said fed up of why neuter is left out

Speaking out is all I have left in this distopia
Of disfunctional us-landers vs them-nolanders
From Mushin-oloosha to Peckham and back

Gender identity? Nigerians don't give a fuck!
None disclosure is all the token dared asked for
If you speak out 'back home' you are dead!

So what would you rather I did? Do the closet?
Submit to wanton objectification like a mat?
Bow apologetic in the face of rabid rejection?

Stab all trans like me in the back to save you?
Kowtow so as not to offend you fired by you?
Kiss arse to stay in your good books unaided?

Pull the other one, pull the other one; fuck!
Heard, "fool me once negates it twice"?
I'm not an agent in how you socialise yourself.

I will not driver myself insane for your sanity
I am trans and I will speak out at freak labels
Shush! Unapologetically, I will not. I'm trans!

4. The Rabid Virus

1 It is a global epidemic
   Somehow causing fitful laughter
   Mainly causing fearful slaughter
   In the selfsame flock
   Fearful but if you said as
   Much it's enough excuse
   They set children they've
   "Dog train," kids on you.
   Those without children
   Will just infect their dogs
   "Definitely!" assurance of
   Fear. Gender role is the
   Unnamed virus human's
   Live with daily viral form
   They call it, "the order of
   Things!" It reeks dosorder.

Rumi calls it, "consumptive"
'Akiarapa calls it, "ailment"
Buddha calls it, "suffering,"
Ignatius calls it, "in-breeding"
Descart call it, "chains,"
Fearfully a friend asked
"Why is everyone giving
you dirty looks?"
They are fearful of the uncertainties
My existence provokes in them…
Enough said only humans
Can live in occupation so &
Say, "that's why we are here!"
& rabidly believe it…

2   Away and home team up
Always at each others throats
Only setting time out for
The outsider they see in me
The virus that holds them together
Irritates others like me robbing us
Of breathing space. Questioning
Our right to basic human rights,
Questioning our rights to use designated loos
Question our right to our own voices
And then turning it into an imaginary
Cow prod to keep us in line
"You need to bleach wash your brain
Out!" they'd say calling other on board.
Or the rabid virus would say at
Our expense. Hell, some of us out
Of fear out of a craving for acceptance
Out of desire for approval.
"How do they do it? How do they?"
They thunder the rabid virus does
The neocolonial craze is in the air
Neocolonialist come in all colours
No use pointing out colonialist alone
We all take part in the demise
Of soul of spirit of our role in to true self

3   If in doubt listen again when out and about
If in doubt listen to your heartfelt pelt

We, some of us, call ourselves women
We, some of us, call ourselves men
But do not forget some call ourselve trans
Some intersex some queer some neuter
But wherever the leaf drops
The cancer is the same.
Bornstein calls it, "the either/or" system
Agbaje calls it, "Okunrin n'bobirin"
Raymond calls it, "the transsexual empire"
In an attempt to apportion blame
The band wagon followed her lead
Inagije called it, "eat make a eat jo!"
Diaspora (African) call it, "white supremacy"
And still dem go bone when a say
A no be dis a no be dat a don tell una
A no be bai, bai not to be mistaken for bi
"Are you trying to be a pariah?"
A guy asked me once when I answered
NO! I'm a woman only loving neuter
He barred me from existence if he could.
Cousin Warrior took one look and asked
The ground under his feet to swallow him whole.
Later cousin Warrior told aunt Mope
"He said he is no longer Home"
"How dare he?" she responded blaming
Her near rape by my father on me
It happened even before I was born
"Inkan se!" she said thinking "like father like son".

4   Efen multicultural nonentities go put mouth
Dem go say, "na paranoia dey kill am"
Dem no fit speak the truth wey dey
Kill dem small, small for body
Dem no sabi say na di epidemik wey dey dem
Heart. Dem no sabi say because of di
Paranoia wey dey dem heart dey so so
Wey dem for heart
Dem know sey somtin dey
Wey dem sef dey call dem rabid virus dem
We dey chop dem since so na ma
Palava dem com put for head…
What is it about gender role?
How dare you say you are a woman?

How dare you say you are a man?
What was that? Trans?
How dare you say you are
Trans, intersex or Queer?
Chides the mob of sufferers
Upgrader to gender role police
It is unnatural it is unAfrican.
No it isn't.
Gender role is unafrican it enslaves
Women gender role is unnatural it
Makes monsters of men
Gender role is the rabid virus
It makes cowards of us all
Before you become slaves to disorder
Question what evils you sow.
The rabid virus is gender role.

5   It is a global epidemic gender role
Check it out causing fitful laughter
In some causing fearful slaughter mainly
In the selfsame flock so
Fearful but if you said as
Much it's enough excuse for them
To set their children they've
"Dog trained" kids on you.
Those without children
Will just infect their dogs somehow
"Definitely!" assurance of
Fear. Gender role is the
Unnamed virus human's
Live with daily viral form
They call it, "the order of
Things!" It reeks disorder.
Rumi calls it, "consumptive"
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you dirty looks?"
They are fearful of the uncertanties
My existence provokes in them…

Enough said only humans
Can live in occupation so &
Say, "that's why we are here!"
& rabidly believe it…

5. The Oh My God Farce!

1   The house in the middle of our street is open again…
    Why are the windows so wide open? Been round back?
    Why? What's happened round back? Tell what, Gems?
    We were hanging out on our veranda trying to see trying
    What were you trying to see? Happened round back?
    What? What happened? Laughter, suspense, alright!
    One moment nobody would move in; the next. No blinds.
    Just like that. We met eye to eye. Three of us and it…
    We don't know what, did we, Guys? A glimpse was all.
    That was the last "insight"
    we got. What's happening?
    Does anyone know who moved in? Who lives below?
    This is killing me. Fuck that. Who moved in that house
    That's not the question to ask. How long do they have?
    What? Why? Do you know something? What, why? How?
    Stop fucking about! If you know something, share with us
    You know us. We've lived here longest? How long? Share.
    I know the guy in the flat below, init? He told me five.
    Five raving loonies: one's a lesbian, one's a gay, one bi, on
    Go on, go on go on. Two are trans and ones intersex see.
    When we went back there to get a closer look; it was blocked off!
    The windows round back were blocked up. Doubled up on
    Doubled up on net curtains, cutting our view off; hiding?
    What? Hiding? What goes on in there? You or you, whom?
    I'm the originator of our inquiries so it'll have to be yous!
    Oh my hog oh my God oh my gawd oh my, oh my GOD
    Decide? Who's going in there? Who among you lot, whom?

2   The house in the middle of our street is open again…
    Oh my Dog oh my hog oh my God our neighbourhood
    Our neighbourhood is going to the dogs under our noses
    My friend in the flat below knows one of them. Does he?
    Does he? What? What are you waiting for? A name praise
    All your own? Tailor made just for your whimsical mien?
    Out with it or you are on your own, traitor! Out with it.

Oh my oh my God; oh my oh my God who let the freaks in?
Apparently lives in there Ambiguity too and a Lovable one
Gays are like that; lovable darlings and this one could pass
Could pass for a woman? That's alright isn't it? Stay away
From my hubby is all. I'll kill you with my own hands if you
(Action: a sigh) just stay away from him and we'd get on fine.
He already looks at you with a smile I saw ages back before
I slapped him for looking at you like that. He stop giving.
Oh well you can't live with them you can't dream without
Just stay away from Jim mincing and brow flirting. I know
But that's in the past now. I'll even forget what I heard.
What? What did you hear? We were only playing; honest?
As long as it doesn't happen, again! What's with the woman?
She's so buff and all? Why she don't speak to no one why?
It's only I'm happily married but one look at her and I…
My legs, they buckled right from underneath me, didn't they?
He's a man that thinks he's a woman or something I heard
Oh my hog oh my God oh my gawd oh my, oh my GOD
Decide? Who's going in there? Who among you lot, whom?

3 The house in the middle of our street is open again…
Oh my God oh my flipping Gawd did you just say? What?
Never mind, whatever I fancy her. Can you? Say somink?
Tell me you are joking. It's a transwoman. I've seen better!
Not like her heft? Just taking about her made me wet
What if your hubby finds out? I'll deny it. Don't go there
Oh my oh my Gawd. See you later babes. Got to, got to go.
Oh my gosh. Away she goes like a bitch on heat. Gosh!
If only she knows its already shacked up with Mumsy.
Diva of Divas. "I don't know what she sees in him myself"
I didn't even get a chance. "I swear we saw him that day"
I'm going to have that woman, she; out of no where; I???
It's like she's stolen the words off my tongue she was fast
Mama de mama, Mumsy or for the wet behind the ear
Mummy mummy mummy and o so camp about it & I
I thought I was camp I thought until I met her, him the
Queen mumsy's
best friend. And what a gorgeous arse
I beg your pardons I meant fit. He's the fittest queen ever
Any who any who any who get this right he does do trannies!
Either… Oh my, oh my fucking, sexy Gawd oh my oh my…
I've got to too. Wait until I tell Miss Hermaphrodititis just
Just then the intersex, Pammy in her full glory in train.

No no no I'm not bisexual oh hell no I'm a boy I'm a girl
Both married in a unity of one me. Eat your heart out.
Oh my hog oh my God oh my gawd oh my, oh my GOD
Decide? Who's going in there? Who among you lot, whom?

4   The house in the middle of out street is open again…
    Pete here's my chief of security and Dean and Jerry Divas
    Mincing, mincing, mincing see how they go femme trans
    Foot soldiers with 9 dan black belts a piece so watch it.
    My train of butch and femme ladies, gentlemen; hands off!
    Let the party take control. Keep those arses humping o
    O is that the time? Snap, snap! Cars. Three black benzs &
    Away away away they went leaving questions in trail
    Oh my oh my oh my gawd oh my gawd oh my gawd oh my
    Fuck your arse fuck your pussy imagine that in public?
    That's typical Mumsy. I go to work alway and you cosh in.
    Just sitting there couch potato with a notebook & a pen
    Get off your arse, get off your arse, get a fucking job, contribute!
    You are a disgrace. Where do you come from where? :)
    I'm not prepared to cater for you & the many mouths back home
    The many mouths back home in Africa. I can't do it I can't
    Oh my oh my God oh my oh my gawd oh my oh my gawd.
    At the end of her tether the transwoman says her Om mani
    Padme hom Om mani padme hum Om mani padme hum
    What are you saying? What are you saying? No repeat it…
    Nothing? You always saying nothing nothing nothing here's
    Something for your jobless arse, get a job or something? Fee!
    My fee for putting up with you transwhatever
    you are?
    Get over yourself you fucking ignorant bitch, arrogant bitch!
    Oh my hog oh my God oh my gawd oh my, oh my GOD
    Decide? Who's going in there? Who among you lot, whom?

5   The house in the middle of our street is open again…
    I live in that house. What is it to you? You are the bi one
    I live in that house. What is my sexuality to you, nosy?
    The house in the middle of the street always takes freaks
    The house in the middle of the street, the house, our house
    The house in the middle of the street where all evils abide
    Oh my, oh my God oh my, oh my God oh by Gawd, oh my?
    Report, report, report! Oh my god, oh my God I wont rest
    I won't rest until the entire world knows he's not a woman
    I won't, I won't, I can't if I tried my religion won't let me!

Oh my God oh my god oh my God and the farce went on
The farce went on. Every ones' happy doing God's work
Judging judging judging sitting in judgement over each other
Claiming authority in the authority of doing God's bidding
Praying selfrighteously,
God heavenly so and so I'm doing
Your bidding father save your own save your own I'm doing
I'M DOING YOUR BIDDING FATHER I'M DOING YUR
The house in the middle of our street is open again…
I live in that house. What is it to you that we are creating space
For queers of all convictions, and GQ, what is it to you, nosy?
The house in the middle of the street always takes freaks
The house in the middle of the street the house the house
The house in the middle of the street where all evils abide
Oh my, oh my God oh my, oh my God oh by Gawd, oh my?
Oh my hog oh my God oh my gawd oh my, oh my GOD
Decide? Who's going in there? Who among you lot, whom?

6. *As If I Needed a Reason*

Transgender black, lesbian, transgender and with a troublesome, gender expression to boot! As if anyone needed to give a reason for being to anyone but themselves. If nobody else did, why ask it of me to do so? I don't know what it is but I have been put upon more times than I care to revisit here. However I will share a few incidents.

I'm not sure why gay men constantly hit on me but if straight men are anything to go by I'd say it must be down to their errant concealed pythons and the thinking stops there. For the gay men apart from friendship I said, "stop!" For straight men, short of outing myself with regard sexual orientation every single day I am faced with their propositioning eyes, I might be risking more than I bargained on.

I've found recently that some of the women involved in my case were either confused, possessive, self-centered like my ex or outrightly tactile as I found at KU bar a couple of weeks ago. I was partying hard when I felt a wondering hand on my pudendum. I knew it wasn't mistaken but since the woman apologised I thought nothing of it. I carried on dancing. She came round again only this time pushing me and spiriting herself away before I could even draw breathe. Initially, getting my first proper look at her, she seemed like she was whipping up support to have me thrown out of the club. I could have been the transwoman in 'better than chocolate' the way she behaved towards me. This was the second acquaintance who tried to get me thrown out of a

club with that film in mind. The third encounter between me and Ms. Separatism happened in the ladies' toilet. She didn't even say anything short of whispering to a woman who stood there watching when out of nowhere she lunged at me reaching for my breasts. It was the same woman, beautiful except when she was angry as she was now. I thought.

'Get your hands off, now!' I said markedly. 'Look, they don't come off and you're hurting me, GET OFF!'

When she didn't I grabbed hold of her in the same manner.

"Yours are not real!" she yelled trying to scare me into silence.

"They are as real as any I've touched; even yours!" I said as she let go of me and fumed off out of the place.

The sole watcher there with us came towards me.

'You can touch mine any day,' she said gesturing towards my breasts. 'May I?' I nodded yes without thinking but I didn't have to worry. She touched me softly, caressingly dropping one hand, "there!" I felt I'd died and gone to heaven. We swapped numbers.

Waiting for a Bus 53 on my way home all those years ago. I felt exposed to the elements when I was groped by a man. Immediately, proud of what he planned to do he walked noncommittally towards me. As he approached something took me back to waiting, watching, wondering when my bus would arrive. It was running late already. My eyes told me, 'you are being watched!' Anyone could have been watching me. Being objectified in that way was getting on my nerves. 'You are being watched?' came the voice again. If I had to turn round that very action would have warned any voyeurs off. I did not ask for it but it happened anyway. I had been groped. It took a split second. Although I almost missed the act, it happened. Before it did I had just spotted another man staring at me. No warning. No reaction. No inkling except for that suspect look on his face. Just there listless somewhat resigned to the sort of person he went out with. Groper and watcher walked away while for the longest time I remained frozen in shock.

If the multicultural passengers waiting for a bus saw what happened they put up a damn good performance suggesting otherwise. Had I said, 'get your hands off me!' Yes, or at least I thought I had. If I had wouldn't he have said something? Perhaps a fight would have broken out or something? I forgot the touch though just feeling a sort of absence, a sort of loss. The first thing was my boundary. Someone, through excessive closeness, had breached my boundary, my sense of my own body, of my, 'self.' Eventually it came back to me, 'get your hand off my body,' at the time there was no penis or vagina except for an enduring response to touch and the raw material somewhere where the light of day never shined.

That was my first physical experience or a transphobic hate crime. It was so silent you would have heard a pin make contact with the floor. However, it wasn't the last. The point is, why do I have to explain myself away in front of my abusers every time? Why should I have to explain my very existence? A question I still ask myself on a basis.

Things rarely stopped there. And then there was all the audial gropers. Perhaps, as long as you are not expecting me to explain the cause of transgenderism? That mystery is embedded so deep inside me that it will be life threatening for me to explain. That didn't stop Lafenwa asking his partner to go ask me. Apparently, because he had a friend who transitioned years ago back home, he thought that gave him a sense of entitlement.

'Does it pain?' he asked with the undisguised revulsion mixed with an unhealthy dose of curiosity.

'Did it?'

I took a gulp rather than the sip I had intended and felt a surge of unexpected confidence.

'Did what hurt?' I said leaving him to squirm.

'You know, when they cut it off?' he offered still looking out of sorts.

'It's irresponsible of Steve to tell you my business in the first place,' I said. 'Allow me to apologise. Sorry, it's only, that I asked him about you and he told me to ask you.' Not that his excuse made any difference but I told him what happens. 'The surgeon doesn't slice the penile tissue and use it for dog food. Rather he or she (the surgeon) takes a bit of the penile crown for the construction of a clitoris, the shaft skin is inverted for the vagina lining and …'

Steve's partner looked wasted from the impact of the information I'd given him. 'My, friend, said, "it hurt!"' he said looking as if his face had been used for a punching bag.

'Funny that, isn't it? Of course any operative procedure would hurt but the pain is bearable with pain killers and a bonus, they heal. Honestly, you get drugged to the eyeballs so much so if you I like me, I begged to come off it. If I were like you that would have been life threatening but I'm not. For me, it felt like a huge release.' I was about to continue but he rushed off. Something told me that was the last time he would ask anyone about sex reassignment surgery.

Just short of the week in which Stephen Lawrence's racist murderers were brought to book, it is strange that these days, in terms of gender identity or sexuality the new aggressors, bullies, or 'shank bearers' are multicultural this time around. What happened if a black transwoman was being abused, harassed, beaten up or worse, murdered because of her gender identity?

At times white and black at others, black or just white or even yellow

as happened on a few occasions. The police's attitude was nothing to write home about. Men, especially the ones who fancied me turned nasty when they heard the ongoing gossip. Immediately they took a position. One day while reading in my sitting room, I heard a familiar voice shouting: 'I'm not gay, I'm not gay, honest I'm not!' The voice sounded like my immediate neighbour's who gave me his phone number asking me out to a new wine bar he knew. I couldn't help laughing at the humour of it.

'Yes, I am all those things: black, lesbian, trans queer, "with a troublesome gender expression",' your words.

7. Nollywood What?

These are the stagnant waters of our times
Big names propagated away for our minds
Women rule the world men disrupted it
After, "men in love" the gay theme dried.
Men rule world women helped
Was swept under the carpets of laughter...
Claims accused of lesbian capones fright
Sooner or later latterdayers ran the shows.
What's his name again? This isn't about names.
Interesting isn't? Go see Nollywood films if you no gree

Homosexual are assumed dirty, unnatural
Heterosexuals mix sexualities for fun to
Ward off boredom hiding quiltbag pleasures.
You no hear... big men after young girls?
You no hear... de mamas after young guys?
They call it, "enjoying fresh life," na so dem dey.
Don't get me started on how they treat trans affection?
When they hear this another clarrion call goes
Out: come see oh, come see oh dis man na woman oh
Na woman; dat woman na man wetin dem go say next?

This dem want dat dem want till dem pafuka de
Country then they say the quiltbags are unnatural.
Which one dem dey call, "quiltbags" oh?
Jandon naija or americana na dem know stuff.
We dem dey call, "quiltbags" no be beddings?
Try it this way: "QUILT BAGS" abbreviates us:
Queer, queersome, queerings, we are all queer

Unquestioning, undecided, unacknowledged
Lesbian, women in love with women lesbians
Trans, transexual, transgender transgender...

Bisexual, bigender, bi affection by preference
Asexual, agender, by choice and that's fine too
Gay men, gay women, gay queer everbody
Sex sexual sobriety subtle sensual all senses.
Do these answer your questions? Nollywood
Can't until it realises sex gender & sexualities
Are what make the species diversely rich...
Until we are able to address issues clearly
Until we each experience life truthfully...
What is Nollywood? Movies or madness???

— 3 —

Recounting and Reflecting on Resistance: The Dilemma of the Diaspora to Define

Raju Rage

In July 2014 I participated in an exhibition in Berlin (Germany) entitled 'What Is Queer Today Is Not Tomorrow' where I presented my work 'The Dilemma of the Diaspora to Define.' The pieces within the work consisted of an assemblage of 'culturally coded objects' which had been manipulated in order to interrupt, disturb and confuse. This was my attempt to deconstruct a complex yet essentialised 'identity,' as a South Asian transgender-queer person. I particularly wanted to explore the conflict and tension produced in this form of resistance. I communicated this concept through sculpture, sound narratives, and embodiment, using my racialised and gendered body, with a 'performative installation' (and later de-installation) of the work.

One main thread that was being woven in my work was: what is the desire to know and what can we know? The publicity for the event on 24 July at 20.00 stated:

> Placed in a world caught in endless transition between absence and presence, in/visibility and the dilemma of defining, join 'monster terrorist fag' on a diasporic voyage towards the fragile contested borders of the u/nknown for a performative installation-assemblage cohered through sensation, vibration, echoes, soundscapes, feedback loops, time travel and recursive folds.[1]

A main feature, that I later realised was popular with the many spectators I shared that gallery space with, was the persona I created as a vehicle to embody all the disparate elements of my personal constructed identity. This persona was 'Monster Terrorist Fag' who had *their* face painted monster green and metaphorically 'tore up the place' that night. Intimidating instead of entertaining and maybe even

considered threatening by some, for various intended and unintended reasons.

'Monster Terrorist Fag' was a concept inspired by Jasbir K Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages* chapter 'The Sexuality of Terrorism,' which I originally saw in Sikh Formations (Vol 4/1 [1998], 52).[2] I would like to recount the journey that I took which ended up in a cathartic critical-creative 'explosion' on the night of 24 July 2014 (and later also at the de-installation on 10 Aug).

I had been reading 'about myself' in theory books, from the 'Queer turbaned Sikh as improbable if not impossible subjects' of Spivak, to the 'dangerous bodies' of Sara Ahmed, to the 'concept of culture' by Kobena Mercer, and the 'burden of representation' of Stuart Hall.[3] All this whilst simultaneously tracing the historical and geographical migration of my so-called 'ancestors' from Panjab to East Africa to 'Great' Britain.

Deep in the vaults of various colonial archives, I discovered interesting 'facts' about 'my people,' losing myself along the way and picking myself back up from some imagined route travelled. With an additional sore butt from the hard stools in rigid rooms that were the last places I wanted to 'find out' about myself in, but had no other choice due to erasure of my history. My tired 'oriental' eyes tirelessly scrolled along the lines and chapters that blurred into each other.[4] I gazed at selective collected images I could not afford and did not have permission to reprint, attempting to absorb every word and picture in my hopeful photographic memory, zoning out from time to time in desperate deep reflection and in raging rebellion of these concrete colonial walls surrounding and taunting me.

On falling upon Jasbir Puar's text late one evening, just before the library was about to shut, I was suddenly rendered wide eyed … Yes! This made complete slap-bang sense to me! stumbling upon this term 'Monster Terrorist Fag,' which almost literally jumped out at me from the page, from the rest of the texts, the rest of the books and the rest of the words I had been swallowing, yet not digesting, for weeks. I immediately highlighted it with a yellow marker and pondered on its importance. I did not immediately comprehend the full meaning the theorist, Puar, was unfolding and there was not enough time left in this place before being kicked out. However, I knew that this was *my body* she was referring to and that this term was being placed on my body, whether intentionally or not, whether I liked it or not.

> South Asian queer diasporas must contend not only with the stigmatisation of their bodies via these perverse terrorist bodies, but also with the forms of queerness-as-exceptionalism that are

often offered in response to this stigmitisation.[5]

I got this, I totally understood, THIS WAS MY LIVED EXPERIENCE. However, there was clearly more to be said, a part of the story that wasn't being told and must be. I sat in a dusty dull quietened room filled with portraits of long forsaken, yet revered, ancient white men. Those I would never want to meet, desperately wanting to rise up from my seat, run round whilst screaming in a stereotypically 'primitive' loud voice 'bale bale!' like a 'proper Panjabi.' I was confronted by the fact that theory had impacted my body and I COULD NOT sit still. I hurriedly photocopied the pages, scrambling to top up credit on my print card and argue with the attendant for some irrelevant reason besides being brown in a wrong place and at the wrong time (as usual). I scrambled to my locker dodging zombie-intellectuals carrying transparent plastic bags with their entire lives in them, who had recently ravaged some rare books. I raced out of that library, intent on re-reading it on my way home in safer more comfortable surroundings. After a few days of re-reading the text, flipping pages frustrated and manically, while sketching notes frantically, wanting to find more than I could grasp from that unfortunate stale white page, I realised I had to do something more with it.

I began to incorporate this idea, this definition and what it actually meant for me into the creative project I was working on, which was in the process of exploring the conflicts and tensions around the construction of identity as part of the South Asian diaspora. I decided to personify this 'Monster Terrorist Fag,' as a 'being' that could embody my experiences as a Queer Trans South Asian Panjabi Sikh person from the diaspora, a usual contradiction (note Spivak was completely correct, as per usual). It became my way of channeling, interrupting, and manipulating through embodiment. Whilst playing with cultural codes and gazes that define us, or force us to define ourselves, in order to clearly inform those people who have the expected desire to know *who we are*. Essentially I, as M-T-F (Monster Terrorist Fag, not Male to Female, though that is still relevant here as a play on gender) began 'queerying' what this desire to know is and what it is we can know?[6]

So it all began in the library, archives, researching for weeks on end in stuffy surroundings. The next step was the creation which took a couple of intense weeks in the hectic messy screen-printing room, creating a collage portrait image for this Monster Terrorist Fag persona (see figures 1 and 2). Where screen printer assistants did everything but engage with the actual image which turned out to be too provocative to address when helping me with the job. I quite quickly became the screen-print-room-freak. After that I spent a few more weeks creating

Fig. 1: Monster Terrorist Fag (Culturally Coded Collage 2014)

the sculptural culturally coded objects in my tiny home-turned-into-art studio, such as the rubber turban and cloth depicting archival imagery, cloths hanging on every possible makeshift holder I could find. The final step was embodying and exhibiting that process where I could explore the relationship between the objects and my non-conforming body and the space.

The space I am referring to was the nGbK Berlin 'a somewhat grassroots democratically organised art association, founded in 1969 in order to support political and socially involved art' as Luce deLire (comrade and an organiser of Heidy Collective who co-curated 'What Is Queer Today Is Not Queer Tomorrow' exhibition) explained to me.[7]

The evening of the performative installation was incredible. The catharsis of this experience was actualised and superseded the expectation. But it almost broke me. I had been schooled about the preference of artists to remain objective from their work but this had become impossible for me and I was subjectively sucked in with every pore of my being, completely embodied.

What follows is a transcribed extract of that performative installation, which was filmed by Zara Zandieh, an amazing local Berlin artist and queer person of colour (QPOC) comrade.[8] The film is available to watch/screen on my website.[9]

Fig 2: Still from Performative Installation

Performative installation begins:

With a figure wearing a mask of a South Asian woman with eyes cut out, donning a pink and green sari with in/visible motifs and text

on it. They enter a room through the fire escape holding a yoga mat under one arm and some other printed paper bags in both hands. The sari covers their head and their face is partially hidden under the mask, though it is visible to the audience that their face is painted green. A soundscape begins to play with a voice recounting Puar's text:

> All bodies can be thought of contagious or mired in contagions, contagious bodies infecting other bodies with sensation, vibration, irregularity, chaos…they evoke the language of infection and transmission forcing us to ask how does one catch something whose trace is in choate or barely discerned?

The undefined figure who it seems is finding it difficult to move on account of carrying so much, places both bags and the mat down and walks up to the audience and pulls out something from under their sari blouse, unfolds and reads it and then looks up as if reading a noticeboard. They sit down again. The figure begins frantically pulling objects from out of their bag and puts them aside beside them. They look sideways to see if someone is watching and then roll up their sari and begin to tug at something underneath it. The object seems attached to them and will not come out and so they grab scissors from a nearby bag and cut it loose. The object turns out to a book inside an ethnic cloth bag. They begin to read this book and some of the audience is able to glimpse that it is *Terrorist Assemblages* by Jasbir Puar. The figure flips to a marked page in the book (page 46) and reads for a second, then fans themselves with it and bored with it, puts it down again and instead pulls out a newspaper made out of cloth and paper out of one of their many bags. The 'newspaper' contains numerous archival headlines and images that are difficult for the audience to comprehend but the figure seems engrossed by reading and examining them. The soundscape continues and now there is a beat. The figure bored of reading the paper, grabs some headphones and an mp3 player from out of their bag and puts them on. The figure gets up and unrolls and lays the yoga mat down in front of them. They begin to dance on the mat to the sounds coming from the headphones while the audience listen to the soundscape narrative and beats. The figure begins to make 'traditional' provocative dancing gestures and begins to unravel their sari. Uncovered is a bra made out of 'oriental cracker packets and rubber' and a fishnet stocking and salwar underneath that. As the sari unravels, the green underlay is visible and also black and white photographs that lay in between the folds are revealed. The figure pulls them out and discards them on the floor in front of them. They lay the sari on the floor in front of them in a pile and move into the yoga mat and begin to do some suggestive yoga poses though it is not clear if they

are praying or posing. The figure picks up the yoga mat and attaches it to the wall. They dance again in an indistinguishable style and then hang the sari from the yoga mat. They sit down and pull a supermarket can of 'mild beef curry' from one of their bags. They open and begin to eat the brown chunky gloopy liquidy substance. They pull out an item from their bag and place one of the images discarded from the sari into what looks like a passport holder and place it on the plinth they are sitting on. They continue to eat and pull out some chilli powder from their bag and pour chilli powder onto the food, mixing it in and eating it. They continue to add more and more chilli powder and continue to eat the food from the can as if trying to improve the flavour. Then they start to pour the chilli powder onto the floor making what looks like the letters to form words. They pull out another item from the bag and stand up. They begin to unravel it and what looks like very long rubber inner tubes. They pull out a mirror and use the canned food sat on top of *Terrorist Assemblages* as a prop to hold the mirror. They begin to wind the rubber tubes around their head to make a traditional turban. They remove the rubber bra and hang it up on a plinth nearby and begin to dance to the sounds in the headphones, topless revealing their chest, whilst the audience continues to listen to the soundscape...

The performative installation continued and lasted for about an hour with various assemblages of sculptural culturally coded objects occurring throughout. Many parts were repetitive, for example writing text onto the chilli powder: 'terrorist lookalike' which lay in a heap on the floor and was walked and danced upon, the dancing being a continuous feature in the installation. So too are parts of the soundscape like 'are you Asian? … Wow!' as well as other narratives which are audible yet difficult to grasp, including a narrative about my grandmother which was intertwined with one about my grandfather alongside my unfolding experiences of wearing a turban.

The audience who congregated were seated or standing up at the back stood back though they had not been instructed to. They do not approach 'Monster Terrorist Fag' or the assemblage and at one point where I come close to one member, they immediately retreated as if intimidated. This is not intentional on my part as M-T-F. At other times I intentionally interacted with the audience, for example, when I handed them Post-it notes with scribbled text on them like 'exotic,' 'colonised,' 'traditional,' 'effeminate,' 'terrorist,' where I was exploring the impact of projections on the body, my body and strangers' bodies. The audience were noticeably pleased to be tagged with such labels which they stuck on their bodies, again without instruction.

The performative installation was not planned in any way and

was a spontaneous interaction with the culturally coded objects, my non-conforming body as M-T-F and the space and whatever else exists in it, namely the mainly white queer audience. It also became, somewhere along the line, a conscious realisation and thus investigation of the impact of academic theory on my body. It was a long durational installation verses a short performance and although I did not engage with the audience the whole time, except for at the very end handing out the Post-it notes, I can't help but wonder what they were experiencing, whether it was curiosity, boredom, confusion, or frustration. This occurred to me in hindsight rather than at the time, where I was actually totally consumed in the process. I suspect many and/or all of the suggestions above were experienced by them, but of course that is only my interpretation.

As a 'subject' who is constantly performing my identity, this anti-performance is of course intentional. To attempt to undo the constant daily performance of identity (e.g. gender), to attempt to interrupt the constant expectation of entertainment to be fulfilled by brown exotic bodies (e.g. exotic traditional dancing or yoga) and to confuse the dominant white gaze which strives to make sense of and (mis)place brown bodies.

I have thought considerably about what makes something an anti-performance vs a performance. For me, as a racialised and gendered being I believe, in agreement with Judith Butler, that performativity is the condition of 'identity' being performed and contingent at all times, therefore changing and unknown at the core.[10] I am un/consciously performing my identity every moment of the day and I believe identity is something I and all of us perform and/or sculpt in order to fit into everyday life, or else we resist doing it with specific, often violent consequences. With this notion, this anti-performance sets out to be anti-performative and deconstructive, Derrida inspired.[11] The attempt was to (temporarily) stop performing identity in imposed ways as well as to focus on the change and unknown, instead of fixed essentialised categorisation that is often forced onto us or we choose in order to 'belong,' but which may restrict and/or misrepresent us.

However, the struggle with presenting anything to be 'looked at' is that what is put forth in the place of so called 'stable constructs,' e.g. fixed binary gender like 'male or 'female' or racial categories like 'Asian,' may still get objectified and fetishized and end up not transcending, but continue to be reduced to 'racialised gendered queerness.' It can be a never ending trap. I was aware of this and yet still made a declaration of refusal to be defined by the dominant white western gaze, whether that occurs or not was the challenge but not the objective.

On reflection I am wondering what the outcomes were exactly? On

one hand it dawned on me, unfortunately only just before the performative installation (on the cheap flight over) reflecting and scribbling into my notebook as one does, that if one did not know the cultural codes that I was utilising in the first place then one would not understand the manipulation involved. This was one inherent problem with my work, because I do not want to resolve this by explaining it as that would also defeat the point, therefore it would get left unresolved and become ambiguous.

Some of the images I transferred onto the culturally coded objects, such as 5 metres of cream muslin cloth, were archival images of Sikh soldiers in the First World War who were fighting in British Imperial Armies. These were prisoners who were captured at prisoner camps whalf-moon') in Germany and named 'exotic camps' containing brown exotic prisoners that German citizens in 1916 came to glare at on social outings.[12] Studies had been conducted on them to gather research on typical features of racial categorisation, such as nose sizes and bodily features (where it is important to note that inconsequential results were gained). I am making an informed guess that most of the audience that night of the performative installation would be unaware of this. Possibly due to a lack of presence of South Asian community in Germany and thus a lack of this educational history in Germany, might mean that they would not necessarily grasp or make any important connections. The perceived heterosexual 'normative' bodies that are being picked apart by scientists depicted on that cloth presented before them, could not be perceived as having anything to do with my queer trans South Asian body being picked apart by doctors at the gender clinic. Could they? I embodied this, but was it communicated? Was the audience continuing to pick out my body parts that did not fit into a binary body, in that process, even if to celebrate that defiance?

Yet my intent explicitly expressed in this work is/was:

> to interrupt and disturb, as a technique, to keep the audience from identifying with the 'performative' subject by feeling uncomfortable and displaced by the 'performers' own visible displacement. The manifestation of confusion may indeed be understood as purposeful, yes, but the fact that no sense can be made of it is the point. This becomes the anti-performance that actually encourages dis-identifying, with the audience instead becoming aware of themselves and their implication/role/gaze in the viewing and thus the performing subject, is freed by their non-complicity of 'getting it' having undermined/disrupted the gaze, if only temporarily, by using their own subjugated body.[13]

The work is not actually meant for the audience, though they are instrumental to fulfilling a gaze that can be interrupted. They are invited

to view the installation of the exhibit yet are ignored by the performer, me Raju Rage, as 'Monster Terrorist Fag.' What does this do to/for the audience? Does this alienate either of us? Does it marginalise me more than actually subscribing to the categories set before me (e.g. fe/male or 'South Asian') or not? Does it other them and does that become subversive at all?

I do feel this tension definitely manifested. Even if I was intentionally unaware of the audience, but also focused on the embodiment and oblivious to them, I did sense discomfort, boredom, confusion, curiosity that was never satisfied. Even at the end after an hour of on-looking and a flock to view the objects close up when it was over, there was a desperation to understand that was unfulfilled.

So back to my questions: What is the desire to know and what can we know? What is rendered in/visible?

I think that the audience in that room, and those who continued to view the exhibition of the assemblage of objects that were performatively installed that day for a further 3 weeks, did not actually have a great desire to know, because the interrupted objects were so off their radar as to making sense to them as to what they in fact were. I feel the work restricted their engagement with it. On the other hand some feedback I received was that people really 'enjoyed' the performative installation which made me realise that the embodiment of the work was instrumental to understanding or making some sense of what was displayed, or else it gave them some gratification for whatever reasons, as a spectacle maybe. The work became almost rendered useless without the body/being.

This anti-performance specifically focused on the history of constructed language, written, spoken and visual of 'Asian,' 'man,' 'woman,' 'queer,' 'feminine,' 'masculine,' 'religion,' 'culture,' and how they come to mean what we think they are supposed to mean, by displaying their embodiment, tensions, and conflicts with themselves and in relation with each other. For example, unfolding and stripping a sari to reveal a rubber bra made of 'oriental crackers' to wrapping a rubber turban on an ambiguously gendered body, each layer revealing something different. The intention was not to resolve that conflict but to ensure that the meanings did not hold their original meanings anymore and that new meanings and new stories were/are created. Did this constant transition and code switching change the audience's minds about what they thought they were seeing?

This was my exercise in the manifestation of the work. Because the performative installation became an interaction, albeit a reluctant one, some meanings did change. Also mistakes happened, albeit interesting ones. For example, an alarm going off as it was pulled off the mp3

player while 'Monster Terrorist Fag' was dancing, this added to the piece, but was not initially envisaged and echoed alarms going off both literally and metaphorically. Someone mentioned they thought it was actually part of the soundscape. Someone else thought that I was 'dancing when I was confused' which was not actually a truth but I was dancing whenever the music 'made me' want to dance. Was the audience member projecting their own confusion? New meanings and stories were created for me as the 'embodier' as well as for the audience, though they were not necessarily aware of the original meanings.

However, a lot of the 'cultural codes' did not register. For example the different ways turbans are worn within the same ethnicity depending on where they are geographically located: India, East Africa, or Britain, which all have important specific meanings vs 'all turban wearers looking the same' a racism that is often perpetuated. It was interesting to see which elements were picked out as visible and recognisable, familiar maybe? from the assemblage: the rubber turban; the netted body stocking; the green face paint; the music and dancing; the words scribbled on the notes; the chilli powder but not the archival images or more so their relevance; nor the text hidden in the sari or the narratives in the soundscape. These became rendered in/visible, although to be fair there were many deep layers in this work to uncover even if you tried your hardest and knew all the references, but that was the point, an uncompromised complexity.

I had written in a zine, 'We are Losing Inertia,' created by Binghao Wong a month previously to my performance that

> I am not attempting to 'escape' any gaze in this piece of work. I do not believe it is ever achievable; there will always be a gaze. Instead, I aim to interrupt the dominant white western gaze which seeks to categorise and fix/place, by replacing the stability of this gaze with overstimulation of conflicting codes, by code switching, creating confusion, displacing desirability and audience satisfaction with anti-status quo and anti-climax, in order to reveal its actual weakness, to communicate that identity is unsettling and it is never finished, that 'categories always leak' (Trin T Min-ha)[13] and that 'identity' continues to exist somehow even when it is attempted to be broken down by the subject themselves. I want to allow catharsis in the process and an ambiguous middle space of neither here nor there, which could be occupied even if only temporarily. This is my necessary work.[14]

This still stands true, however, what I would add on critical reflection is that I found it a real challenge as an artist to work in this methodology, because as a trans person there is a desire ingrained in me to be liked, affirmed and to fit in; because as a person of colour there is an obedient rule and understandable pressure to not deviate

from the cultural norm; as a queer person in the west, an obligation to subvert but only from a queer-normative western perspective and as an artist an ambition to get people to engage, whether by loving or hating your work, but having some sort of strong reaction to it rather than disengaging from it. I am not sure whether my work at this stage (as it is still in process and progress) was a success or a failure, and whether which one, success or failure, is the more sought out outcome in this scenario.

Was the failure the actual success?

Part of the failure, that is an actual failure to be acknowledged, however, is that you can never really know. I cannot know what the audience and spectators really felt or thought about it.

What does that mean for identity?

I noticed that when people do not know they will either fall back on what they do know and put that in its place, finding the things they need to make that possible or they will render something completely invisible. Is there any way to break out of this presumption based in/visible dynamic?

What would that middle space in between hyper visible and invisible look like?

I think I got a temporary idea of it for one hour…

… one explosive night in July 2014 but I cannot know for sure.

Notes

1   [In German] *Verortet in einer Welt gefangen in endlosem Pendeln zwischen Ab- und Anwesenheit, Un/Sichtbarkeit und dem Dilemma des Definierens, begleite 'Monster Terrorist Fag' auf einer diasporischen Seereise hin zu den brüchigen, umstrittenen Grenzen des Un/bekannten für eine performative Installation-Assemblage zusammengehalten durch Sinneserfahrung, Vibrationen, Echos, Geräuschlandschaften, Feedback-Schleifen, Zeitreisen und rekursive Einfaltungen.*

2   Puar Jasbir, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 46.

3   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Intervention interview,' in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues,* ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 113–32; Ahmed Sara, Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality (London: Routledge, 2000); Stuart Hall, *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle. New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994);

Mercer Kobena and Francis Errol, 'Black People Culture and Resistance,' *Camerawork* No. 9 (November 1982).

4 Re 'oriental,' see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books 1979).

5 Jasbir Puar, '"The turban is not a hat": Queer Diaspora and Practices of Profiling,' in Jasbir, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 173.

6 'Queerying' term coined by Evan Ifekoya, artist and educator, see *Evan Ifekoya*, accessed 8 September 2016, http://evanifekoya.co.uk.

7 'What is Queer Today Is Not Tomorrow,' *Heidy Collective*, accessed 8 September 2016, http://heidyngbk.blogspot.co.uk.

8 Zara Zandieh works as an independent filmmaker in Berlin, see 'Zara Zandieh,' *Vimeo*, accessed 8 September 2016, http://vimeo.com/zarazandieh

9 *Raju Rage*, http://www.rajurage.com, accessed 8 September 2016.

10 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 177.

11 Jacques Derrida, deconstruction: 'The undoing, decomposing, and desedimenting of structures, in a certain sense more historical than the structuralist movement it called into question, was not a negative operation. Rather than destroying it was also necessary to understand how an 'ensemble' was constituted and to reconstruct it to this end.' Jacques Derrida, 'Letter to a Japanese friend,' in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 272.

12 Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja, '*When the War began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War 1 Germany* (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011).

13 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, (Bloomingtom: Indiana University Press 1989): 'despite all our desperate, eternal attempts to separate, contain and mend, categories always leak.' 13/14 Wong Binghao, 'We are Losing Inertia,' *issuu* (2014), accessed 8 September 2016, http://issuu.com/binghao5/docs/we_are_losing_inertia_-_issuu, limited copies printed by ICA London.

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In Defence of a Radical Trans Perspective in the French Context

João Gabriell

Every 20 November is the Transgender Day of Remembrance (T-DOR). In principle, it honours the memory of the transgender people murdered every year. In France, like other places, solidarity rallies are organized in several cities on this occasion. This article first appeared in a shorter French version on my former personal blog. It is an attempt to focus the conversation about transphobia on the most marginalized within the trans category. It is crucial not only for the most vulnerable trans people themselves, but also in order for us to join the larger movement against exploitation and oppression in the neoliberal phase of capitalism. There will be no such thing as 'trans liberation' without the end of capitalism, as the 'trans' category is a western medical concept of the modern capitalist era, where gender binary is essential to the division of labor.

On Transphobic Murders: Who Really Dies?

The non-homogeneity of the 'trans' category is strikingly apparent when we talk about transphobic murders. In France in particular, it is harder to quantify transphobic murders largely due to the difficulty faced in quantifying the transgender population, especially those who are foreigners. Another challenge is the absence of so-called ethnic minority statistics that measure the adverse impact of race and ethnicity along with other factors on the socio-economic status of migrants and other people of colour who legally reside in France, even though some studies have already pointed to transmarginalization.[1] In the US, however, several studies analyze, at least in part, this phenomenon of transphobic murders.

For instance, in a study conducted by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) in 2013, two results stand out:

- if we consider gender as the key factor: 53% of LGBT murders in 2012 concerned transwomen.
- if we consider race as the key factor: 73% of LGBT murders concerned people of colour, mainly Black people, which is not surprising at all in the context of the US.

It is therefore clear that transwomen, and non-heterosexual people of colour, and/or transgender people are extremely vulnerable to death. However, this line of reasoning needs to be extended further. When considered in parallel, the two results reveal a specific intersectional category: transwomen of colour.

Thus, given their proportion in the entire population in general and in LGBT population in particular, transwomen are disproportionately represented as victims of murders that are not solely transphobic, but follow from *a formidable overlap of situations of domination*, such as, poverty, violence resulting from the criminalization of sex work, experience of homelessness and life in the streets, and incarceration etc. Several articles explore the specific situation of Black transwomen in the US context.

The lack of representation or misrepresentation of people of colour, especially transwomen of colour—or just transwomen as such—in films or other media in events related to the T-DOR was critiqued in France, such as in the blog *Un bruit de grelot* that offered an incisive analysis. Some representative productions this year center on transwomen, sometimes transwomen of colour even. They are indeed very interesting: Lizzie Crowdagger's book, *Une autobiographie transexuelle avec des vampires* (2014) was released in Strasbourg, and the documentary *Yo Indocumentada* (that I haven't seen) was released in Nice. I'm not going to cite the film *Transamerica* (2005) that is considered transphobic and was shown in Marseille.

On a larger scale, the specific vulnerability of transwomen of colour must be acknowledged (or forced to be acknowledged) more explicitly in the ways in which political questions related to trans people and transwomen (white people or people of colour) are addressed. These questions should incorporate the specificities of transwomen that include murders, higher risk of HIV, and sexual violence. For transmen of colour, these include the intimidation by the police, and the impossibility of finding employment among others. Many blogs by transwomen discuss these specificities. For example, the blogs *La petite murène* and *Sortir les couteaux* offer a strong critique of the T-DOR.[2] As for trans people of colour, I have contributed to the topic of precariousness and various other issues in my own way. Also, Douille in his blog *Récits d'un non fambloyant* discusses similar themes.[3] Such analyses are surely

present in the blogosphere. The engagement with them and resonance with their reflection, however, seems limited for the moment.

Additionally, the realization of these specificities of trans people of colour, and transwomen of colour especially, is not on the agenda of the so-called 'queer scenes' of big and segregated cities like Paris. It will not be so in the near future either, given that certain white bourgeois activists, belonging to allegedly 'politically' conscious milieus, have recently appropriated the question of transphobia without any ethical consideration.[4] They have completely discounted all existing substantial analysis of the positionality of individuals in terms of social hierarchy, especially in relations of exploitation. It is therefore important to reimagine our alliances with the queer movement(s) and explore other alternative routes rather than strive for inclusion or better 'representation' within the white middle class or bourgeois queer or TPG (TransPédéGouines, French for TransGayLesbian) milieus. Even though these queer and French TPG movements are often articulated in opposition to mainstream LGBT movements, they cannot be considered to be effective spaces of contestation (other than symbolical). The main reason behind such reasoning is that trans people who suffer the most from structural domination do not belong to these circuits. They are either completely marginalized in these circuits due to several explicit or non-explicit procedures or stay with these circuits only temporarily. And, certainly, the absence of marginalized groups in mainstream political circuits inevitably points to the absence of non-oppressive conditions within such contexts.

Thinking Race in the French Context : The Necessity of Dismantling the Processes of Invisibilization of the Trans of Colour Population

The way race works in Europe, and especially in France, is that race is not constructed as absolutely opposed to an idea of 'Blackness' that puts Black people as the main figure of danger far ahead of other racial groups. Statistics about poverty, discrimination, incarceration, and police brutality show the specific anti-Black oppression in the US context. In France, racism is rather organized around multiple figures of 'Otherness' that occupy a complex position in terms of their social and economical marginalization (except for the Roma people who are clearly more subaltern than other racialized groups): the African (which means 'Black' even when they don't come from Africa), the Roma, the *banlieusard*,[5] the Muslim (which often means 'the Arab') and the migrant are the main figures.[6] Of course, on the one hand, we have to say that in all of the last three categories—the *banlieusard*,

the Muslim, and the migrant—there are a significant number of Black people; we also have to say that racism in the US is not only a Black and White matter. It is important, nevertheless, to understand how France's processes of racialization work differently than in the US. This is important so that we understand how to organize as queer and trans people of colour in France, and build transnational solidarities that are relevant to us instead of imposing US frames to our struggle. The ground reality that main organizations of colour for transwomen are organized around migration and not Blackness like in North America is an illustration of that fact, even though there are a significant number of 'Black' trans women in those organizations who do not necessarily identify as such due to how race and colourism works where they came from, especially when they are South American. Things can change and maybe a 'Black trans activism' will be more visible one day, but the simple fact that the trans of colour movement emerged around different process of racialization in each country—France on the one hand, and the US on the other hand—is already significant. It means that all trans of colour activism in France can neither evacuate the question of how race works nor overlook the specific colonial history of race in this country.

Activist movements of transwomen, especially migrants and/or sex workers, and groups and unions such as ACCEPTESS-T, Pari-T, Strass, Cabiria, the Pastt, and Act Up provide crucial information on the specific forms of violence suffered by transwomen of colour, especially sex workers and HIV positive folks in France. The work that they are doing needs to be more emphasized because it is crucial. On one level, it indicates the inefficacy of the acronym 'LGBT' to account for their positions that are often very different, indeed even antagonist since assimilation into the larger society for LGBT comes at the expense of transwomen and poor queer and trans people of colour.

Trans activisit Lalla Kowska Régnier, co-author of the Trans Manifesto in France formulates an incisive critique of the erasure of trans questions across the LGBT movement:

> LGBT is a fictitious alliance. It is imperialist and completely fits around the capitalist machinery. It invisibilizes, stalls and/or prevents the emergence of unique cultures of minorities within its purview by privileging the most dominant culture, that of, men.[7]

LGBT maintains an assimilationist stronghold on all its members. In addition, in a very perverse manner, it renders impossible the critique of male hegemony through a recourse to the 'gaytitude' or 'queeritude' of men.[8]

The realization of the ineffectiveness of 'LGBT' and the universalizing

hold of the 'trans person' labels, even while the violence concerns very specific situations, becomes significant in placing race and class at the centre of analyses and targets that often erase them. In so doing, we can put an end to the futile and annoying exercise of naming privileges and those who benefit from them simply for the sake of enumerating them. And to show that we are against oppression without really changing any concrete situation. On the contrary, the will to rethink the terms ('LGBT') and their deployment ('trans people') underlines the desire to revise the entire paradigm of the most concrete aspect of the struggle. Compelling questions include: What are the political topics central to the demands and frames of struggle of the trans movement? By mobilizing around these political topics what relations of power can be constituted against the state, medical industry, police, and professional world? Which other movement can be our ally (either as one that supports us or vice-versa) if we organize around these political topics?

In sum, interrogating 'LGBT' and the universalizing tendencies of the label 'trans people' amounts to questioning the strategies involved. As a consequence, it places political activity under a critical lens. Finding alternative terms, other critical vocabularies will give expression to newer strategies for the trans movement, whether it is in the realm of objectives, calls to action, mobilization, or political alliances or fractures.

How Race and Class Have to Be Centered in the Analysis of Gendered Transphobia: Who Are 'Transmen'?

Borrowing from Philomena Essed's concept of 'gendered racism' that demonstrates how racism affects men and women of colour differentially, I would like to argue for a gendered analysis of transphobia.[9] This enables me to discuss the specific vulnerability of transwomen in the face of violence, specially when they are non-white. However, this gendered critique of transphobia remains incomplete and ineffective unless the complexity of another category and its vulnerability is brought into focus. This category of non-white transmen remains invisible despite the weight it bears upon itself. In fact, 'gendered racism,' in my view, does not solely speak about women, i.e. cis-women or transwomen, but also about the social relations and norms that govern gender/sex(-ual) hierarchies, thus including men whether they are cis-men or transmen.

So, like transwomen, the category of transmen hinges on intersecting questions of race and class as well. In this context, attributing 'male' privilege to transmen 'in general' when compared to transwomen 'in general,' as I have read and heard from sources, is similar to a particular

form of cisgender white feminism that has been messing up for over a century. The dubious arguments include suggesting that a woman per se is always more oppressed and more exploited than a man despite the fact that the woman is a boss, or a white collar executive, and that the man is black, a toilet cleaner without any work contract, and an undocumented migrant like many migrant workers in France.

So, who are we talking about when we talk of male privilege that transmen enjoy after transitioning? And above all, with respect to whom does this privilege operate? What benefits can 'passing' afford to someone who transitions in order to become a transman of colour? Does this privilege include the fact that there will be more stringent identity controls by the police now that he is perceived as a male of colour rather than the sexual and racial harassment that he was subjected to when he was perceived as a ciswoman of colour?[10] Or will this 'man privilege' help him in a job interview, since a Black person or a person of Maghrebian origin with documents that do not match his or her appearance in terms of gender will be suspected of having forged papers and hence be regarded as an undocumented migrant? Or if his documents have already been changed, he has the gender that matches his masculine appearance, and is seen as a man of colour, *just like the others*, will this 'male privilege' help him in that job interview since men of colour face extreme discrimination in terms of jobs in postcolonial France? I must admit that he is very lucky indeed.

In comparison to transwomen, transmen can be more invisible in society. Among other things, this is due to normative constraints of conformity in terms of gender constructs. According to normative standards, larger women are seen as 'problematic' and are more 'visible' than 'smaller' men. However, this so called 'passing' for transmen is not a privilege when the transman is a person of colour. It only allows the transman of colour to be perceived, without any gender ambivalence, as the man of colour,[11] which is to say, a potential suspect, criminal, thief, rapist, undocumented migrant, or a terrorist depending on how he will be racialized, his name and what he wears. How does this 'passing' amount to privilege, then? Even worse, being a transman of colour is to be a man of colour with additional problems since Black and Maghrebian cis-men have some types of resources to defend themselves through community support in the face of violence. But we, transmen of colour do not have this support at all.

The difficult position of transmen of colour can be summed up in the following manner:

- when we are not able to 'pass satisfactorily as a man' according to current norms of gender in place, we are forced into the category of

the gender deviant: 'masculine girls,' 'lesbians,' 'androgynous people,' 'transvestites,' etc. This functions in tandem with the already visible racial markers and exposes us to violence;

• when we are able to 'pass satisfactorily as a man' according to the same norms of gender, we are forced into the stigmatized category of the 'man of colour' that exposes us to violence with less support systems to rely upon than cis-men of colour.

In either case, it should be emphasized, being a transman of colour does not offer any space of non-visibility, or any respite from violence, in the white patriarchal world. Although this analysis does not in any way lessen the burden of violence, especially that of murders, that trans-women of colour have to endure, it is surely presumptuous to allude to transmen of colour in general as people who can negotiate spaces of invisibility just like white transmen, especially when white transmen do not belong to the working classes. In certain limited contexts, a white transman can become a white man who is able to enjoy the privilege attached to the unmarked categories of race and gender.

We need to recall that cissexist social relations exist in a racist, capitalist and patriarchal context whereby men of colour solely benefit from masculine privilege when we consider them in connection with women of their own race and class. It is undeniable that in this case they have the power over women. Further, in the context of the trans category, transmen of colour enjoy a better situation than transwomen of colour. However, as far as state violence is concerned, race and class, men of colour, cisgender or trans, are truly vulnerable.

Reflections on a Viable Radical and Global Politics from a Trans Perspective

The articulation of a potent politics that will improve the conditions of the most economically precarious trans people in France needs to avoid one significant mistake: the very notion that the struggle against transphobia is disconnected from the material conditions of trans people is a problem in itself. This notion also perceives transphobia as a matter of ignorance that needs correction through education. A positive image (of trans people) and/or laws that will punish dis-crimination cannot transform the material conditions of trans people, just as laws against racism have never been able to decrease systemic racism. We need to think of the trans question in connection with the other questions (women, people of colour, etc.) and in terms of unequal distribution of socio-economic resources and privilege when compared

to the cis category, and also when trans people are compared to each other. If we believe in the idea of an economy of violence, we have to acknowledge that the huge amount of violence and criminalization faced by trans people, especially trans people of colour, and more precisely trans women of colour, is directly linked to the violence produced by a capitalist, racist, and patriarchal state. This is why transphobia should be considered one of the lines of violence along with several others. It is necessary to talks about the system that produces those people who possess material resources and other people who do not, those people who will be able to live while other people will die. Not only should the intersecting lines of oppression and exploitation be assessed in relation to the cis category but also, once again, in relation to other trans people since we are never just trans and belong to other groups (dominant or oppressed) in addition to being trans. These groups have a direct impact, whether positive or negative, on our future as a trans. It should be pointed out that in a world where unequal access to resources and life chances remains a given fact, the improvement in the material conditions of some people often happens at the expense of other people whose precarious economic conditions become even worse. In this context, trans liberation cannot be achieved if working class people are still exploited by the financial elites, if women are still raped or murdered at such high rates in their home by their partner or criminalized when they resist gender violence, and if police and the carceral state are still destroying communities of colour. Emancipation for trans people of colour in France will be dependent upon the emancipation of those with whom we share class and racial interests, and to do so, the trans of colour movement in France has to be a part of the decolonial struggle in order to resist all forms of pinkwashing and transwashing by the state and opportunistic politicians.

Reflecting on the non-homogeneity of the trans category and the fact that being dependent on race, gender, class or nationality, life chances of trans people can be very different is not a call against unity for trans liberation. On the contrary, it is the basis where unity can be found because we will know that the price for liberation is not the same for all of us. There is a specific time for unity and concerted efforts. But in order to do so, we also need time to point out what is wrong with mainstream understanding of transphobia and how it affects trans people of colour, trans poor, and above all transwomen.

So, in order to define the emergence of a radical and global transformative politics from the perspective of the trans position in France, and one that offers a valid critique of patriarchy, racism and capitalism, the following questions must be asked and answered properly. This is where we have to start in order to centre those who are the most

marginalized within a trans framework for trans liberation, but also in order to be part of the broad movement against neoliberalism in solidarity with all oppressed and exploited people:

• Who becomes poorer after the transitioning?
• Who does not have access to trans solidarity networks? Who can only have conditional access to these networks?
• Who is exoticized, marginalized, or excluded from trans/queer social and economic spaces?
• Who has the privilege to represent 'transidentity' in a 'positive manner' in popular voyeuristic TV programmes?
• Who has to face harsh discrimination in employment and housing?
• Who can gain employment only within the LGBT or queer community and become therefore vulnerable to exploitation within the community without any recourse to other options?
• Who, on the contrary, can economically benefit from the development of a LGBT or queer consumer market?
• Who, among the transpopulation, cannot have access to drugstores in order to buy hormones and all the risks that it entails?
• Who has to beg in order to pay for the operations and thus become explicitly or implicitly indebted to economically dominant people in 'political/activist' circuits?
• Who has the choice of being operated upon by their 'dream' surgeon abroad?
• Who will bear the burden of being violent, aggressive and dangerous in 'political/activist' circuits at all costs when they denounce violence that they face in those milieus?
• Who can transition without their family both in terms of financial and emotional attachment?
• Who cannot return to their country of origin after transitioning?
• Who benefits from a trans assimilationist racist agenda and can be perfectly in sync with the neoliberal agenda?
• For whom does the change of gender identity on official documents imply the end of all troubles, violence, and discrimination?
• For whom does transitioning mean to be more desirable in 'false' alternative circuits and for whom does it mean being excluded from romantic and sexual circles?
• For whom does the reflection on questions pertaining to 'trans' at the university, academic conferences, and journals etc. really lead to a positive transformation in personal life?
• For whom does transitioning imply more violence in public spaces without any access of support in any kind?
• For whom does transitioning imply being more vulnerable to

sexual violence?

- Who has to become a sex worker and/or sell drugs in order to survive?
- Who will have to live in the streets?
- Who will have more problems when the cops decide to charge?
- Who is more exposed to HIV and without access to treatments?
- Who will benefit from a struggle against transphobia that only adds a new crime in the law?
- Who will benefit from police support?
- Who benefits from the fact that western countries and mainstream LGBT movements articulate their 'sexual minorities and trans rights' discourse in opposition to people of colour, and especially Muslims ?
- Who will go to prison?
- Who dies because of being trans?

Notes

This chapter first appeared as a blog post on 22 November 2014 on the author's former blog. The author would like to thank Sandeep Bakshi for the encouragement and translation.

Translator's note: The translation departs slightly from the original French text in order to best reflect the change in context. It does not substitute for the original. All changes have been approved by the author.

1   The study of MAG (an LGBT French group) in 2009 and the study of Alain Giami in 2010 already gives us some data of trans people in France. More generally, there is increasingly more work being done in the social sciences about the trans question, but not necessarily in terms of statistics.

2   A blog post on 'La Petite Murène' (http://lapetitemurene.over-blog.com/article-comme-le-nez-pas-au-milieu-de-la-figure-123752627.html) responds to a text by Ms Dreydful that appeared on my blog (https://negreinverti.wordpress.com/2014/05/21/mon-probleme-avec-le-feminisme-trans-critique/). The response concerns the specific question of the vulnerability and hypervisibility of transwomen in public spaces (my words). Although I cannot critique anything concerning transwomen, I do not agree with the generalization regarding the category of 'transmen,' The post does not consider the impact of race and class on transmen of colour, which renders them in a subaltern position with respect to white transmen. In other words, the analytic of sex is not the only one that makes it impossible to think of

a homogeneous trans category.

3   Douille, 'Un autre parcours,' accessed 16 September 2016, http://vincentfortune.over-blog.com/article-un-autre-parcours-72957983.html

4   I'm talking about how mostly white (but not only) queer activists used the 'trans' identity of a white bourgeois bar owner in Paris, deflecting attention from the question of exploitation that led to the strike in this bar in 2013.

5   The term 'Banlieusard' is used in France to talk about people of colour who live in marginalized neighbourhoods outside of big towns like Paris or Lyon.

6   This does not mean that we should underestimate the type of so called 'invisible' racism faced by Asian communities.

7   Ferjani Jihan and Kowska Lalla, '"Manifeste Trans": Notre corps nous appartient,' Nouvelles Questions Féministes 1/27 (2008), 151–53

8   Lalla Kowska Régnier, 'Le coq et le tas de fumier,' Les Mots Sont Importants, 30 June 2013, accessed 16 September 2016, http://lmsi.net/Le-coq-et-le-tas-de-fumier.

9   Philomena Essed, Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1991).

10 It must be emphasized that some women, especially sexworkers, migrants, homeless, and drug- dependent transwomen, who are often people of colour, are the targets of police violence in public spaces. As I mentioned in this post (https://negreinverti.wordpress.com/2014/09/15/complexifier-lidee-selon-laquelle-les-hommes-non-blancs-seraient-les-cibles-privilegies-du-racisme-colonial/), we must not therefore always try to frame this question of violence simply in terms of the masculine gender.

11 The documentary titled Still Black (2008) (http://www.stillblackfilm.org), made by a black transman in the US, poses this precise question even though I have some reservations concerning certain aspects of the documentary. We have to understand that transitioning can allow some white transmen to become the 'white man' in some circumstances. They can avoid identity controls since studies show that these controls are often carried out on black and Maghrebian origin men in a vast majority. They can survive even when their families sever contact with them. They do not have problems at the airports. These above mentioned privileges are not afforded to us, transmen of colour.

— 5 —

On Doing Work, or, Notes from the Classroom

Humaira Saeed

What are the words you do not have yet? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence? Perhaps for some of you here today, I am the face of one of your fears. Because I am a woman, because I am black, because I am myself, a black woman warrior poet doing my work, come to ask you, are you doing yours?

— Audre Lorde, 1977

As a queer lesbian academic of colour, who teaches postcolonial studies, gender, sexuality, and queer studies, and (somewhat randomly) US literature, in an institution with a large number of working class students and students of colour, teaching has never felt so activist to me as it does now. They need to see that not only do we exist, but we survive, and that not everyone is pulling the ladder up behind them. First generation students might make many grammatical errors, but this does not reflect their intellectual and political thought. These students are negotiating more—how about we listen on their terms. How about we, the privileged ones in the seats of relative power with the grading pen, do that work. We can value their brains and the unique insight, regardless of whether they have an accurate white middle class syntax. And I fight for that.

But of course it is not always utopian. Ideas stick, like mud, to their brain cells. So I teach postcolonial sexuality and all they remember is that 'the Caribbean has a homophobia problem.' They arrive well versed in what a cis-het identity is, but struggle to historicise this and thus locate it. They have read several Buzzfeed articles, they're opposed to racism but have no engagement with systems of power. We are fighting the tide, and resisting hegemony. They'll leave the year knowing that black racism isn't a thing, they'll get embarrassed for reading me as heterosexual because I present as femme. This is what it means to be an educator. This is what it means to embody that which

you teach. But there are things you won't tell them. Like the story of your colleague who sleazily wanted to take you out for a drink so you would talk about sex as the exoticised Muslim woman. And they'll get taught about black feminism from white women who smile sweetly to sanitise critiques of power. We are fighting the tide. They'll get taught by people who tell them 'non-binary is not real,' that 'old and ugly woman wouldn't be raped,' while half that class is not gaining the language to talk about oppression and the world adequately, the other half is shrinking further into its shell. And the line outside my door grows. While the white cis-het profs write another book, edit another journal and deliver another keynote, I make cups of tea for the crying feminist who is experiencing cyber bullying, I strategise with another about how to make sure the classroom acknowledges the systemic power of sexual violence, and I pick up the emails from anxious students who get in touch with me, rather than their personal tutor because I am more likely to understand the experience of not being able to leave their house that day. None of this is in my job description, of course, though it is some of the most important work I do. And none of this is my profession, though perhaps it is my vocation, trained as I was in the intensity of an over-achieving girls' school full of eating disorders, homophobia, and white standards of everything. But what it does do is keep me from being a person who creates knowledge. Kept so busy in the support role that I barely have time for research and writing, but who believes in the 40-hour week anyway? This full time academic job is delivering an annual breakdown, but I couldn't afford to go part time. So we fight the tide. We try and make these roles formalised only for them to be collapsed into a personal tutor system whereby aforementioned sleazy colleague takes responsibility for the pastoral care of young women of colour. And we decide there must be other ways to fight the tide. We find alliance in unexpected places and we learn to smile instead of punching because survival has to accompany resistance. We try it all out.

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A colleague once told me that I was 'just too many protected categories.' I actually get on with this colleague, and their comment made me laugh, but (as I'm sure contributions to this volume demonstrate), this is a lot to carry. Sometimes I figure that at least this will mean my voice will be listened to (naïve mistake #1), even if used in a corporate agenda.

But politics is not REFable [I spend my working days writing this—is that resistance, or just reiterating that THIS has to be part of the work

that we do], so there is no financial support when I want to do LGBT history month events that address race, gender, class. So I turn to the equality team, join the LGBT steering committee, sign up as chair for said committee, and learn to navigate another set of bureaucracies in the hope that we might be able to break through the sinews of the system (naïve mistake #2). And I have an anecdote about this:

You would think it was innocuous enough. After the steering committee had set itself up as a campaigning group through securing gender-neutral toilet signs for some campus toilets, and collectively signing to the Trans Safer Spaces policy, I thought, let's continue the campaigns (naïve mistake #3), and circulated an open letter criticising the PREVENT strategy. I thought that we, as a group, could sign the letter. But they refused, with some classic responses that I will treat you to shortly. It was concluded that we should sign the letter as individuals, but this was a stand that the group was not prepared to make. My intersectional mind reels from this, confused, not quite putting the pieces together. This is the same group that (rightly) campaigned for accessible toilets, that (rightly) engaged with safer spaces policies for events, offered the illusion of a critical voice around inclusion. I belatedly realise then, that the trans and gender queers for & with whom the sign campaign was waged, were white, or conceptualised as white. Our universal queer subject hovers, haunting the meeting, insisting that everything be asserted in its terms.

Some quotes from responses:

I'm left feeling very uncomfortable about this.

Feeling quite bad about the discussion we had in the meeting.

My own reasons for not supporting the signing of the letter as a Network, were based on my personal secular beliefs. [NB the letter was not a statement of faith]

I was hoping that Humaria would be present to give us some context. [NB is it really so hard to spell my name right, and Google can be your friend in looking for context].

I also have my own personal feelings about faith and religion that are contrary to supporting one. [NB does speaking out against bigotry mean you are 'supporting' a religion? Sounds a bit like the section 28 argument to me]

This may be ignorance or a very narrow understanding of this particular situation and its context. If that's so then please educate me, this is a university. [it is ignorance. Don't deflect the responsibility onto me]

that I wasn't comfortable that a few SG members present could agree to represent the feelings of the Network as a whole (not just the Steering Group). [but it was okay to do this when signing up to the safer spaces policy?]

We need to recognise we are much stronger when we work together and we all need to operate in an environment free from fear of being called ignorant for voicing an opinion that is different to someone else. [then maybe you should listen]

Am I your educator, your colleague, your pastor? Can I absolve you from your stupidity, your will to ignorance? Or am I simply divisive? You ask me to educate, but for me not to be 'hard work,' I thought the two went together (naïve mistake #4). You take the easy way out because you can, feel despair because you 'feel uncomfortable,' then swiftly move on as the brown bodies who upset you remove themselves from the debate (myself and two allies resigned from the steering committee). This diversity project is part of a bigger problem: that of respectability. I've learnt from James Baldwin that this demand will only wear you down. We need to be the respectable people they will never believe us to be. The patient ones. The magnanimous ones. The ones always expected to understand.

I live somewhere relatively small, compared to the metropolises that used to house me. The same people circulate across spaces, across subcultures. So the person who 'couldn't support a religion' corners me at a punk gig and starts to apologise, wants to confess how they fucked up. We know this scenario. I've lived this scenario before. I have less patience for this scenario as time goes on. I communicate this. What is the use of an apology when the sole purpose is to make the apologiser feel better? What use is an apology when it actually ruins someone's night? I don't refuse to hear the apology, I just refuse to engage when my time is hijacked. If figuring this out is too hard work, then we are at the crux of the matter—this person is not prepared to do the labour. *We know this scenario. I've lived this scenario before. I have less patience for this scenario as time goes on*. Do the work.

***

If you're perpetuating racism because you can't be bothered to do the work, despite being educated, then I have no respect for you. My mantra of late has been that I have no time for stupidity. I am rallying against the stupid, refusing to be patient and refusing to engage. Because there is no point in having dialogue with the stupid, and the stupid will never allow themselves to learn what might challenge them. To

clarify: stupid has nothing to do with what we might call 'intelligence,' 'cleverness,' 'educated.' Stupid is a position, it's a base, it's a land from which wilful ignorance acts as a defence shield that dialogue cannot breach. The response to the PREVENT letter can again act as anecdote:

Defensive responses to the letter (see above) were generated and declared the letter made points that it did not make. I genuinely didn't understand, as I thought that the letter would be read before opinions asserted (naïve mistake #5). I had to acknowledge that they probably *had* read the letter, but had opted to ignore or misunderstand the content. This is what I would call wilful ignorance, and it is absolute stupidity. Some points, however they are expressed, will not be understood because the individual reading/listening refuses to let the words in because of what might be threatened if they did. In this case, the case of the letter, the people in the steering committee had nothing to lose from signing the letter, but could recognise no reason why they should. And it is here in this recognition that they had most to lose. Recognising that the letter had some validity would mean decentring themselves as white, secular LGBT folk, it would mean acknowledging their relative power, and it would mean taking responsibility for this power. And to do this means work. It means doing the work of interpretation, which was work they were not willing to do. They willed themselves into stupidity for the sake of protecting their position at the centre. But they also asked that I do this work. That I, as educator and queer person of colour, convince, argue, and explain the case that had already been made in the letter. The wilful ignorance gets turned on its head, as it is really the fault of the queer person of colour for not explaining fully. B*ut some points, however they are expressed, will not be understood because the individual reading/listening refuses to let the words in because of what might be threatened if they did.* There are many things that can be said here, about education and access and language of communication, and I do not propose that all communication can be accessed all of the time. But this was a group of university educated, middle-class white people. All with humanities degrees, misunderstanding a public open letter. It's not the fault of the letter. And where there is a will to ignorance, there is no point in trying to break through. And they will hate you for refusing, because you are being hard work, but it's about time they learnt what hard work actually is.

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I would like the opportunity to wear a label that identifies me as a 'token,' but the field of postcolonial studies hasn't gotten that far. Any critiques of the whiteness of the scholarship in this field are of

course met with dismissal on the grounds of identity politics being anachronistic. My current position is one where I actively reject this field, while working still with individuals within it. I am slightly intrigued (incredibly irritated) by this uninterrogated attraction to alterity that becomes masked as social justice work. At what point does this scholarship become appropriation, exploitation, people of colour fixed as producers of culture, but white academics as producers of knowledge, without whom culture has no meaning. So I reject this field as I am asked to collude with it. I seek out those scholars whose bodies are on the line as they work in this domain, as they are told they are either not intellectual enough (English as second/non-historical language), or too dense (English as that which must be rejected). Not everyone is pulling the ladder up behind them but I have no time for those who are—Homi Bhabha had a term for you, the mimic men. Let's observe other cultures' resistance, but ignore those in our vicinity whose everyday is resistance. We're an English department with three people of colour. Is that something of a record? How many people of colour actually get to the post-PhD point in the humanities?

Yet I remain in the academy, even at moments of intense alienation from it (Avtar Brah's phrasing about the idea of home), because I do have something to say. This is where I am going with it:

My current research begins from a place where I ask, who carries the burden of representation, and who is to be held accountable for the ways in which representation becomes collapsed into hegemonic modes of intelligibility? From these questions I want to establish the imperative of developing a critical reading and interpretative strategy that, rather than vilifying marginal voices for their modes of expression, instead charges the readership with insisting that these voices be understood in fixed and reductive ways. Why does reading matter, why discuss reading and cultural texts in a collection that seeks to consider how we might decolonise sexuality? Because I come from a standpoint of asserting that culture forms the world in which we live, representational excess and absences impact upon social worlds, and identity formation, and indeed, discourse is intimately connected to knowledge. Decolonising sexuality does not only take place through lived experiences, but through the ways in which these experiences are mediated. Lesbian and Gay literary studies, for all of its limitations and whitewashing, has the potential to remind us of something crucial—that to read queerly is to read askance, to interpret from an angle, to read for dissidence, to identify precisely that which hegemonic structures seek to make invisible. So what I want to propose here, is that reading queerly can be deployed for decolonial ends, that sexual dissidence exists within postcolonial spaces, but that it is the role of the critical reader to look

for these absences rather than demanding that all representations speak and make themselves known in the terms of western epistemology. Because this is not simply about representation—a critical reading shows us that often it is representation itself that does the most damage through epistemic violence. I am writing about this here to highlight this approach as a decolonial teaching strategy, a way in which we might teach that encourages students to think about texts, and by extension the world, from a queer angle.

Why use 'queer'? I'll defend this as having a usefulness outside of the US academy. Sometimes the continued use of a term embodies a resistance to it becoming completely co-opted. Queer developed as a concept from women of colour existing on borders and embodying borderlands (Anzaldua). There is no more fitting a term then for me to use when considering these texts—I will not concede this ground because it has been colonised.

We have a lot to say, address, and discuss, precisely because we are at the margins. Our concerns will never be straightforward, they will never collapse into a linear narrative, they cannot be contained. My existence is not fundable. None of us are fundable. This is the case when the things we research are not related to us through distance and epistemic violence. Yet here we are collected in this collection, and speaking from our positions as best we can. On our own terms. Without the filter of institutional agenda and narrow disciplinary demands. Without trying to please a structure that wants us to fail. I have barely any citations here, but my words are formed by the queers and feminists of colour whose words give me strength and inspiration. I will always be grateful for these thinkers, who have pushed and continue to push the edges of what we think possible. Some of whom are my peers, some of whom are in/of this collection, some of whom live on through their words. Thank you for your work; it is a gift that I will always do my best to reciprocate.

CREATE

Decoloniality, Queerness, and Giddha

Sandeep Bakshi

Decolonial Beginnings

This chapter addresses the concealment of non-Euroamerican queerness embedded in standard western narratives of progress and modernity in relation to non-heternormative gender and sexual configurations. Building upon the work of decolonial thinkers, it aims to uncover 'the myth of modernity' that places Europe in a dialectical relation to its other and marks, in the words of Enrique Dussel, the 'process of concealment or misrecognition of the non-European.'[1] Specifically, it reassesses the contemporary queer paradigms in the west and its other, South Asia. Defying the Eurocentric assumption that homosexuality is a modern western conceptualization, it focuses on South Asia as the geographical location that is traditionally associated with the repression of all forms of sexuality. In so doing, it aims to develop tools for a decolonial critique of global queerness that obliterates specific gender and sexual arrangements which cannot be subsumed under the over-arching language of queer rights, same-sex marriage and kinship.[2]

The category of modernity in the context of South Asia often appears as a vexed site. The binaries of tradition/modernity, old/new and non-modern/modern acquire renewed sustenance through an assumed linear notion of time and history, which configures the west at the centre of time and modernity. As Dussel, Aníbal Quijano, and Dipesh Chakrabarty have variously noted, in this eurocentred reading of history, the west appropriates the discourse of newness by positioning Western events like the French Revolution, the secularization of religion, and the Industrial Revolution, as key factors in the development of political modernity in the world.[3] Non-western forms of knowledge production that include historically enduring yet metamorphosing cultural practices, written or non-written cultural memorabilia, such as, culinary traditions, sartorial customs, rites, rituals, and religious conventions to name a few are relegated to the periphery of the knowledge industry. Even academic and philosophical canon in the area known as the global south receives acknowledgement when it garners

support or explicitly re-produces the Eurocentric disciplinary norm. As Walter Mignolo suggests, the 'rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality, constitutive of two heads from the same body' creates and re-creates enduring binaries of difference.[4] This dichotomous relation between the west and the rest and, knowledge and non-knowledge, the knowing subject and the performing object, embodies therefore the visible boundaries of the eurocentric modernity.

Coloniality or the colonial matrix of power 'is constitutive and not derivate of modernity. For this reason, we write 'modernity/coloniality.' The slash (/) that divides and unites modernity with coloniality means that coloniality is constitutive of modernity: there is no modernity without coloniality.'[5] In this regard, decoloniality constitutes the delinking from discourses of modernity that Euroamerican-centric thinking proliferates. In this chapter, I shift the critical focus towards allegedly traditional cultural practices, such as Punjabi women's dance-and-song performances during wedding and birth ceremonies, called Giddha, to mark a delinking, a decolonial shift. Reading queer cultural practices of Punjabi women's songs as a contrast to western narratives of queerness will be an attempt to erase the binary of modernity/nonmodernity that the western queer coloniality of power exerts over cultural embodiment of queer knowledge and memory.

To disrupt the seamless self-referential linking of modernity with Euroamerican frames,[6] the pulverization of the eurocentric assumption that routinely posits the west as the originator of modernity is imperative.[7] The critical issues that bear upon this chapter incorporate questions regarding the over-reliance on western modes of knowledge production and *our/my* epistemological obedience to them nonetheless. This recognition functions as an 'enabling acknowledgement,' to borrow from Jasbir Puar,[8] of the western location of my own writing. However, by enacting a critique of hegemonic formations of western modernity, I am, akin to Mignolo's thought, 'starting and departing from already familiar notions of "situated knowledges".'[9] Consequently, this act of interrogating western claims to modernity inaugurates the premise of disagreements, collision, and delinking from the Euroamerican centre. It offers perhaps the opportunity to *re-link* with those ways of thinking and being that within the confines of imperial western knowledge-churning industries are relegated to the realm of study and control.[10] The critique of hegemonic eurocentric modernity does not, in any respect, presuppose the establishment of counter-hegemonic practices of non-Euroamerican modernity, whatever that might mean, as the original or referential category of analysis. It entails, instead, the re-emergence of forms of *human knowledge and practices* that lay buried beneath centuries of eurocentrism. In this

regard, this re-existence serves to signal the availability of one option, the decolonial option.

My primary concern is to develop the span of queer studies by enabling a dialogue between queer and decolonial analyses, which enables a productive decentering of Euroamerican queer paradigms. The set of questions that frame the discussion in this chapter are:

1. Given the dominance of western models of queerness that are consistently (mis-) construed as templates for queer modernity and global queerness, can a formulation of decolonial queerness (albeit not singular) prompt a regenerative option of *living and experiencing queerness* without reproducing the eurocentric bias?[11]
2. Does the shift from imperial languages (English, French, Spanish, etc.) to another language or culture (here Punjabi) possibly transform itself from linguistic to epistemological redefinition of queerness?[12]
3. And crucially, what does the articulation of decolonial queerness reveal about the trajectory of non-western queerness(es)? Can the move from critique of eurocentrism to the re-construction of the queer non-European other outside the relations of coloniality of power effectively participate in what Quijano terms the 'epistemological reconstitution' whereby differences in queerness does 'not necessarily imply the unequal nature of the "other"' and is 'not necessarily the basis of domination'?[13]

Queer Eurocentrism

In the provocative video rendition of the song 'Kamasutra' from the album *Festival* (2002–3),[14] the renowned Italian sister duo Paola and Chiara engage in a highly sexualized performance of female same-sex desire. Inscribed in the contemporary trend of lesbian hypervisibility for male spectatorship, which global artists such as Madonna, Britney Spears, and Christina Aguilera have popularized in recent years, Paola and Chiara's act extends the visual limits of lesbian sexual pleasure by incorporating scenes of explicit sadomasochism with glossy PVC strap-on and other leather outfits. The cascade of images that accompanies the rhythmic and ecstatic incantation of Kamasutra creates the impression of an unproblematic, harmonious emancipation of queer female sexuality. Throughout the song, heterosexual desire appears restricted as its representation remains confined to the television screen that the sisters watch intermittently. It seems as though heterosexuality

relates to a distant past and inevitably functions as a sign of faded memory. Where bright spotlights enhance the sensual quality of the corps à corps between the sisters, etiolated images of male-female lovemaking serve to displace heterosexual desire as the master signi-fier. For a brief instant, an almost inaudible sound of Punjabi women singing a traditional folk song 'ਕਾਲ਼ੇਆਂ ਬਾਗ਼ਾਂ ਦੀ ਮੇਂਹੰਦੀ' ('Dark Henna of the Gardens') interrupts the Italian-language song.[15] As the Punjabi voices merge with the Italian rhythms, the verbal cadences replicate the visual contrast between same-sex and heterosexual desire. Like heterosexuality in the visual arrangement, the remote voices of the Punjabi women exist as a mnemonic as well as partial presence in the overall vocal composition of Paola and Chiara. The final audio sequence literally effaces the sharp and irregular Punjabi beats, and the sisters end the song in soft tones.

The inclusion and ultimate suppression of the Punjabi song in the sisters' purported queer performance depends on a eurocentred inter-pretation of Indian culture in terms of temporal stereotypes. The fading voices of the Punjabi women invariably recall the visual sequence of heterosexuality as anterior to the lesbian act. Like the almost invisible images of heterosexuality, the gradual obliteration of the Punjabi song locates it in a binary relation to the Italian song. North Indian queer folk culture, which 'Dark Henna' references, appears as a former, almost ancient version of the politically *mature* queer presentation by the duo.[16] Clearly, in this context, South Asian queer configurations are subjugated in conventional western narratives of modernity whereby constructions of '"Third World" sexualities as anterior, pre-modern, and in need of Western political development ... are recirculated by contemporary gay and lesbian transnational politics.'[17] In other words, they become the past, the earlier template of the modern Kamasutra of the west. The embedded binaries of tradition/modernity, old/new and non-modern/modern acquire renewed sustenance through an assumed linear notion of time and history, which positions, in a eurocentric bind, Paola and Chiara's performance at the centre of modernity.

Dussel's scrutiny of the allegedly 'emancipatory "concept" of modernity' with the 'concomitant "fallacy of developmentalism"' resulting from eurocentrism is particularly apposite to comprehend the notion of temporal modern/non-modern distinction. By anterioriz-ing the Punjabi song, the sisters extend Hegel's 'idea of a "necessary" movement of history from East to West,' to borrow from Dussel.[18] Within queer studies, the category of modernity is mobilized in an attempt to depict the west as progressive and temporally advanced. Current manifestations include, among others, Barack Obama, Hilary Clinton, and David Cameron's self-positioning as champions of queer

rights.[19] Such discourses imbricate the postcolonial third world in teleological narratives of development and progress, and exemplify what Chakrabarty labels the 'measure of cultural distance ... between the West and the non-West' and in the field of queer studies, what Ratna Kapur calls tenets of the 'newly emerging hegemonic, colonising queer.'[20] As Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin Manalansan explain, the underlying notion of these tendencies is 'a premodern, pre-political, non-Euro-American queerness' that must follow Western identity categories 'in order to attain political consciousness, subjectivity, and global modernity.'[21] Further, in her study of queer nationalism, Puar contends that 'even as patriotism immediately after September 11 was inextricably tied to a reinvigoration of heterosexual norms for Americans, progressive sexuality was championed as a hallmark of U.S. modernity.'[22] Puar's analysis points to geo-political strategies of temporal distinction between the west and its others that are regularly used as justification of international intervention and aggrandizement in which queer sexualities are co-opted. The song aptly attests to the international circulation of artistic and cultural practices that is manifest in Paola and Chiara's reference to the classical Indian text of *Kama Sutra* and the Punjabi song. As a paradigmatic moment of western cultural theft of third world art, the song follows the routine trajectory of what Gopinath terms 'the standard circuits of commodification and appropriation.'[23] The performance offers an insight into how global modes of consumption underpin questions of queer identity whereby exoticism in the form of South Asian culture can become readily available for the articulation of the western queer subject even whilst the sisters play at being lesbian and do not indeed offer a positive perception of queerness.

By absorbing the literary and cultural forms of expression from other geographical locations, western queer subjectivity simultaneously defines itself in opposition to a non-western Other and opens up mainstream spaces to cross-cultural influences. However, it embodies the exotic otherness of South Asia in a tangential and subordinate relation to western queer sexuality as the exclusive focus on the sexualized bond between the sisters resists any sustained representation of the South Asian elements. Queer sexuality, framed within the dominant western cultural specificity of fusion between the east and the west, elides and occludes alternative spaces of cultural expression when such spaces encounter their western counterparts. In other words, the centrality of the incestuous relation between Paola and Chiara inevitably marginalizes and results in the erasure of non-western cultural spaces that the song invoked in the first place.

Interestingly, both citations of South Asian culture in the song 'Kamasutra' are dependent upon diasporic articulations of the nation.

The US-based Indian filmmaker Mira Nair directed *Kama Sutra: A Love Story* (1996), and the Punjabi song features in her internationally acclaimed film *Monsoon Wedding* (2001).[24] Paola and Chiara's references thus borrow from diasporic translations of South Asian culture, and make evident the transnational trajectory of cultural and literary representations. The incorporation of exotic themes in fact illustrates how third world cultural practices systematically require diasporic revision and adaptation in order to become intelligible in the west.[25] Furthermore, the direct reliance on diasporic frameworks to (re-)present postcolonial national cultures regulates the movement of non-western cultural products. Extending the paradigm of capitalist regulation of goods, I suggest that South Asian cultural products necessitate the process of validation through the diasporas prior to their entry as global commodities. By opting for Nair's version of Indian culture, the sisters control and command the access of third world cultural practices in first world markets.

Walking Away

Paola and Chiara's allusions to South Asia demand additional scrutiny as they obliterate complex histories of South Asian queer sexuality. Vatsyayana's text *Kama Sutra* (fourth century C.E.) has gained popularity in the west, as Michael J. Sweet notes, for 'its treatment of sex in its more mechanical aspects, although that only forms a part of its subject matter.'[26] It also offers an examination of non-normative sexuality such that 'the proponents of a gay liberation ideology … have sometimes refashioned this text according to their own wishes.'[27] Even though the reference to the ancient text *Kama Sutra* is a coded acknowledgement of its queer aspect within the thematic specificity of the song, it explicitly functions as a complement to the performance of the sisters. On the other hand, Punjabi folk songs with all-female voices and dance performance called *Giddha*, conventionally feature in wedding rituals and celebrations in North India and Pakistan. Culturally, they are markers of female homosocial spaces and often involve overtly sexual lyrics and homoerotic performances. In her critical evaluation of Nair's diasporic refashioning of female folk songs, Gopinath suggests that she replaces the 'queer potential' of the female homosocial place by 'straight female bonding' in *Monsoon Wedding*.[28] Similarly, in referencing the Punjabi song, Paola and Chiara evidently point to the space of queer female pleasure that it occupies. However, the gradual absorption and elision of the song 'The Henna of Dark Gardens' forecloses the possibility of South Asian queer female pleasure even while it evokes it. The South

Asian voices are abrasively absorbed and occluded in the Italian setting. To borrow from Dussel, Paola and Chiara's liberatory sexuality is 'constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity that is its ultimate content.'[29] Yet, the silencing of the non-western subject is in effect the erasure of female homoeroticism with its enduring legacy of homosocial history in South Asia, especially since the sisters fashionably appropriate queerness. Therefore, the song establishes queerness as a western construction in which queer elements from the global south can only become visible when they serve to augment, highlight and complement western queerness.

The elision of South Asian homoeroticism in the pastiche of queer identity resonates with the routine process of commodification of third world items in a first world context, a process that neither acknowledges nor disputes the global hegemony of the west. Two other critical instances of the regular absorption and erasure of the global south in *products* of the north include performances of Boy George and Queen. The band Culture Club's song 'Karma Chameleon' (1983) topped the charts in the UK and became a successful single globally establishing Boy George's queerness/androgyny as the single most defining feature of the song.[30] I would aver that Boy George's queerness precludes the meaning of the Hindu concept of Karma even though it is summoned in the title. More significantly, the music video sets the scene in Mississippi in 1870 and depicts cross-racial relations in incredibly benign terms. Queerness, I would argue, predicates upon and glosses over racism and becomes problematic in this regard. The second example concerns the literal erasure of the third world marker from the band Queen's main singer, Freddie Mercury. Often regarded as an iconic queer figure, Freddie Mercury was born Farookh Bulsara to Parsi-Indian parents in Zanzibar. His father worked for the colonial administration. The foreseeable suppression of his Parsi name and the adoption of the name Freddie Mercury speaks to the ways in which queer diasporic renditions in the first world produce the injunction of *leaving behind* the history of the third world. It is a similar movement to the incorporation of Nair's diasporic rhythms into Paola and Chiara's song.

However, by investigating the particularly effaced moment that is the queer experience of Giddha, I refuse the eurocentric linear east-to-west movement and its concomitant teleological sequence of progress and development, which inexorably posit western formations as central to articulations of modernity. My insistence on Punjabi women's folk songs and performances is particularly critical of the traditional assumptions about the modernity of the west, assumptions that foreclose any engagement with the complex colonial and postcolonial queer histories of South Asia. Concurrently, it signals a commitment to the

promise of a queer/decolonial reading of cultural practices. Paola and Chiara's song proffers a critical point of reference in addressing the multiple issues that constitute the work of decolonizing queerness. With this in mind, I follow Quijano's call 'to learn to free ourselves from the Eurocentric mirror where our image is always, necessarily distorted.'[31] Seeking to interrupt practices of absorption and gradual obliteration of non-western/non-white subjects in dominant western productions that, like the Italian song, expunge local specificity from global products, I *walk away* from the regular, matter-of-fact silencing and marginalization of non-western practices when considered in relation to their occidental counterparts.

The Decolonial Option for Queerness

Eurocentrism is not a geographical construct. Instead it functions as a relationality that creates the 'South' in relation to the 'North.' In several instances it sustains and reproduces itself through processes of epistemological colonization. The ability to delink from such processes, as Mignolo suggests, can create the conditions for effective epistemological decolonization. This movement of delinking is, in my view, the movement of *walking away* from 'the Totality of Western epistemology, grounded in Latin and Greek and expanded around the globe by means of the six imperial and vernacular European languages of modernity.'[32] In this chapter, the enactment of *walking away* from imperial languages and cultures materializes as *walking towards* Punjabi as both language and culture. It *is* a move towards the decolonial option, which is nothing more than *an option* among other options. In Mignolo's words, this option is distinct from a 'mission' or the 'civilizing mission' since it is not constructed around 'abstract universalisms'; instead it is characterized by 'a world of "truths" in parenthesis.' 'Thinking decolonially,' in this context, '(that is, thinking within the frame of the decolonial option) means to start from "enunciation" and not from "representation" … The enunciation is constituted by certain actors, languages, and categories of thoughts, beliefs, and sensing.' [33] This implies that in the domain of queer studies, like the editors of the recent issue of *GLQ* titled 'Area Impossible,' I attempt to 'reinvent, from the are(n)as of the stories told, new queer idioms of the geopolitical.'[34] The option of reading specifically those purportedly traditional instances of Punjabi cultural practices that surface at the heart of heteronormative institutions such as marriage, births, and other scripted/conventional life events gestures towards a delinking from imperial languages and cultures and, a decolonial shift towards other '"truths" in parenthesis.'

Foregrounding the long-standing customs and rites that animate a wedding, birth or significant heteronormative life-events, Giddha offers a spectacle of song and dance accompanied by drum beats in the Punjab regions of both India and Pakistan. The key manifestations of Giddha include the Mehendi (Henna) ceremony, the Batna (turmeric paste) ceremony, Jaago (all night dance in the village), ladies sangeet (music and dance before any wedding), Ghodi (when sisters sing for their brother's wedding) and other performances linked to the change of seasons and celebration of new-borns. The performances are all-female spectacles, marked by the absence of men in the women-centric rituals and enscripted in highly coded rituals. These bodily, sometimes bawdy sensations are characterized by physical indeterminacy which results in women playing male parts in the performance or participating in homosocial pleasure of affection, community and embrace. I suggest that Giddha creates and ceaselessly recreates the experience of female pleasure through a recall of the historically contingent availability of an enduring cultural practice. Further, the marginalization of biological males by their non-presence functions not only as a covert critique of heteropatriarchy as the women articulate their own oppression by redrawing the lines of oppressive social organization, it also enables a queer space where women's bodies through the enactment of physical desire are affirmed in homoerotic embrace. Patently, these queer performances, considered in the arena of domestic space, enable an escape even though momentary from the quotidian life of labour.

Following the investment of women of colour feminists and third world feminist scholars in critiquing differential racialized oppression of women, a remarkable oversight in white feminist studies, María Lugones problematizes and revises Quijano's conceptualization of 'coloniality of power.' Her focus on historical analyses of gendered sexuality makes racial heteropatriarchy emerge as a key signifier of the colonial/modern gender system that is entrenched in systems of eurocentred global power. The decolonial possibility, that Lugones highlights, decentres the 'binary, hierarchical, oppressive gender formation that rests on male supremacy without any clear understanding of the mechanisms by which heterosexuality, capitalism, and racial classification are impossible to understand apart from each other.'[35] Affirming the availability of pre-colonial multifarious genders and sexualities with examples from Yoruba and Native American cultures, she asserts that, 'as global, Eurocentered capitalism was constituted through colonization, gender differentials were introduced where there were none' in cultures which 'recognized "third" gendering and homosexuality positively' and consistently offered 'a gynecentric construction of knowledge … that counters the knowledge production of

modernity.'[36] Locating my discussion of the decolonial option for South Asian queerness in this frame, I suggest that through the numerous gender trajectories that have continued uninterruptedly in pre- and post-colonial times, Giddha performances excavate the historiography of possible gender and sexual configuration(s). The cultural archive that is uncovered in the endlessly repeated gestures of women masquerading as men opens up the unbroken stream of women's homosocial bonding, 'the gynecentric construction of knowledge,' that memory through Punjabi mehendi songs and *boliyaan* (couplets) keeps intact.

There is an established history of men participating as women in Sufi poetry or Punjabi songs. Complimenting this routine aesthetic experience is the almost ritual/religious role of *hijras* (neither men nor women) in South Asian cultures. However, placing the emphasis on women's experience of ritual, even homosocial rituals, shows the violence of the 'dark side of the gender system,'[37] to borrow from Lugones, that in the case of hijras allows celebration of the birth of male heirs thus reflecting upon their own perceived non-masculinity and for women often results in forced subjugation or even death in heteropatriarchal structures. It is precisely the masquerade of gender in Giddha that enables a critique of violence enacted upon women's bodies.[38]

The plausibility of female queer sexuality is initiated in the female-to-male gender inscription. Commenting upon all-women spaces in India, Zakia Pathak underscores the 'ritual recognition of the need for the release of emotions in uninhibited speech' during 'social, secular, gatherings of women at the wedding ceremony' where 'bawdiness is freely allowed.'[39] Similarly, Gopinath argues that 'a Giddha performance itself, in its production of female homosocial space, may allow for forms of female intimacy that exceed the heteronormative.'[40] As in the staged performance 'ਮੇਹੰਦੀ ਮੇਹੰਦੀ' ('Henna, Henna'),[41] the simulation of the heterosexual act by women iterates and enhances the queer aesthetic of the performance.[42] In the context of South Asian cultures, women playing men are particularly insightful instances of the relation between genders—and I am carefully using the pluralized form of the term 'gender' here—since the crossing of genders has often been subject to heteronormative gendered hierarchies. Men playing women's role in local theatres in India and Pakistan, and in dance performances such as the Kathakali, signal the control of access to public space for women. That Giddha embodies the space of women performing men and simultaneously enables the expression of sexual desire between women indicates the iterative possibility of queerness that lies outside the colonial modern/gender system. The recuperation of the homoerotic pleasures in Giddha by Bollywood in several song-and-dance sequences constructed around marriage rituals emblematizes the potential of

its queer genealogy. In addition, the effacement of the Punjabi song in Paola and Chiara's performance, cited in the previous section, is constitutive of the erasure of the oral archive of Punjabi queerness.

Queer Decolonial Aesthesis

Decolonial aestheSis is a movement that is naming and articulating practices that challenge and subvert the hegemony of modern/colonial aestheSis. Decolonial aestheSis starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception. Modern aestheTics have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices, or, more precisely, other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving. Decolonial aestheSis is an option that delivers a radical critique to modern, postmodern, and altermodern aestheTics and, simultaneously, contributes to making visible decolonial subjectivities at the confluence of popular practices of re-existence, artistic installations, theatrical and musical performances, literature and poetry, sculpture and other visual arts.[43]

In the staged performance titled 'ਵੇ ਗੁਰਦਿਤੇ ਦੇਆ ਲਾਲਾ' ('O Gurditey's father'),[44] a woman, the grandmother of the bride, sits in the centre of a group of women clapping their hands to the rhythms of her song in which she plays the mother of a boy called Gurdit. Another woman, her own daughter, sits close to her, wearing the dupatta in the form of a turban, playing Gurdit's father. The grandmother wraps her orange silk dupatta on her face to mark/to parody the inhibition in women and their expressions. She sings to her husband, Gurdit's father, about the cycle of pregnancy whereby from the first month to the eighth month her desire for lemons, mangoes and sour foods becomes increasingly pressing. As Gurdit's father comforts her with simple utterances of affirmation to her mounting pain, she becomes impatient and curses him. The beats of the song participate in the urgency with which the grandmother recounts the advance of the pregnancy. Both the women regularly engage in a queer embrace where Gurdit's mother pushes away her husband. She says, 'ਮੈਨੂੰ ਪੁਹਾਡਾ ਪਾਕੇ ਤੂੰ ਪਜਾ ਵੇਹਲਾ ਫਿਰਦਾ' ('You put me in this trouble and now you are roaming free'). Sexual labour that results in the pregnancy becomes the focus of her curses.

The performance instantiates the resistance of Punjabi women against

heteropatriarchal oppression. Lugones describes resistant subjectivity as one that 'often expresses itself infra-politically, rather than in a politics of the public, which has an easy inhabitation of public contestation.' She adds that, 'infra-politics marks the turn inward, in a politics of resistance, toward liberation. It shows the power of communities of the oppressed in constituting resistant meaning against the constitution of social organization by power.'[45] I contend the availability of queer infra-politics in Giddha performances clears the space for a critique of heteropatriarchy. In this regard, the women's hierarchical reversal of gender roles within the frames of queerness actualizes as queer aesthesis in this performance. This queer aesthesis is already (dis-)orientated by the dupatta-turban clad patriarch who attempts to embrace his wife. Even though it is a parodic-cum-blithe enactment, the queer displacement of the husband's authority, as he tries to alleviate his wife's discomfort, generates an overt condemnation of reproductive heteromatrimony.

Queer aesthesis in the performance functions in a non-normative relation to language. In Punjabi cultures the form of address for a husband is acknowledged by language of respect. Often, women do not call their husbands by their names. The word 'ji' functions as a signifier of respect for elders and its several forms can be used to mark respect for husbands. The title of the song therefore omits the husband's name who is simply named as Gurdit's father. However, gendered hierarchies are subtly overturned by the husband's constant incantation of saying 'ਹਾਂਜੀ' ('yes' and adding 'ji') to it while the wife sings her pain. The respect that the husband displays then characterizes the politics of the 'inward turn,' in Lugones's words, in order to critique standard conceptions of gender.

Linguistic wordplay is an indispensable feature of Giddha songs. It is through the subversive management of language codes that the critique of oppressive structures becomes intelligible. English language itself, the over-permeating linguistic, colonial signifier in South Asia, accommodates as a partial presence in the Punjabi couplets of the performance. Critiquing the prevalent practice of polygamy, Gurdit's mother expresses anxiety at her deteriorating health which would prove beneficial to her husband's other wife. She interrogates the father whether her gardens, her silks, her outfits, her cosmetics and her trousseau will all be the property of the other wife. She sings,

ਹਾਏ ਮੇਰੇ ਗੇਹਣੇ ਤੇ ਕੱਪੜੇ, ਹਾਏ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੰਦਲ ਸਲੀਪਰ
ਹਾਏ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੂਟ ਤੇ ਸਿਲਕਾਂ, ਹਾਏ ਮੇਰੀ ਪੌਡਰ ਕਰੀਮਾਂ

ਸਭ ਕੁਛ ਕੌਣ ਸਮੇਸੀ, ਮੇਰੀ ਸੌਕਣ ਸਾਮੇਂ?

(All my jewellery and clothes, all my sandals and slippers,
all my suits and silks, all my powders and creams,
Who will take care of them? Will your other wife inherit them?)

In a carefully nuanced revision of English, she adjusts the pluralized form of the words 'powder,' 'cream,' and 'silk' to harmonize with Punjabi declensions. The queer aesthesis that allows critique of heteropatriarchy redoubles as the queer decolonial aesthesis whereby English *is assimilated into* critical encoding of Punjabi queerness. In this critical vocabulary, words such as 'ਪੌਡਰ' ('podder'), 'ਕਰੀਮਾਂ' ('careemaan') and 'ਸਿਲਕਾਂ' ('silkaan') denote the collapse of conventional distinctions between colonizing and colonized languages in post-colonial global economies of consumption.[46] Colonial linguistic normativity that 'enables the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices,'[47] as Mignolo and Vázquez suggest in their definition of decolonial aesthesis, is re-configured in the queer decolonial bind.

Queer Re-emergence

Reading queerness decolonially opens up new avenues of exciting critical enquiry into queer South Asian formulations. I have attempted to counter the knowledge-producing western formations of modernity through a reading of queer and decolonial transactions which surface when cultural practices such as Giddha, that are deliberately attached to attributes of the 'non-modern' in eurocentric frames, receive sustained critical focus. The over-invested analytical category of queerness can redeem its occidental bias by staging a re-emergence of sorts in its alignment with decoloniality. My proposed reading above is *only one possibility* in the exploration of the queerness of Giddha and other forms of cultural expression from non-white western worlds. As such, queer readings of Giddha can offer multiple critical insights into diasporic revisions of dominant paradigms, configurations of caste hierarchies that have recently been enunciated by the artist Ginni Mahi, the queer patriarchal bond that binds women across generations, uncritical accounts of beauty, narratives of migration, and queer performances of marriage, to name a few. Certainly, the work of building such queer historiography, what Quijano would term, 'epistemological reconstitution,'[48] must remain attentive to the aural/oral nature of this geo-biographical archive.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it is critical to appreciate non-western queerness as another option that does not re-create

the relations of domination or hierarchy with other modes of existence including heterosexuality. Queerness, in this context, neither supersedes nor substitutes extant cultural practices in any geographical location. What I have offered is one legible option of experiencing queerness through the decolonial perspective. This option remains committed to momentous crossings in theories and cultures and hinges on partial, un-recounted and unfinished narrations that will perhaps one day articulate how multiple decolonial and queer futures coincide, collide, and benefit mutually. The visible gaps that this chapter has left behind rest on the optimism that further analyses will engage with those his/herstories, transgender narratives and even queerly *straight*forward anecdotes that I could not recount.

Acknowledgements as Anecdotes

This chapter develops my presentation at the Summer Institute titled 'Towards a Non-Eurocentric Academia: Border Thinking and Decoloniality from Asia to Africa and from Europe to the Americas,' co-organized by the University of North Carolina and Duke University in May 2016.

Audre Lorde and Sara Ahmed, two queer women of colour thinkers of our times have emphasized the power of (queer) anecdotes to reshape our presents and reimagine our futures. Writing, telling, retelling our stories, our anecdotes can be both daunting and emancipatory. Below are two anecdotes to underscore the significance of why this chapter, this work is important to me.

Anecdote I

In January 2015, my mentors and research collaborators, Suhraiya Jivraj, Silvia Posocco, and myself met in Ile Saint Louis in Paris to organize the first draft of the present collection. We were still in the process of reading the contributions and were reflecting upon the timescale for corrections, redrafts, revisions, and other matters. The television in the flat constantly relayed the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting along with the escalation of threat of war from various French political formations. We wondered if we would ever terminate our three-day editorial meeting in a satisfactory manner given the violently morose atmosphere in Paris. However, the collective care, the lunch and dinner outings and walks, the *choux* pastries and couscous maintained an extraordinary semblance of routine reality that enabled the successful completion of our meeting.

Anecdote II:

As a child I considered all languages to be a single language. The realization of difference in languages occurred when I was travelling on holiday in Punjab in the 1980s. Seeing the Punjab Roadways buses was a routine sight, and yet, once, my father asked me to read the destination written on the buses. I wondered how my father who taught me complex mathematical operations could not actually read the boards on the buses. I realized that they were in Punjabi. My mother and I are the only ones who can read Punjabi among my people. This memory has made me more sensitive to the loss of language since Punjabi will diminish with me in the family. My sister does not read or write it and my niece and nephew cannot even speak it. Surely it must mean *something* to have the gift of a language that binds me in a bond with my mother despite my (un-)settled re-homing in French.

Notes

1   Enrique Dussel 'Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures),' *Boundary* 2 20/3 (1993), 65–76, 66.

2   Recent studies expose the recuperation of queer rights discourse for neoliberal agenda. For instance, queer scholars suggest that 'sexuality, in the form of gay rights, is increasingly taken up by both liberal and conservative forces as a dominant marker of "western values," which then serves as a key trope in the global war against terror.' Stacy Douglas, Suhraiya Jivraj and Sarah Lamble, 'Liabilities of Queer Anti-Racist Critique,' *Feminist Legal Studies* 19 (2011), 107–18, 109.

3   See, Dussel, 'Eurocentrism and Modernity'; Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America,' *Nepantla: Views from South* 1/3 (2000), 533–80; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

4   Walter Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto,' *Transmodernity* 1/2 (2011), 44–66, 49.

5   Walter Mignolo, 'Global Coloniality and World Disorder: Decoloniality after Decolonization and Dewesternization after the Cold War,' *World Public Forum: Dialogue of Civilizations* (January 2016), accessed 16 September 2016, http://www.wpfdc.org/blog/society/19627-global-coloniality-and-the-world-disorder.

6   Achille Mbembe presents the European myth-making of history as a relation of the self to the same self. He notes that this meta-narrative, this

'auto-fiction,' and 'auto-contemplation' leads to a closure of any space for the other. Achille Mbembe, *Critique de la Raison Nègre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), 9–10.

7   Quijano asserts that 'the Eurocentric pretension to be the exclusive producer and protagonist of modernity … is an ethnocentric pretension and, in the long run, provincial.' Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power,' 544.

8   Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 24.

9   Walter Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom,' *Theory, Culture & Society* 26/7–8 (2009), 1–23, 2.

10 Mignolo argues that, in the western narratives of modernity, non-European territories appear as 'places of nonthought' i.e. 'of myth, non-western religions, folklore, underdevelopment involving regions and people,' who 'have been waking up from the long process of westernization.' Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience,' 3.

11 For similar discussions of western models of queerness, see, Ruth Vanita, ed., *Queering India: Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002); Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F Manalansan IV, eds., *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002).

12 In a similar vein, Raju Rage and Mia Nikasimo's contributions in this volume work to underscore the problematic relation of imperial language to queer of colour realities.

13 Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,' *Cultural Studies* 21/2–3 (2007), 168–78, 177.

14 Paola and Chiara, 'Kamasutra,' *YouTube*, accessed 16 September 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m847IUUby6w&spfreload=10

15 For one version, see 'Kaalean Baagab de Mehndi,' *YouTube,* accessed 16 September 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTvkwthqH8Q).

16 In terms of historical narratives, Dussel argues that Hegel's philosophical arguments locate 'Asia in a state of "immaturity" or "childhood" (*Kindheit*).' Dussel, 'Eurocentrism and Modernity,' 69.

17 Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 12.

18 Dussel cites from Hegel's *Lectures* (1955): 'The movement of Universal History goes from the East to the West. Europe is the absolute end of Universal History. Asia is its beginning.' Dussel, 'Eurocentrism and Modernity,' 69.

19 For Cameron's intervention on aid conditionality, see 'Cameron warns of African aid cuts to anti-gay countries,' *BBC*, accessed 16 September 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15243409. Recently, in the Rio Olympics August 2016, another perverse effect of this discourse has become apparent in the straight US journalist Nico Hines's outing of allegedly gay athletes from countries with explicit laws against homosexuality. See,

'Straight Journalist Cruises Grindr at the Olympics, Outs Athletes From Anti-Gay Countries,' *Towerload*, accessed 16 September 2016, http://www.towleroad.com/2016/08/grindr-olympics/.

20 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe, 7*; Ratna Kapur, 'Multi-tasking Queer: Reflections on the Possibilities of Homosexual Dissidence in Law,' *Jindal Global Law Review* 4/1 (2012), 36–59, 47.

21 Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan, *Queer Globalizations, 5–6*. The deployment of queerness as a marker of Western modernity is documented and critiqued by Cindy Patton in her informed analysis of lesbian and gay rights in Taiwan. She explains how queer human rights discourse becomes complicit with a masculinist agenda of nationalism. See, 'Stealth Bombers of Desire: The Globalization of "Alterity" in Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan, *Queer Globalizations*, 195–218.

22 Puar, Terrorist Assemblages, 41.

23 Gopinath, *Impossible Desires, 29*.

24 See clip from 'Monsoon Wedding,' *YouTube*, accessed 16 September 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8nYL4NsAYk).

25 For an insightful assessment of Monsoon Wedding as a diasporic product that, in several ways, explains Indian culture to the world, see Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*, 114–26. She asserts that, 'Nair functions as native informant and tour guide who traffics in the production of "authenticity" for the global marketplace.' Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*, 115.

26 Michael J. Sweet, 'Eunuchs, Lesbians, and Other Mythical Beasts: Queering and De-queering the *Kama Sutra*,' *in Vanita, Queering India*, 77–84, 77.

27 Sweet, 'Eunuchs, Lesbians,' 77.

28 Gopinath, Impossible Desires, 120.

29 Dussel, 'Eurocentrism and Modernity,' 65.

30 Culture Club 'Karma Chameleon,' *YouTube*, accessed 16 September 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmcA9LIIXWw.

31 Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power,' 574.

32 Mignolo, 'Delinking,' 493.

33 Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, 'Decolonial Options and Artistic/AestheSic Entanglements: An Interview with Walter Mignolo,' *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3/1 (2014), 196–212, 198–9.

34 Anjali Arondekar and Geeta Patel, 'Area Impossible: Notes toward an Introduction,' *GLQ* 22/2 (2016), 151–71, 166. Compare with Mignolo, who argues that decolonial thinking implies a change in the content and the terms of the foundation of knowledge systems. He says that, 'changing the terms of the conversation implies going beyond disciplinary or interdisciplinary controversies and the conflict of interpretations.' Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience,' 4. Within queer studies, Arondekar and Patel similarly point to the challenge of re-writing geo-political and geo-historical queer narratives that are not informed by the centrality of the US, since 'such explorations were and continue to be resolutely contemporary and drawn primarily from the United States; that is, geopolitics provides the

exemplars, but rarely the epistemologies.' Arondekar and Patel, 'Area Impossible,' 152. Also see, Arondekar's work on the im/possibility of recovering the historical archive of same-sex relations in the South Asia within the context of Eurocentric queer studies in Anjali Arondekar, 'In the Absence of Reliable Ghosts: Sexuality, Historiography, South Asia,' *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 25/3 (2015), 98–121.

35 María Lugones, 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System,' *Hypatia* 22/1 (2007), 186–209, 187. Complimentary to Lugones's framing of racialized imposition of heterosexuality, Shefali Chandra provides the specificities of its implementation in India where caste, sexuality, and white female sexuality interacted to create differential structures of power. Shefali Chandra, 'Whiteness on the Margins of Native Patriarchy: Race, Caste, Sexuality, and the Agenda of Transnational Studies,' Feminist Studies 1 (2011), 127–153, 128.

36 Lugones, 'Heterosexualism,' 196. In her work on lesbian sexuality and visibility in contemporary India, Naisargi Dave points to a similar system of oppressive coloniality of power whereby 'queer women in India had not felt themselves torn between sexuality and nation until that incommensurability was strategically introduced in an act of interpellation that worked to contain an increasingly socially disruptive intensity.' Naisargi N. Dave, 'Indian and Lesbian and What Came Next: Affect, Commensuration, and Queer Emergences,' *American Ethnologist* 38/4 (2011), 650–65, 660.

37 Lugones, 'Heterosexualism,' 206.

38 In her work on Bhangra (Punjabi men's performances), Gopinath expounds on the re-imagining of the nation in the UK that incorporates South Asian sound communities. In her view, the over-saturating impulse of equating Punjabi music primarily with Bhangra is highly problematic since it results in the erasure of Giddha and women-only experience. The diasporic rendition of the modern/colonial gender system, in this case, congeals into a masculine postcolonial (re-)presentation of colonized cultures. See, Gopinath, Impossible Desires, 29–62.

39 Zakia Pathak, 'Defamiliarizing Practices: The Scene of Feminist Pedagogy,' in *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, eds. Joan W. Scott, Kora Caplan and Debra Keates (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 341–354, 349.

40 Gopinath, Impossible Desires, 49.

41 See clip from 'Ucha Dar Babe Nanak Da' (1982), *YouTube*, accessed 16 September 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h9SdlWC2bI

42 The diasporic performance of 'ਮੇਹੰਦੀ ਮੇਹੰਦੀ' ('Henna, Henna') by one male lead performer in a YouTube video titled 'Master Deepak Mehndi Mehndi Mehndi,' (accessed 16 September 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Iy2qzFFJGc) demonstrates how queerness re-circulates in transnational articulations.

43 Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez, 'Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings,' *Social Text* (2013), accessed

16 September 2016, http://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aesthesis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/.

44 'Ve Gurditte Deya Lala,' *YouTube,* accessed 16 September 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNzal9iYAR8

45 María Lugones, 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism,' *Hypatia* 25/4 (2010), 742–59, 746.

46 Hijras, for instance, use language queerly in order to confound the feminine/masculine binary. See, Kira Hall, 'Go Suck your Husband's Sugarcane: Hijras and the Use of Sexual Insult,' in *Queerly Phrased: Language, Gender and Sexuality,* eds. Anna Livia and Kira Hall (New York: OUP, 1997), 430–60, 448–49.

47 Mignolo and Vázquez, 'Decolonial AestheSis.'

48 Quijano, 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,' 177.

To Be Young, Gay, and African

Diriye Osman

When I first came out to my family, most of them stopped talking to me. My father, who I was very close to, stopped speaking to me for two years before picking up the phone late one night to let me know that my being gay was not only an amoral form of psychic and sexual corruption but also an act of perverse, Western mimicry. I was not only going against my Islamic upbringing but my African heritage as well.

I was born in Somalia, and I spent my formative years living in Nairobi, Kenya, before moving to London. Somalia and Kenya may have many sociological and cultural divisions but both states stand firm on one soil when it comes to the issue of homosexuality. Any form of sexual difference is considered not only repugnant, but also devious precisely because sexual difference in Somalia and Kenya, like most African states, is a narrative best kept to oneself. If you want to spin this story publically and share your experiences as an LGBT person, you had best buckle up and brace yourself for physical abuse, ceaseless harassment, imprisonment, or death. Things are considerably more lenient in Kenya than Somalia amongst the cultural elite, but both nations still have a long way to go when it comes to ensuring basic rights for their respective LGBT communities.

When I came out to my family I did not flinch. I spoke my truth and stood my ground knowing that I would be punished in some way for having the audacity to assert my identity. What upset my family the most was the fact that I was proud of being gay. They could not configure the possibility that after years of silence, timidity, and self-doubt I had finally cultivated courage and the kind of confidence that comes with a hard-won sense of comfort in one's own skin.

I come from a community that has been emotionally and psycho-logically traumatized by decades of civil war, mass migration, and dislocation; a community that has through sheer collective willpower and survivalist instinct managed to rally together to form the tightest, most close-knit networks, with family life as the nucleus. In order to fully belong you must live up to absurd standards of virtue, honour, and

piety. The reality is no one manages this, but the trick is to try or act like you're trying. There are multiple degrees of scorn poured on any form of transgression: a girl without a headscarf is a harlot-in-training, and a teenager with a rebellious streak is ripe for daqan celis—a return to a grim part of Somalia for some much-needed 're-education.' All these taboos become miniscule in comparison to homosexuality. The fact that I wanted to write about my experiences as a young gay Somali did more than grate on my family's nerves. They were incensed enough to threaten me with violence, but I was smart enough to know that as a citizen of the UK there are laws that protect my rights as a gay man. This is a position of privilege, but it's only a position of privilege because I fully understand and exercise these hard-won rights.

I arrived at this point of self-acceptance by doing what came best to me, what generations of the Somali community have always done in order to sustain themselves when crisis kicked off, I told stories. I told stories of what it meant to be young and endure struggle. I told stories of what it meant to fall in love with another man and for that love to be reciprocated in the face of rejection and familial disapproval. I told these stories repeatedly and I wrote them down by drawing on the gorgeous history and culture of the Somali people. It's a natural human impulse to denounce the traditions of those who have rejected you, but I refused to do that. I wrote these stories down and compiled them into a collection of short fiction called *Fairytales For Lost Children*. These stories follow young gay Somalis on the cultural and social periphery of both their adopted homelands of Nairobi and London as well as their motherland, Somalia. These characters experience a wide spectrum of dilemmas whether it is mental illness, civil war, immigration, or complicated family histories. But they still hold on to their sense of humanity and optimism without the need for apology or victimhood.

When I published this book last year I received emails from young LGBT men and women from Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda telling me how much the stories meant to them, and how they felt a sense of solace knowing that I was telling these narratives without shame or fear. Shame and fear are the most potent weapons in the homophobe's arsenal. If one rejects the notion that one has to be ashamed of being gay or lesbian, then half the battle is won.

With each email that I received I would not only encourage and motivate these young men and women as best as I could, but I would also tell them to go out into the world and form meaningful friendships and support networks where they could be themselves without fear of judgement. At a time when LGBT youth across the world are losing their lives to homophobic stigma, it's important to remind them that they are worthy and their lives have value.

As for me, I'm wise enough to know that struggle will always happen. That's just the general texture of a life's pattern. But I keep moving forward in the knowledge that I'm simply a voice in a chorus of voices united in the belief that equality on all fronts is not a privilege but a basic human right that we must continuously fight for and defend.

As for my young fellow LGBT Africans, I will say this again and again because it bears repeating.

It's a beautiful thing to be young, gay, and African.

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This Is How We Soften Our Hearts

Diriye Osman

Daughter, I hope this letter finds you in the best of health. I hope that the world has been kind to you during these past ten years.

Daughter, I am still living in Somalia and the days here are hot and dry and filled with dreams that are never fully realized. Still, this land is ours and this soil belongs to you. This culture, strange and seductive as it is, is the beat that binds us beyond blood. This culture is the only real heirloom I can leave in your name.

Daughter, you were not always my daughter. In my past life, you were my son and I treated you like the sun. When you told me that you were leaving for London to honour your spirit I was stunned into silence. I felt that by becoming a woman you were rejecting me. I felt that by becoming a woman you no longer wanted to be my son. I felt that by becoming a woman you were essentially giving birth to yourself and no longer needed a mother. I felt that by becoming a woman you were denying the fact that I ever mattered to you and this stung. I became a ball of spite and misplaced anger. I spliced the chord that connected us and allowed my silence to speak for me.

Daughter, are you happy? Have you found what you were looking for? I wonder, every day, if you have found joy, peace and a sense of belonging. At night, I stare at the moon and I wonder if you are doing the exact same thing at that moment. Our relationship was always symbiotic and synergistic that way.

Daughter, you do not know this but I have been diagnosed with cancer and it has spread from my uterus to all my organs. The doctors tell me I don't have much time left. This letter is a small parting gift. I may have faltered and made many mistakes but I don't want you to take the path I have chosen. I am not a schooled woman like yourself but there are small wisdoms I have learned along the way and would like to share with you in the hopes that they will endow you with a sense of possibility in moments of doubt and fear.

Daughter, I want you to form the most intense, loving relationship with yourself. Only then will you realize your capacity for kindness

and emotional expansiveness. Daughter, after you have formed this relationship with yourself, I want you to love others with the openness and humility that you always embodied as a child. Daughter, I want you to forgive easily, laugh loudly and never allow yourself to become the invisible silent woman that your mother was. Daughter, this is how we soften our hearts and become better, more fully-realized human beings.

Daughter, by the time you receive this letter I will not be here. I will have undergone my own transition. I am scared and I do not want to go, but we rarely get a say in these matters. I am proud of the woman you have become and as I transition from this life into the next I want you to know that you have value. I will transition in the knowledge that my daughter has made this terrifying journey before me and is now reborn, a miracle child, strong and steady, painting this complex world with her own astonishing splashes of colour.

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Femininty in Men Is a Source of Power

Diriye Osman

When I first told my friends that I would be wearing a pearl-studded, brocaded mock-Elizabethan gown, bustier and fancy ruff for the cover of my book, *Fairytales For Lost Children*, they were doubtful. In the past I had flirted with androgyny by wearing women's jewellery and a dash of perfume but I had never worn a dress. To my friends, though the notion of a man wearing a dress meant having an extra pair of balls, it seemed essentially perverse. But to me the idea made perfect sense. My book was about gay Somalis exploring their sexual identities and gender roles, so why not riff on these motifs by donning a jewel-encrusted queen's dress?

I liked the flamboyant cheekiness of the concept, but when I went to the costumier for my first fitting that sense of cheekiness gave way to something more dynamic and surprising. As the costumier strapped me into the corset I didn't feel constricted. Instead, I felt—and looked—ice-cool, sensual, beautiful, powerful, virile.

In 'Against Interpretation and Other Essays,' Susan Sontag argues that, 'What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine.' To me, this is the most elegant breakdown of the Jungian theory of anima and animus—the feminine principle within men and the masculine principle within women.

Some of our most influential cultural figures—David Bowie and Prince in particular—have straddled this dichotomy for decades. Miles Davis summed up Prince's visceral sex appeal as such: 'He's got that raunchy thing, almost like a pimp and a bitch all wrapped up in one image, that transvestite thing.'

In Somali culture hyper-masculinity is the most desired attribute in men. Femininity signifies softness, a lightness of touch: qualities which are aggressively pressed onto young girls and women. When a woman does not possess feminine traits it is considered an act of mild social resistance. This precept applies equally to men who are not overtly masculine but the stakes are considerably amplified. If a Somali man is

considered feminine he is deemed weak, helpless, pitiful: the underlying message being that femininity is inherently inferior to masculinity.

Variants of this thinking extend across most cultures, belief systems, races and sexualities: Western gay culture is as obsessed with exaggerated masculine traits as the patriarchs of Somali clans. Femininity is predominantly perceived as an unappealing quality, a cancelling-out of hyper-valorized masculine traits, with effemiphobia reaching its natural end-point on the online gay dating circuit with the infamous 'No fems' or 'be straight-acting' tags that pop up on most profiles.

In the case of gay men one could argue that decades if not centuries of stigmatization have created a culture of conformity fuelled by internalized homophobia: the accusation—and it is framed as an accusation—that same-sex-attracted men fail to be authentically masculine has left an enduring mark. But where does that leave everyone else who doesn't fit the 'straight-acting' tag? After all weren't the Stonewall riots, the birth of the gay civil rights movement, kick-started by the transgender community, drag queens and effeminate young men—the most outcast members of the gay community? Shouldn't they be our heroes?

The case for effemiphobia often hinges on a threadbare argument against 'camp' overexposure. Prominent and popular performers like Paul O' Grady, Graham Norton, and Alan Carr are constantly cited as stereotypes of what an imagined mainstream society wants from their gay performers: flamboyant, with outsized, unthreatening, and mostly desexualised personalities. But it takes a tremendous amount of chutzpah to be as charming, cheeky, and exuberant as O'Grady, Norton, and Carr have been throughout their careers. Each of these performers has mined his experience as an effeminate gay man into comedic gold, and each one is now giggling all the way to the bank.

The position of these men as wealthy performers, however, obscures their outlier statuses, and their success is not an accurate representation of the daily stigma and abuse that many feminine men, whether gay, bisexual, asexual, or straight, have had to endure from the straight community and certain sections of the LGBT community.

The American writer, Dan Savage, who co-created the 'It Gets Better Campaign' to tackle the issue of suicides amongst gay teenagers who were being bullied because of their sexual orientation, put it succinctly: 'It's often the effeminate boys and the masculine girls, the ones who violate gender norms and expectations, who get bullied.'

I contemplated these issues as I toiled with my dress to the photographer's studio. The outfit was heavier than I expected and I was sweating by the time I arrived. After I mopped myself down and gathered myself

together the makeup artist helped me get into the dress. As she laced my corset I thought how strange it was that I, an African man living in the twenty-first century, would willingly strap myself into the kind of constricting garments that European women had fought so hard to resist a hundred years ago. I remained ambivalent until my makeup was done, until I glanced in the mirror and saw something I had never seen within myself before: a sense of poise, daring even. I had morphed from a shy, timid young man into someone who was bold, unafraid to take risks. I stood before the camera and gazed directly at the lens. There was no need for validation. The photographer didn't have to give me directions. I knew what I was doing. I struck confident pose after pose, proud of the fact that there was a hard-won sense of power in my femininity.

Theoretical Coalitions and Multi-Issue Activism: 'Our Struggles Will Be Intersectional or They Will Be Bullshit!'

Sirma Bilge

Zoraida Reyes was a 28-year old trans woman and migrant rights activist committed to building a multi-issue immigrant rights movement, one that takes into account transgender and queer struggles. She was killed, her body found in a parking lot at a fast-food restaurant in Anaheim, California on 12 June 2014. In her tribute to Reyes's life and legacy, her friend and fellow activist Kitzia Esteva-Martinez points out how the police called her death suspicious but not yet a murder. Her testimony sheds light on the complexity of structural conditions that make Ms Reyes and people like her, i.e. undocumented trans and queer migrants of colour, one of the most vulnerable segment of society to state and interpersonal violence. It is worth quoting Esteva-Martinez's tribute at length:

> So many transmigrants and Trans women of color have been hurt and murdered in the last few months […]. We need to build communities and movements where the lives of our undocumented trans sisters and trans sisters of color are no longer under threat and treated as disposable.
>
> I met Zoraida in college at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where we were involved in some of the same student organizations. We quickly built a friendship around our undocumented, queer experiences. During that time, she began her transition and hormone therapy and needed a social support system for transitioning that didn't exist at white, heteronormative, affluent UCSB.
>
> Zoraida joined an undocumented student group I was in that focused on campaigning for the DREAM Act and institutional support for undocumented students. We thought the organization was a safer space, so I asked that it also provide opportunities for those of us who were queer to have emotional support. The president of the group responded that if we wanted a support group that talked about 'gay issues,' we

needed *something separate* because most people could not relate to our experience. But it was important to me that we had *an intersectional space*, where the material and social needs of Undocu-queer and trans folks were a critical part of our fight.

Weeks later, at the same space, a very harsh, transphobic comment was made. Zoraida and I stormed out the room, never to return. Back then, I felt self-righteous for walking away with her from a space that was just being built and already reproducing homophobia and transphobia. But, I wished I stayed to challenge that reproduction of oppression, which targeted me as a cis queer woman and her as Trans, and fought for a place of leadership for queer and transmigrants. Today, we are still building spaces that address queer and trans issues in the immigrant rights movement.[1]

The murder of Zoraida Reyes is predominantly understood as an individual crime, a law and order issue—an ideologically charged pre-ferred reading that prevents us from seeing and challenging its structural bedrocks. Transgender people of colour in the US are victim of violence at a shocking rate, in particular transgender women of colour. A 2013 report by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) found that transgender women of colour were the victims of 67% of all hate-motivated homicides against LGBT people. Often, these murders are characterized by macabre violence and remain unsolved, while local media and police routinely misgender victims and insinuate that they have drawn this tragedy by their 'life style' (sex work, etc.). From an intersectional perspective, these murders cannot be dissociated from the sinister work of a matrix of domination that underlies the everyday life of trans of colour. As Samantha Master and Beth Sherouse note in a *Root* article on 30 January 2015:

> These tragedies occur at the intersection of racism, transphobia, misogyny and homophobia—forms of discrimination that work together to force transgender people of color into poverty; deny them employment, housing, access to health care and fair treatment from law enforcement; and in too many cases result in death. This creates a situation in which lives are literally put in peril because they are denied access to safety net services including emergency shelters and rape crisis centers.[2]

The refusal to give space and legitimacy for queer and trans realities and concerns within a support group for undocumented students, where Zoraida and her friend hoped finding consideration and help, is symptomatic of a persistent problem obstructing multi-issue activism. The exclusionary politics operate in this case by framing queer and trans concerns as 'gay issues' and assuming that 'naturally' *most* (read heterosexuals) would not relate to *them* (read 'gays'), which suggests

an inability (or refusal?) to relate across difference. The capability to relate, or the *relatability*, is predicated on sameness with the group's normative core ('most'), while those deemed too different are asked to seek support elsewhere and organize separately with people like themselves (read 'gay') to address their own issues. It is assumed that 'gay' groups adopt undocumented queer and trans issues as their own, while it is far from being the case, as the same silo thinking and injunction to sameness with the group's 'core' also prevail in LGBTQ activism.

Many feminists of colour have been denouncing this silo mentality for many decades now, convinced of the necessity of working through and across difference to resist oppression and bring about social justice oriented change.[3] Yet in almost every progressive struggle, some form of power asymmetry persists and determines what the 'core' issue is and what can be discarded. Building communities of struggle on expectations of sameness entails forcing less powerful actors to mute their differences—still a standard practice which has been historically determinant in the emergence of multi-issue activism and intersectional thought.

Consider for instance how central was, to the founding of the Combahee River Collective (hereafter CRC), the *necessity* of challenging oppressive silo thinking and its attendant single-issue politics. It is seldom mentioned that the CRC was initially formed as the Boston chapter of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) by a group of radical Black feminist socialist lesbians, who soon realized that their sexual difference was not welcomed within the NBFO and that their political vision for social change was more radical than the NBFO. They left parental body and organized politically as radical black lesbians instead of melting into a (more liberal) category of black women.[4] The reflections of Barbara Smith, a CRC co-founder, eloquently capture what autonomous organizing meant politically and psychologically for those who tend to fall in the cracks of other movements' prioritized struggles:

> Combahee was really so wonderful because it was the first time that I could be all of who I was in the same place. That I didn't have to leave my feminism outside the door to be accepted as I would in a conservative Black political context. I didn't have to leave my lesbianism outside. I didn't have to leave my race outside, as I might in an all-white-women's context where they didn't want to know all of that. So, it was just really wonderful to be able to be our whole selves and to be accepted in that way. […] That is what Combahee created, a place where we could be ourselves and where we were valued. A place without homophobia, a place without racism, a place without sexism.[5]

Given the structural significance of separate political organizing for the advent of intersectionality, understood both as a critical power analytics and social justice praxis,[6] its relationship to alliance-building and coalition cannot be taken for granted—despite tempting assumptions that applying intersectional thinking onto social movement politics would logically lead to coalitions.[7] Intersectionality's relation to coalition is a strained and complex one, as evidenced by historical and contemporary tensions between multi-issue/intersectional activism and single-issue politics (e.g. gender-first feminism, race-first anti-racism, class-first anti-capitalism, sexuality-first LGBTQ activism, etc.). Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to provide, through its discussion of recent scholarship weaving together seemingly unrelated social phenomena, new insights on the potentialities of intersectional conversations between emancipatory knowledge projects and social justice praxis.

Many social justice activists and scholars concur in their admission that resistance against oppression is better practiced through local autonomous struggles, which can form under proper conditions strategic coalitions around issues of common concern, as well as reach, in an era of digitally mediated social movement activism, wider audiences. The earliest articulations of the idea of intersectional oppression within radical lesbian feminist of colour organizing reflect this tension between political autonomy and coalitions; they also lay bare the gaps between thinking and writing about coalitions and practicing them in real life. Wouldn't it be fantastic if building viable coalitions were as simple as publishing anthologies that bring together the writings of feminists of colour from different ethnic, racial, national backgrounds and genders and sexualities? Unfortunately, as lesbian Chicana scholar Cherríe Moraga perceptively posits: 'The [coalitional] idea of Third World Feminism has proved to be much easier between the covers of a book than between real live women.'[8]

The coalitional inclination that is found within many multiply-minoritized groups does stem not from a taste for coalition, but from necessity. The CRC Statement clearly pinpoints this when addressing the difficult political work that fighting oppression on a whole range of fronts (heterosexist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy) entails. Such a task requires working, at some point, 'in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements.' Yet these topical coalitions do not mean a shared set of concerns, as 'no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression. … We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism.'[9]

It is hard to be against coalitional politics if one strives for more effective struggles to create a more just world. Yet, what gets routinely lost in unmitigated appreciation of coalition is that not all groups benefit equally from coalitions. Less powerful constituencies are more likely to find themselves burdened with unequal share of labour, or tokenized or marginalized or absorbed or all of the above by more powerful ones. Coalitions are not altruistic endeavours; they often entail explicit or implicit pressures to leave encumbering difference behind. The question of whose difference is encumbering for whom is rarely addressed in terms of power dissymmetry between parties involved in coalitional work. Structurally marginalized groups have always had to straddle the fence: for them, coalition has been both a necessity and potentially subjugating process. Illusions of consensus, and fantasies of unity and universality serve the most privileged, erasing the needs, interests, and viewpoints of the marginalized.[10] If muting differences for the sake of *the* struggle is not a viable pathway for fostering social justice oriented change, then what is it? Can we put instead difference at the centre of our social justice praxis, which is beyond the separations between theory, politics, and methods, to generate new ways of engaging multi-issue activism and activist scholarship?

A tentative answer to these questions lies with intersectionality understood as both a critical power analytics and social justice praxis. In its initial articulation in the works of radical lesbian feminists of colour, intersectionality provides a significant framework to engage difference differently. For one, an intersectional take on difference relates it unambiguously to power—a relation articulated around the twin principles of inseparability and irreducibility.[11] From an intersectional perspective, the operators of power that are salient in a given society at a given time (e.g. class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, age, immigration status, etc.) are neither separable from one another, nor reducible to each other. Yet, an intersectional analysis of power is not only about the intertwined processes that produce historically contingent complex social inequalities of class, race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, etc., which I call, to simplify things, a *categories-of-power analysis*. It is also simultaneously a *domains-of-power analysis*. The domains-of-power framework provides a tool for examining the actual organization of power relations. Building on and expanding the work of Patricia Hill Collins,[12] I conceptualize it as a quintipartite framework of interconnected domains, namely, the *structural*, *representational*, *disciplinary*, *interpersonal*, and *psychic/embodied* domains of power. Accordingly, an intersectional power analytics addresses both the *categories* (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) through which power and oppression/resistance operate, and the *domains* where it is organized, managed,

legitimized, reactivated and internalized, or contested and subverted, etc. In fine, ideally, intersectional analysis deploys simultaneously these two frameworks and tackles also how they might intertwine in historically specific ways.

Concretely, returning to Zoraida Reyes' murder, this entails explaining how intersecting inequalities/oppressions that operate through inseparable, yet irreducible, and context-specific categories of power (race, sexuality, gender, class, citizenship) shape and are shaped by, organized through, various domains of power. Some questions that cross-deploy these two frameworks can be, among others: which categories of power are simultaneously involved in the ways media talk about Zoraida's murder (representational domain), in the ways police respond to this crime (disciplinary domain)—and how police's response (or the lack thereof) and dominant public discourses on trans women, sex workers, undocumented migrants mutually feed, and how the material structuring of anti-discrimination work in separate silos and ideological assumptions that efficient activism requires sameness and enrolment in one struggle reciprocate and lead to exclusionary interpersonal experiences for those bringing new (i.e. divisive) issues (marginalization of Zoraida and her friend in the migrants rights association), and how the combinations of these interlocking oppressions mark bodies, generate subjectivities, and are internalized or resisted by the persons themselves (psychic/embodied domain of power).

Placing difference at the heart of our social justice praxis, instead of muting it, is not a new concern for feminists of colour. Lesbian feminists of colour have blazed a formidable trail to redefine difference in transformative ways. This pioneering definitional shift is remarkably developed in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Audre Lorde, among others, and later expanded in the work of Maria Lugones, for example.[13] Anzaldúa's work decentres the dominant understanding of difference in oppositional terms and reconfigures it through radical relationality and interconnectivity. Her conceptualization of 'new mestizas'—those who inhabit an interstitial space between multiple worlds 'because of their gender, sexuality, color, class, body, personality, spiritual beliefs, and/or other life experiences'[14]—provides a new framework to rethink borders and border dwellers not through disconnection, disruption and divide, but through interconnectivities.[15] Radical interconnectivity provides her an ethics and analytics, a way of knowing and acting, a methodology of relational difference, which constitute the foundations of a future alternative community, *El mundo zurdo* (the left-handed world)—a place where different people with different needs and life priorities would cohabit and work together to bring about revolutionary change.[16] Through her epistemology and ethics of *mestiza*

consciousness, reworked later into *conocimiento* (understanding or deep awareness—a transformation process that involves getting to know each other, seeing from multiple point of view), Anzaldúa develops holistic and relational modes of thinking, instead of binary or oppositional thinking, and strives to develop creative, spiritual and activist political imagination and possibilities for living and working together to bring about social justice-oriented change.[17]

Audre Lorde delves on similar issues when she talks about transforming creatively difference so as to make it the basis of our commonality and interdependency. She posits, in her path-breaking essay 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House,' the idea of 'interdependency of our mutual non-dominant differences' to articulate our relations and political imagination around. This is an invitation to engage difference creatively and generatively, beyond mere tolerance. Instead of defining what we have in common on the basis of similarity, we need to ground it on our differences: i.e. having in common our differences. Thinking commonality through difference initiates a difference-instilled relationality, which becomes both the medium and the ethos of any collaborative endeavour. Reflecting on her relation as a Black woman in North America to the Indigenous land-rights struggles and to Native American women, Lorde underscores the need for translating 'that consciousness into a new level of working together,' and asks: 'how can we use each other's differences in our common battles for a liveable future?'[18] For her,

> only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters… Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged.[19]

The idea of making a difference-irrigated relationality the foundation of non-oppressive coalitions is appealing on several fronts. It can indeed be envisioned and put into practice as ontology and epistemology, as theory, method, and pedagogy. In other words, it entails seeking inter-connectivities and ways of working with and through difference not only in the sphere of social movement politics but also in knowledge production politics in each and every site of it. Let us consider this in the realm of theory and epistemology, which can never be fully dissociated from praxis. Theoretical conversations and coalitions

between seemingly unrelated or even competing knowledge fields are as important as political ones between seemingly unrelated or even competing social justice movements. As evidenced in few examples I discuss below, intellectual coalitional work can lead to productive theoretical cross-fertilization and generative tensions.

In a recent blog (6 June 2015), Joanna Barker, a Lenape (an enrolled member of the Delaware Tribe of Indians) and professor of American Indian Studies, argues

> gender and sexuality are core to Native/Indigenous histories, cultures, and politics; to processes of imperial formation and violences of colonial domination; to interpersonal and communal governance; to land-based epistemologies and pedagogies. If you are not engaging that core, it is not because gender and sexuality do not matter. It is about constructing their irrelevance, articulating them as unimportant. And that is an ethic of relationship and responsibility, not merely to humans of various genders and sexualities but to the land, to the water, and to nonhuman relations. It is an ethic deeply embedded within the social politics that inform Native/Indigenous histories, cultures, governments, and territorial rights struggles; within ideologies and violences of cultural authenticity and legal claimant legitimacy; within the violences and discriminations of sexism and homophobia.[20]

Although positing gender and sexuality as systems that are *constitutive* of the matrix of domination (settler colonialism and capitalism) that Indigenous and Native studies scholars address is not a dominant trend within the field, a growing number of scholars engage in this direction. A 2010 special issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* with the title 'Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity: Rethinking the State at the Intersection of Native American and Queer Studies' (edited by Daniel Heath Justice [Cherokee nation], Mark Rifkin, and Bethany Schneider) and the anthology *Queer Indigenous Studies*, published next year, are two cases in point for intellectual efforts to build sustained conversations and alliances between Queer and Native studies. These activist-scholars not only posit gender and sexuality as central to Native studies (as their critique of colonial capitalist heteropatriarchy suggests), but also reframe settler colonialism as conditioning sexual normativity (be it hetero- or homo-normative) and queer theory as well. Editors and contributors to the anthology contend that GLBTQ2 (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited) Indigenous critiques 'can radically reshape Native studies, queer studies, trans studies, and Indigenous feminisms' through its critical methodological and political contributions to the work of decolonizing knowledge.[21]

Likewise, Mark Rifkin's notable book, published same year, inter-twines queer theory and Native studies in ways that go beyond the

customary focal points on easily identified queer subjects such as 'two-spirit' or 'third gender' people and posits Native peoples and dominant discourses about them as central to the historical formation of sexuality in the U.S.[22] It is worth highlighting that Rifkin, a non-Indigenous scholar, not only reframe settler colonialism as conditioning sexual normativities but also shows how sexual normativities are also constitutive of settler colonial project. In other words, for Rifkin, sexual normativities and settler colonialism are mutually constitutive in complex and contested ways: they work together to proclaim Indigenous social structures, family, kinship etc., as inadequate to form the basement of a sovereign governance, legitimating thereby their placement under white colonial governance.

These scholars contribute to the development of intellectual coalitions between critical knowledge projects—making Native studies converse with queer and trans studies, in particular with the intersectional project called queer/trans of colour critique, and shed light on how settler colonialism, sexual normativities, capitalism, patriarchy, and nationalism reciprocate to structure society as a whole. The task they achieve is not a minor one. It is about putting into conversation seemingly unrelated or dispersed phenomena (unrelated in particular from the standpoint of those who are not subjected to their conjoint negative effects) in ways that shift radically our understanding of what is constitutive of the complex architecture of power, supremacy, and oppression.

In ethnic, diaspora, and migration studies, similar coalitional developments have been occurring for some time now and are predominantly the work of queer and trans of colour scholars. I will name but a few earliest illustrations of this scholarship that brings together and creatively engages the tensions between a predominantly white queer studies and typically heteronormative critical race, ethnic, migration, and diaspora studies. The anthology *Queer Migrations* opens up new terrains on the study of migrant experiences at the intersection of citizenship, sexuality, and race. It brings insight on state rationalities and techniques to police national borders as well as racialized queer bodies, and provides ethnographically rich accounts of how these new immigrants have transformed established diasporic communities.[23] Simultaneously engaging performance studies, critical race theory, queer and psychoanalytic perspectives, José E. Muñoz focuses on queer of colour performance art and sheds light on transformative performances of sexuality and race by queers of colour who create on the margins of both dominant (white, heteronormative) culture and mainstream (white) gay culture. Likewise, David Eng's work cross-reads psychoanalytic and critical race theories to revise one through the other, and sheds

light on the place of race in gender and sexual formations, and the place of gender and sexuality in racial formation, as well as in transnational diasporic identity formation. In an ethnographically rich account of Filipino 'gay' men in the United States, Martin Manalansan's work not only illuminates how they negotiate between culturally-specific understandings of being gay (Euro-American construct) and being *bakla* (Filipino construct), between different gender and sexual traditions and ideologies, but also provides an original theoretical framework that builds simultaneously on queer/postcolonial/Asian-American studies and anthropology. Focusing on queer female diasporic subjectivity, Gayatri Gopinath's work proposes a queer diaspora frame that disrupts Eurocentric binaries such as tradition/modernity, secrecy/coming-out, straight/queer, first generation/second generation. It also cross-mobilizes queer theory and diaspora studies to address the whiteness of the former by using the latter, and the heteronormativity and androcentrism of the latter by using the former.[24]

The emergent field of trans of colour critique also constitutes an eloquent illustration of relationality and coalitional thinking: it conceptualizes trans as a site of multi-issue struggle (for racial justice, economic justice, anticolonial struggle, and sexual justice), as evidenced in the following Statement written by TransJustice and the Safe OUTside the System Collective of *The Audre Lorde Project*. The Audre Lorde Project (hereafter ALP) can be justifiably viewed as one of the Combahees of our times. It is a 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color center for community organizing' in New York City. An August 2014 Statement released by TransJustice and the Safe OUTside the System Collective of the ALP on the aftermath of Ferguson protests over the fatal shooting of an unarmed Black teenager, Michael Brown, by a white policeman, shows how their politics builds on a vision of interconnected struggles against oppression, which they clearly connect to Audre Lorde's legacy, also the Project's name. To this end, they make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena of violence and oppression, and shed light on their shared systemic underpinnings.

> We feel it is our responsibility and duty to make the connections between the murders of Black and Latin@ Trans women, the arrests and violations against LGBTQ youth of color, and the violent sexual and physical attacks against Trans men and women of color are an extension of the same conditions and systemic oppression.
>
> These violent attacks lead to the brutalizing violence of (Non-Trans) men and women of color, and the detentions and deportations of immigrants of color. These systems were created and built under the false pretense of 'protect and serve' but instead are used to control

and target our livelihood based on our race, physical ability, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, economic status and citizenship. The solutions to these acts of violence cannot be found within the very systems that are brutalizing and murdering our people. As Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans, and Gender Non Conforming People of color, we are very aware that these systems were built to tear us down. We are committed to and continue to heal, lift up, and organize against all forms of hate, communal and police violence, and genocide. We know that we have the power, the resilience, and the strength to transform this culture of violence which regards our communities expendable, invisible, and dangerous.

In the words of Audre Lorde, 'We were never meant to survive.' Our survival, our continued resilience, our continued efforts for social justice are direct threats and challenges to systemic oppressions. We must, at all costs, do whatever we can to lift up and protect one another in our interconnected struggles for liberation.[25]

To conclude, it is important to note that this kind of theoretical cross-fertilization, which provides promising avenues to develop coalitional possibilities, is not limited to conversations between a given field (ethnic studies, critical race, etc.) and sexuality studies. An interesting example of coalitional thinking that unsettles dominant ways of understanding of historically embedded structures of power comes from critical disability studies. In her work, Nirmala Erevelles puts the theories of intersectionality in conversation with disability studies to work them both ways: using intersectionality to take issue with the whiteness of disability studies, and the lens of disability studies to challenge the absence of disability, or its use as a mere descriptor rather than a system of power in intersectionality and critical race scholarship. Erevelles provides an original account of power entanglements constituting social hierarchies. Drawing on a materialist approach, she understands disability not as a social attribute, identity category, or variable, but as 'the ideological linchpin utilized to (re)constitute social difference along the axes of race, gender, and sexuality in a dialectical relationship to the economic/social relations produced within the historical context of transnational capitalism.'[26] Her approach does not deny identity-based dimension of disability, or that of other axes of social differentiation for that matter, but provides a complex frame of relationality in which disability works as an ideological cornerstone in the articulation and rearticulation of social formations of race, gender, and sexuality in dialectic relationship to global class relations and capitalist modes of production.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning Karen Soldatic's recent work that compares the governance of disability and indigeneity in Australia,

as it successfully brings together two rarely discussed together social formations—indigeneity and disability, within the context of settler colonial state and nation formation. Her comparative study of the biopolitical management of bodies that deviate from the normative white able-bodied core reveals how the reproduction of the settler colonial rule relies on the reproductive control of the deviant bodies. Noting the lack of disability and indigeneity in much of the broad field of postcolonial scholarship, Soldatic clearly calls for intersectional dialogue between these critical knowledge projects so as to build solidarity between Indigenous movements/scholarship and disability movement/scholarship with the aim of undoing the continuance of the white able-bodied masculine settler (post)colonial nation-state.[27]

The critical task of theoretical coalitions is to expose concealed connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena from which different problems they face stem; to elucidate that which is diffuse, rendered impalpable by the hegemonic workings of neoliberalism. It is important to pay critical attention to neoliberalism's cultural rationales which function to effectively obscure these connections and naturalize the unequal status quo—hampering our capacity of identifying and confronting root problems. Intersectionality as critical social justice praxis should hence actively seek to expose concealed and naturalized connections between systems of oppression. I contend that these connections need to be tackled both through the intersecting categories of power framework and that of interrelated domains of power.

Non-oppressive coalitions within and between social justice-oriented movements and knowledge projects, hence both political and intellectual coalitions, require a radical vision of relationality—what Maria Lugones calls a 'deep coalition,' i.e. identification with the other through understanding and acknowledging their resistant agency (interactive acknowledgment of difference), and creative ways of putting into practice the idea of radical interrelatedness and as Lorde puts it 'the interdependency of different strengths.' Unless more powerful actors engage seriously in radical relationality coalitional resistance against oppression cannot avoid producing its own oppressed groups.

Notes

The title is a free adaptation from Flavia Dzodan's incisive blog: 'My feminism will be intersectional, or it will be bullshit!', *Tiger Beatdown*, 10 October 2011, accessed 14 November 2011. http://tigerbeatdown.

com/2011/10/10/my-feminism-will-be-intersectional-or-it-will-be-bullshit/.

1   Kitzia Esteva-Martinez, 'Remembering Zoraida: Why We Must Build an Anti-imperialist, Multi-Issue Immigrant Rights Movement', *Black Girl Dangerous*, 26 August 2014, accessed 2 February 2015, italics mine, http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2014/08/remembering-zoraida-must-build-anti-imperialist-multi-issue-immigrant-rights-movement/.

2   Beth Sherouse and Samantha Master 'As Black Transgender Women Continue to Die, It's Time for a Call to Action, *The Root*, 30 January 2015, 26 accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2015/01/time_to_stop_end_the_violence_against_transgender_people//.

3   The work of lesbian and queer feminists of colour has been particularly determinant in this regard, among them that of Gloria Anzaldúa and Audre Lorde, which are discussed later in this chapter.

4   Duchess Harris, *Black Feminist Politics from Kennedy to Clinton* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6.

5   Barbara Smith interview quoted in Duchess Harris, 'All of Who I Am in the Same Place: The Combahee River Collective,' *Womanist Theory and Research* 2/1–2 (1999), 10.

6   I conceptualize intersectionality as a double layered power analytics which tackles not only the interconnectedness of (historically contingent) *categories of power*, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, age, immigrant status, ethnicity, caste, religion, etc., but also (no less historically contingent) interrelated *domains of power*. I add a fifth domain, the *psychic/embodied*, to Patricia Hill Collins' domains of power framework that proposes four (structural, cultural, disciplinary and interpersonal).

7   An inspiring assumption one wishes it were true is: 'If intersectionality is the theory, then 'coalition politics' is the practice.' Jane Ward, *Respectably Queer*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007), 35.

8   Cherrie Moraga, 'Refugees of a World on Fire. Foreword to the Second Edition, 1983,' in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 4th ed., (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015), 257.

9   Combahee-River-Collective, 'A Black Feminist Statement,' in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995), 232, 234, 235. See also for a discussion of the Combahee River Collective in relation to coalition politics, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, Intersectionality (Cambridge: Polity Press, forthcoming).

10 Dorothy Roberts and Sujatha Jesudason, 'Movement Intersectionality. The Case of Race, Gender, Disability, and Genetic Technologies,' *Du Bois Review* 10/2 (2013), 315.

11 Sirma Bilge, 'La pertinence de Hall pour l'étude de l'intersectionnalité,' *Nouvelles pratiques sociales* 26/2 (2014), 68.

12 For Patricia Hill Collins, 'domination encompasses structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power … [which] constitute specific sites where oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation mutually construct one another. … Each domain serves a particular purpose. The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues.' Patricia Hill Collins, *The Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 203, 276. I depart from this framework in that I do not conceive the individual consciousness as ensuing only everyday lived experience, or as containable in the interpersonal domain of power. For me, providing analytical distinction to the psychic and embodied domain of power opens up important paths to engage intersectionality with the questions of embodiment and subjectivation, to think how bodies are marked by intersecting power relations that cross multiple domains and express them– think for instance Bourdieu's bodily *hexis*, or how subjectivities are generated across various sites through the techniques of self-discipline, producing individuals qua entrepreneurs of themselves—think for instance Foucault's government of the self. The psychic/embodied domain of power allows us to consider how the self-governing subject is produced within historically contingent power intersections that are organized and managed across a variety of sites. Moreover, the addition of a psychic/embodied domain of power to intersectional framework also facilitates potentially productive coalitions between intersectionality and anticolonial and decolonial work focusing on decolonizing the mind, as well as possible theoretical conversations with phenomenology.

13 See Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, Calif.: Crossing Press, 1984), Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute Press, 1987), and Maria Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes. Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

14 AnaLouise Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham: Duke UP, 2009), 10, 322.

15 As evidenced for instance by her reclaiming of an Indigenous, preconquest Mesoamerican philosophy, *Nepantla*—a Nahuatl term, to combine that which is usually opposed (Euro-American and Indigenous traditions). See Erin Ranft, 'Connecting intersectionality and nepantla to resist oppressions,' *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 1/2 (2013), 210, 211, and Keating, *Anzaldúa Reader*, 10.

16 Keating, *Anzaldúa Reader*, 10, 36.

17 Keating, *Anzaldúa Reader*, 302.

18 Audre Lorde, 'A Burst of Light: Living with Cancer,' in *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde,* eds. Rudolph P. Byrd, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: Oxford UP,

2009), 102. Originally written in 1985.

19 Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 111–12.

20 Joanna Barker, 'My Comments for the NAISA Presidential Plenary Session,' *'Feminism, Gender, Queerness, Sexuality: Keywords for Indigenous Studies?'* 6 June 2015, accessed 7 June 2015. https://tequilasovereign. wordpress.com/.

21 Qwo-Li Driskill et al., 'Introduction,' in *Queer Indigenous Studies*, ed. Qwo-Li Driskill et al (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 18.

22 Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, The History of Sexuality and Native Sovereignty*, (New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

23 Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú Jr., (eds.), *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

24 José Esteban Muñoz. *Disidentifications* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); David Eng, *Racial Castration: Masculinity and Asian Americans* (Durham: Duke UP, 2001); Martin Manalansan II, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003). Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005).

25 The Audre Lorde Project, 'We Were Never Meant to Survive': A Statement on Police Violence, Hate Violence, and Anti-Black Racism, 19 August 2014, accessed 30 August 2014. http://alp.org/%E2%80%98we-were-never-meant-survive%E2%80%99-statement-police-violence-hate-violence-and-anti-black-racism.

26 Nirmala Erevelles, *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 6, italics original.

27 Karen Soldatic, 'Postcolonial Reproductions: Disability, Indigeneity and the Formation of the White Masculine Settler State of Australia,' *Social Identities* 21/1 (2015), 53, 64.

ALL POWER ACTIVISM

Dismantling the Image of the Palestinian Homosexual: Exploring the Role of alQaws

Wala AlQaisiya, Ghaith Hilal, and Haneen Maikey

First: Introduction

The Zionist colonization of Palestine holds at its premise racial, sexual, and gendered discourses through which colonial power is exercised. It is through the production and creation of certain types of knowledge and specific domains of truth that the colonial regime perpetuates and reinforces its mechanisms and modes of governments on the colonizers, making them internalize a certain conduct. This paper seeks to understand the means through which the Zionist colonial regime influences the production of specific objects of knowledge: sexuality and the image of the homosexual in Palestine. It wants to pinpoint the ways through which its power hinges on the bodies and desires of the colonized and, specifically, how the image of homosexuals came to be perceived and understood in determined ways within the Palestinian context and throughout its recent history.

It is from the unfolding presentation of the points of intersection between a determined structure of colonial power and its knowledges of sexuality that the role of indigenous feminist/queer organizing becomes fundamental. As Palestinian activists and academics that are committed to engaged analyses and praxis towards decolonizing gender and sexuality in our communities we see that highlighting the work of *alQaws for Gender and Sexual Diversity* and its relevance to the Palestinian context and struggle is a necessary task. Being an open feminist queer space that aspires to 'disrupt sexual and gender based oppression and challenge regulation, whether patriarchal, capitalist or colonial of our sexualities and bodies,'[1] alQaws unveils how the decolonization of a certain type of knowledge on sexuality and its deriving modes of conducts is what can lay the foundation for a radical

disruption of the colonial Zionist structure.

The first part of the paper investigates the recent historical determination of power and knowledge that shaped the image of the Palestinian homosexual, enabling the formulation of two specific portraits of the Palestinian queer: the collaborator and the *Israelized*, leading to the image of the Westernized agent. In a constant effort to interrogate and challenge those structures of power that allowed their promulgation, the second part draws on how specifically Pinkwashing was adopted as a Zionist colonial tactic through which the image of the Palestinian victim queer with its racial and normalizing logic around meanings of sexuality and homosexuality came to be enabled and constructed. This is followed with an analysis of alQaws's work and the relevance of their local strategies to challenge such narratives and essentially dismantle the image that has been ascribed to the Palestinian homosexual.

The Image of the Homosexual: Major Historical Events

From our own personal experiences and from working in the field, we know that the image of the homosexual in the Palestinian context can be summed up in the Other. As people living under a settler colonial regime, this Other came to be constructed in relation to the colonizer and the western values it bears and represents. Thus the image of the Palestinian homosexual at its worst links to that of the collaborator, a person who is involved in directly giving out information to the colonizer and, at its best, relates to an *Israelized* person who has adopted Israeli ways of living. This also relates to the image people have of the westernized agent, or those infamously described as complicit in the project of 'transforming their cultures into copies of Euro-America.'[2] In order to understand the means by which this image came to the fore in Palestinian society one has to trace discourses and events in search for what Foucault identifies as 'instances of discursive production … of the production of power [and] the propagation of knowledge, which makes possible 'a history of the present.'[3] The following focuses on events starting from the first intifada, through Oslo, continuing to the current political situation where intersections between politics and sexuality come to the fore in the Palestinian context. This, in turn, explains the consolidation of the current image of the Palestinian homosexual as rooted in the collaborator and/or Israeli and westernized agent image that alQaws works on dismantling.

As the eruption of the Palestinian first Intifada (1987–93) came to signify the epitome of a national struggle against the fist of the Zionist colonial regime, it also marked a historical moment for the

consolidation of Palestinian nationalist agency with its gendered and ultimately heterosexual implications. Joseph Massad traces the 'conceiving of the masculine'[4] in Palestinian nationalist discourses which come to echo the masculinist heteronormative seeds found earlier in European and even Zionist national project. Thus, the intifada rose to depict the long waited for 'Palestinian wedding' as the communiques of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) came to describe it ; manifesting the 'apogee of heterosexual love' where 'the heterosexual reproduction of the family is at the centre of the nationalist project.'[5] At the time that the intifada was at the peak of a national project which also sought to define Palestinianness against any 'colonial contamination,'[6] as Massad describes it, Israel was doing its best to intensify tactics aimed to foster its ideological foundation that renders natives bodies and land 'inherently rapable and invadable.'[7] For Israel, the Intifada was an underground movement, with elements of unpredictability and spontaneity, which made it very difficult to contain by Israeli intelligence services. This is where Israel used tactics of infiltrating Palestinian factions in order to break their work through coercing Palestinian individuals into collaboration. This tactic was implemented through the usage of threatening and blackmail against the *docile* bodies it targeted, through control and observation, and produced as mediums for the inscription of its power. Homosexuality, pre-marital sex as well as drugs and/or alcohol use, amongst other activities that were socially frowned upon in Palestinian society, were utilized to coerce Palestinians into working with Israeli authority if they did not wish to face the consequences of being publicly exposed. This took place at the time when the image of the homosexual as a collaborator as well as *Israelized* came to be enforced. The reaction of Palestinian factions, which defined these immoral behaviours as a threat that needs to be uprooted from political activism, was a shortsighted action that legitimized further the blackmail of Palestinians by the Israeli intelligence forces. Moreover, these same tactics were later used by different Palestinian factions and armed groups to discipline non-conforming behaviours, gender expressions, and those who were suspected to be homosexual during the anarchy periods of the late 1990 to early 2000.

Such strategies of 'cleansing' society, echoing the Foucauldian understanding of power in its *sanitizing* form, were part of the bigger power paradigm that the signing of the Oslo accords, the new era of so-called economic peace, between Israel and the PLO brought to the fore. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a governing body, which came as a means of 'resecuring the authoritative leadership of the Diaspora-based elite,'[8] helped to consolidate long enshrined ideals

of the nationalist agent who was not only masculine but also 'bourgeois in-the-making.'[9] The creation of Palestinian bureaucratic elite within a PA's authoritarian and neo-patrimonial regime was being encouraged and sustained—this time—by the international community.[10] Their funding for the new entity continued so long as it inflicted on the Palestinians the penalties required for noncompliance with the new sphere of securitization and diplomacy through which Israel continued to retain its control.[11] As internal volatility grew in the late 90s due to Israel's expansionist regime and intensified closure policies, the same donor community that used to 'turn a blind eye to reports of mismanagement corruption and human rights abuses' started proposing changes in the PA institutions.[12] Two years after the eruption of the second Intifada in 2000, a marker of PA's inability to guarantee Israel's security, proposals to reform PA institutions solidified and became more attuned towards a new leadership that could 'deter terror' following the agenda of good governance and Human Rights. Such ideals came forth within a project of modernity whose ontological foundations continue to rely on the construction of its oriental Other who is always *failing*. One here could be reminded of Zizek's useful understanding of ideology through Lacan as 'every perception of a lack or a surplus' always involves a disavowed relation of domination.[13] In this case, the 'not enough of this too much of that' is simply another colonial tool under the disguise of 'not enough of democracy, too much of religion,' 'not enough of modernity, too much homophobia,' etc.

From here, one comes to understand the setting of the criteria for LGBT rights in accordance with the *frame* of 'sexually progressive' countries that define a universal model to follow.[14] Massad draws on US discourse on human rights through which came the proliferation of the Gay International agenda and framework where 'western male white-dominated organizations' advocate for rights of 'gays and lesbians all over the world.'[15] Such universalization of LGBT rights which binds LGBT movements elsewhere to forms of organizing and gains made in the stonewall era is what Jasbir Puar draws on in her definition of homonationalism where LGBTQ all over the world 'experience, practice and are motivated by the same desires and their politics are grounded in an understanding that ties the directionality of their love and desire to stable identity from which to make political claims.'[16] With Israeli LGBT following the same trajectory, Israel's 'gay decade' came forth following the decriminalization of Sodomy in the 1988.[17] This in turn triggered an interest in the LGBT legal status under the PA whereby the 'colonizer's standards and achievements became the yardstick by which the colonized were measured and to which they had to conform,'[18] ignoring the fact that the same 'anti-sodomy' laws

were removed from the Jordanian penal code, which the PA inherited in 1957. Such western interests and findings towards the status of gay rights in Palestine after Oslo enforced the image of the Palestinian homosexual as the western agent.

Besides the imperial and colonizer standards that were shaping the discourse around nation building and gay rights, another, not less worrying discourse started to rise among Palestine solidarity activists who took the south African model of endorsement of constitutional protection in 1996, following the dismantlement of the apartheid regime, as the bar to which other nationals were to be judged. These examples and dynamics of the 'International' and its homogenizing force towards the same trajectory of development within the *reductive frame* of liberal discourses of rights ignores and glosses over native experiences of sexual politics. This includes the dynamics that shaped Palestinian LGBT and other feminist groups before and after the second Intifada who started to formulate separate agenda from their Israeli partners. Palestinian queer activists, who later established alQaws, stopped going to the Israeli Jewish organization *Jerusalem Open House* as their identification with the Palestinian liberation struggle was reinforced during the Second Intifada and the brutal killings of Palestinian demonstrators inside Israel. These events came to confirm once again the genocidal premise of the settler colonial regime which traps the natives within the realm of the *homo sacer*;[19] one that leaves us with the critical question regarding the relevance of human rights for those who are already ceaselessly and systematically reduced by the settler colonial regime to the realm and reality of no rights.

Gaza came to represent such reality following Palestinian political disintegration after the 2006 elections leading to donors' imposed sanctions in disapproval of Hamas and finally Israel's imposed siege on the strip since 2007. That was also the year when alQaws officially separated from the *Jerusalem Open House* as Palestinian queer consciousness was emerging in relation to the political reality it is embedded in. The Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2009 further solidified a more radical political discourse amongst Palestinian queers in alQaws. It also mapped further separation from Israeli LGBT politics that were committed to emblems of Israeliness including service in the army through which their entry into Israeli consensus was guaranteed.[20] Following the shootings at Bar-Noar in 2009,[21] some Palestinian queers were banned from expressing their solidarity in fear of them 'talking politics.' Israeli right-wing politicians, who praised the killings of Gazans a few months earlier, proclaimed a 'Do Not Kill' message to the rhythm of Israeli national anthem at the vigil; a song celebrating the exclusive Jewish nature of the 'land of Zion.' This dynamic further exposed Israeli

LGBT politics as an expression of queer modernity—progressive and gay loving—that relies at its essence on and works to perpetuate and *naturalize* the settler colonial regime and its logic of native exclusion and elimination.[22]

The exclusionary essence of the settler colonial regime comes within a global power dynamic and the violence enshrined in neoliberalism and its ideological cognates, securitization, the necessity to protect from the terrorist Muslim Other, and hetero/homo-normativization. Such was the need in 2005, following the second intifada and the donors' need to 'reform' Palestinian security section,[23] to propagate 'the new Palestinian man' with millions of US dollars which, according to its pundits, enabled the structural analytic of 'gender blurring' agenda in the West Bank where women, too, can join in the mission of fighting 'terrorism.'[24] This is the terrorism that Gaza now has come to represent due to its containment of the Muslim/monster Other whose elimination is encouraged and called upon in Israeli public discourse. Thus, the construction of Gaza comes as the homophobe space whilst the West Bank or Ramallah in particular, with its US-trained security guards, is becoming perceived as the more open 'gay friendly' space.[25] This issue was raised in alQaws's recent interactions with some international donors, who expressed interest in knowing more about what they called it 'the new scene of gay friendly cafe in Ramallah,' and hinting that they heard Ramallah is becoming similar to gay haven, Tel Aviv. In doing so, the colonial regime comes to sustain itself through a logic of *divide et impera* (divide and rule) by creating more categories, divisions, and barriers that ought to be *internalized* in order to act as if the colonial regime is non-existent. Hence, what remains is the acting out of these fantasies (i.e. liberal Ramallah/Backward Gaza) where an image of Europe could be conceived whilst disavowing the failure to which these fantasies are bound. In fact, these fantasies are part and parcel of a larger hierarchizing structure that is embedded in the image of the Palestinian homosexual and the extent of homophobia/backward space it is relegated to. Thus, those coming from 48 territories (Palestinians living in Israel) come first, followed by those in liberal Ramallah who are then followed by the rest of the West Bank and finally, at the bottom of the ladder, comes Gaza. Pinkwashing as a colonial tactic contributed to the consolidation of such an image and its hierarchizing effect.

Second: The Pinkwashing Logic

When one approaches the dynamics inherent to the image of the homosexual in Palestine, it is impossible to ignore the link between

Zionism and Pinkwashing. It is necessary to shed light on how Zionist politics influence both analysis and campaign of Pinkwashing. This campaign is one that uses ostensibly 'progressive' policies around gay tolerance to hide and distract from practices of colonialism. In this framing, we understand Pinkwashing as 'a tactic of Zionism and an influential discourse of sexuality that has emerged within it.'[26] Therefore, anti-Pinkwashing works as an analysis and practice that 'continues to uncover and makes visible the racial, ethnic, and sexual violence that informs Zionist ideology.'[27] In order to expose further the connection between Pinkwashing and Zionism, it is crucial to deconstruct the main logics and notions behind this campaign that was relentlessly marketed as 'Gay Rights Campaign.' To phrase it slightly differently, alQaws is interested in exploring what makes this Pinkwashing project a successful campaign that is appealing to queer people around the world, meaning what makes Zionism appealing to queers around the world.

Firstly, Pinkwashing is an ontologically racist and colonial project that does not simply emphasize how Israel is a fun, fabulous, open, modern—thus democratic and liberal—state, but is mainly based on dehumanizing Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims by presenting them as homophobic, backward, and barbaric. In the Pinkwashing narrative, homophobia and intolerance toward non-conforming sexual and gender expressions, identities, and behaviours, is a rooted disease in society while tolerance is inherent to Israel as a liberal modern project. Such is the orientalist logic where the other is reduced to a set of realities and values that fit the opposite side of the binary (progressive/backward). It is a familiar Zionist tactic that reframes the relationship between Israel and Palestine from 'colonizer-colonized' to one that distinguishes between those who are 'modern and open,' and those who are presented as 'backward and homophobic.' Thus, it simplifies and anaesthetizes the fundamental violence on the basis of which colonialism thrives.

Secondly, Pinkwashing in its promotion of a modern/backward binary shows how it is premised on a notion of progress where the other is always-already dehumanized in the definition of the 'modern and progressive' self. But, Pinkwashing is also framed in a way that speaks to those who have assimilated and internalized islamophobic, racist, and anti-Arab messages into their vision of 'progressiveness' and 'modernity' as it is reflected in the liberal white gay project in the last two decades. In this sense, engaging with Pinkwashing, is not only promoting a racist narrative about Palestinians, but more disturbing is the assumption we may conclude from the popularity of Pinkwashing among gay groups, that these notions (i.e. racism and islamophobia) exist in our own communities. In our opinion, this says more about the

political choices of queer communities around the globe, than the clear colonial interest reflected in Pinkwashing, and maybe suggests an inter-sectional understanding of countering this among our communities.

Thirdly, Pinkwashing follows a gay rights approach which isolates some queer identities from others and conceals the structural inequali-ties that make certain (Jewish, Israeli) bodies and identities 'acceptable' and others (Palestinian, Arab) not. In other words, Pinkwashing is based on the western gay organizing frameworks and notions and by this, it is creating a common language and a common cause with other gay (middle class, white) individuals and communities. Pinkwashing relies heavily on the logic of 'gay rights' as it is commonly understood and practiced by these communities—a single-issue politics based on one's sexual identity to the exclusion of other interconnected injustices based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other difference. The reliance on the gay rights' frame of analysis allows Israel to promote and publicize itself as gay friendly concealing its settler colonial premise which is based on intense forms of sexual regulation that are both gendered and racialized.[28]

Israeli LGBT Groups 'Saving' Palestinian Queers

Since its inception in 2005 the 'Re-branding Israel' campaign—with its focus on gay rights—included partnerships with LGBT Israeli groups, who were and still are directly complicit with this new state-funded project.[29] Together with government-led bodies, Israeli LGBT groups promote gay tourism to Tel Aviv, advocate for Israel as the world LGBT ambassador, and present the IDF as a tolerant army for gay Israelis ('serving with pride'). Thus, the Pinkwashing campaign is seen and considered by Israeli LGBT leaders and groups as the ultimate sign of state recognition, and we, in alQaws, continue to argue that Pinkwashing could not thrive without this unconditional support, and crucial role the Israeli LGBT community play.

Besides the direct involvement in promoting Pinkwashing, globally and locally, LGBT Israeli leaders and groups are actively part of the production of the racist discourse about Palestinians in general, and LGBT Palestinians in particular. The main aspects of this discourse are: 1) the necessity to save Palestinian LGBTQs from their own homo-phobic families and society; 2) the exclusion of the broader context of settler colonialism vis-a-vis LGBT issues; 3) Denial of agency: erasure of the Palestinian queer movement (IGY).

Once again, it is possible to trace how Israeli Pinkwashing ideology functions through the presentation of Palestinian society as either 'too

homophobic' or 'not enough active.'[29] Pinkwashing also takes the form of the Israeli government's initiatives to promote gay tourism. This programme stems directly from Israeli homonationalism and LGBT Israeli's commitment to define and promote itself in relation to its gay parties and beaches and its locals who are welcoming foreigners in.[31] Such acts of welcoming others in is another means of naturalizing the settler colonial regime through Israeli queer desires and bodies expressing *ownership* of and locality to indigenous land and hence entitlement to *invite* tourists in. These ideals of queer tourism are also a significant source of income for Israel. In this case, Pinkwashing represents the underlying logic of neoliberalism in the guise of 'democracy' and 'gay rights.' It allows the generation of economic profit through such universal ideals of 'gay tourism,' thus reproducing the colonial system in its abuse of indigenous resources.

Pinkwashing Impact on Palestinian Queers: Internalizing the image

Challenging the premise of Pinkwashing entails an exploration of its impact and implications on LGBT Palestinians. alQaws identifies two main notions that are assimilated by Palestinian LGBT individuals and communities due to the Pinkwashing campaign.

Firstly, *the colonizer standards and fantasies* about gay rights, homophobia, and racism are internalized inside Palestinian LGBTQ communities. As a form of colonization, Pinkwashing promotes the false idea that the Palestinian LGBTQ individuals and communities have no agency or a place inside their own societies. This creates a detrimental and toxic colonial relationship where the colonized comes to perceive the colonizers' presence as necessary for providing that which fulfils our fantasies.

Secondly, the main notions that describe the personal lives and experiences of LGBT Palestinians are *victimhood and pain.* In the attempt to strengthen Pinkwashing and dehumanize Palestinians, Palestinian queer bodies, personal stories, challenges, and pain have been used constantly as a 'proof' of our society's 'not enough progress.' In this regard, the main accomplishment is to make queer Palestinians victims of their own families and communities, triggering in them a desire or a dream to flee from homophobic Palestine and reach the colonizer's sandy beaches. According to this logic, the society and families of Palestinian queers are the cause of their main problems, and their existences as queers relies on their ability to hate their own support system. This is yet another way of isolating sexual and gender violence from the

broader context of colonized Palestine. As their problems are reduced to sexual orientations, Palestinian LGBTs are left with the option of being victims and/or hate their families; hence, their only solution is to look towards the colonizers for safety. This in turn creates the victim-saviour dynamic which in recent years have been at the centre of representing the relationship between Palestinians and Israeli queers. Such saviour/ victim dynamic glosses over the fact that Palestinians, queers or not, cannot cross over to reach what is presumed to be their 'safe-haven Israel'. This is not only due to the concrete presence of the barriers, including apartheid wall, that Israel installs to hinder Palestinian daily mobility but also an effective result to Israeli legal system which is, at premise, designed to deny Palestinians' sheer existence. Furthermore, it is fundamental to stress that fetishizing Palestinian queer bodies and pain means creating this hierarchy between different bodies in Palestine. On the one hand, there are the bodies that Israelis do not care to kill and erase—as it happens in Gaza—and there are those bodies, the queer bodies, which should be saved. The only Palestinian who is worth saving, therefore, is the one that falls within Israeli exotic fantasies about who the Palestinian queer is.

Dismantling the Image

The dominant social and political construction of the image of the Palestinian homosexual is directly impacted from the continuous exploitation of Palestinian queers' bodies and sexualities, to fulfil the goals of the colonizer (i.e. blackmailing queers to become collaborators, the use of Palestinian queer image as victims waiting for the Israeli saviour, promoting a false narrative about Palestinian society's homophobia, etc.). Furthermore, in recent years, foreign governments and some gay international organizations have started to express clear interest in meetings or encounters with alQaws activists in the possible ways to challenge the PA and/or civil society organizations to 'respect' gay rights. This new dynamic, which is packed up by the growing role of foreign governments and funding in Palestine, is, further enforcing the notion of homosexuality as a western imposed issue in the eyes of Palestinian society. Furthermore, this dynamic entails a disturbing subtext, any 'progress' in making Palestine more 'tolerant' to gay rights and especially inside the authorities, is a sign that the project of building the Palestinian state fits the ultimate modernity standards of 'gay tolerance.' More concretely, by moving forward with this project, foreign governments will not only gain more legitimacy in their intervention in the state building process in Palestine, but will also frame the

PA and Palestine as a new player in the modern world, hence legitimate more support. It goes without saying that this dynamic is taking place in a vacuum, as if Palestine is not colonized. alQaws saw a crucial challenge to address and disrupt this discourse, by developing a locally informed and holistic analysis regarding sexuality and homosexuality in Palestine. Sexual and bodily freedom cannot be separated from fighting Israeli colonialism. Thus comes the need for building a movement that understands and engages with its political reality.

However, there is a strong tendency within the Palestinian society that prioritizes struggles and a hierarchy of liberation; putting the Palestinian national struggle at the top of the list while other struggles (e.g. women's rights, gender and sexuality rights, and minority rights) come last. Hence, besides being seen as Israelized collaborators or westernized intruders, the mere fact of talking of the intersectionality of struggles, and of trying to break the hierarchy of struggles is seen as a divergence from the main cause or as another force to fragment the already fragmented society. Therefore, the goal of dismantling this image, inside Palestinian society and more importantly inside LGBTQ communities, will remain a complex political project. alQaws's leadership integrated this project and analysis inside their work by addressing four different layers:

a) Decolonizing Palestinian Identity Within
the Palestinian Queer Community

alQaws works with a large group of Palestinian queers across historical Palestine to enlarge our base of grassroots political activists through different platforms and groups. In these groups, civil society organizations, student groups, and LGBTQ groups, alQaws works on building together from our own experiences intersectional analyses of the powers of oppression at hand, from colonialism to patriarchy and capitalism. alQaws concentrates on challenging the Pinkwashing discourse that many Palestinian queers internalized, by transforming how we see ourselves from victims of our homophobic societies, and the main feeling of disconnect and split from our families and communities, to active fighters for justice who work on rebuilding these burnt bridges, and on shaping the society we desire to live in. For instance, in alQaws youth groups, we work collectively on understanding the links between sexual oppression and colonialism, and how our bodies, desires and sexualities have been used by Israel. Furthermore, in these groups we are committed to exploring both how homophobia and sexual oppression are constructed in Palestinian society, as well as to relate also to resilient strategies individuals and groups using to express

their sexualities in such a complex context.

b) Imagining Decolonized Palestine

Decolonizing our sexualities means directly resisting the policies of fragmentation and division of Palestinians, as the main colonial/ Zionist strategies used systematically since 1948. The main goal of this strategy is to continue to divide and rule Palestinians into sub-social religious groups: Christians, Druze, Muslims, Bedouin, Palestinians of Jerusalem, Arab Israelis, West Bankers, Gazan etc. Through this, Israel aims to prove that Palestinians did not exist before 1948, and reifies the old Zionist logic of 'a land without a people for a people without a land,' for if there are people on this land they are nothing but 'grazing nomads' who will always fail to have a sense of collective identity and history.

Being one of the few groups working on both sides of the 'Green Line' that divides 'Israel' from the 'OPTs,'[32] alQaws was always aware of how much these divisions were reproduced inside LGBTQ spaces, too often creating a specific hierarchy of power relations that is familiar to the general society. Commitment to building LGBTQ communities across Palestine means that a crucial aspect of queer organizing should be tackling this issue in a deep and constant way. In alQaws's spaces, activists from different parts of Palestine, who never met before, were meeting and working together for the first time. National meetings of alQaws, which take place in the West Bank, are sometimes the first opportunity for queers from Ramallah and Haifa to meet, offering the main space where internalized attitudes about each other are challenged and deconstructed. It is not a one-time task, this is an ongoing process that we address and challenge through our national strategies and local leadership initiatives. While we address these differences in our local work, this approach offers a glimpse to the undivided and decolonized Palestinian society we work and contribute to achieve. Holding this approach and implementing it through various levels of our organization challenges the very being of Zionism.

c) Refusal to Normalize with Israeli LGBTQ Groups

Based on alQaws's experience that started as part of an Israeli Zionist organization (see above) and the understanding of it as part of a broader colonial experience, alQaws refuses, as a principle, to work with any group, Israeli LGBT groups and other civil society organizations and groups that does not have a clear political stance that confronts and challenges Israeli settler colonialism, Zionism, and

Jewish supremacy. alQaws's community will not engage in any action, project, or partnership that normalizes the Zionist colonial entity and the colonized-colonizer power relationship as disguised by an agenda for 'social justice' and 'gay rights.'[33]

d) Challenging the Hegemony of Western LGBT Organizing

The premise of decolonizing sexualities within alQaws and the queer Palestinian movement cannot happen without addressing the global politics related to 'gay rights alQaws works on building alliances with activists, groups and civil society organizations, who are committed to sexual and gender diversity. In doing so, it shifts the attention from the negative image associated with homosexuality and focuses instead on a wider understanding of sexuality and gender. This creates a movement open to all, and not only LGBTQ identifying people, focusing on feminist/queer analysis as a lens to understand the links between the different oppressions we face rather than trapping ourselves in single-identity, a-political activism that fails to confront the root causes of oppression.

Despite its structural limitations, alQaws's work is resisting the hegemony of LGBTQ western organizing approach and framework and questions its relevance to different south-based queer groups. During the last decade, alQaws published different articles and texts deconstructing the four notions of coming out, homophobia, pride, and visibility.[34] It showed how locally-informed strategies are possible, more inspiring and, most importantly, more relevant to our context. Some of the questions that helped alQaws activists in this process were: how can we frame our struggle as against homophobia when we do not publicly discuss sexuality? Are pride parades the ultimate celebration of freedom and visibility in a context where millions of Palestinians have no access to water, health care, mobility, work, etc.? How can individual visibility be understood in a family-based-society? Is coming out, as understood and practiced in the west, a crucial step for healthy and open life? What are the means to have a healthy and open life for LGBTQ people whose bodies, minds and reality is colonized?

Conclusion

Once sexuality and the image of the Palestinian queer are contextualized properly, unfolding the connections and intersections with the Zionist colonial regime, contrary to what most LGTBQ western groups propose, sexuality comes to be understood not as an isolated

component, single issue, of society. Rather this manoeuvre of unveiling the fantasies that are projected on the other, which combines academic and activist work in a constant dialogical relationship, shows how discourses of sexuality are deeply embedded in a structure of power whose ultimate goal is the oppression, if not the total elimination, of the other. Therefore, starting from this premise, alQaws tries to face and dismantle those racial sexual and gendered discourses that the Zionist colonial regime generates in order to enforce a process of subjugation of the Palestinians. It is for this reason that alQaws believes in the necessity to engage in an open and honest discussion around the domains of *truths* that sexuality in general, and the image of the Palestinian homosexual in particular, are invested in and aim to propagate. If oppression is to be fought and a more just order of society to emerge, the relation with our bodies and how power hinges on them needs to be challenged in a radical, fundamental manner.

Notes

1   See alQaws, 'About Us,' accessed 23 September 2016, http://www.alQaws. org/about-us.
2   In reference to Joseph Massad's critique of those identified as 'the complicit' gay Internationalist Arabs, who are normalizing and impos- ing western gay identities that re not relevant to the Arab context. See F. Ewanje Epee and S. Maqliani-Belkacem, 'The Empire of Sexuality: An Interview with Joseph Massad,' *Jadaliyya* 2013, accessed 23 September 2013, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/10461/ the-empire-of-sexuality_an-interview-with-joseph-m.
3   Michel Foucault quoted in Nikki Sullivan, *a critical Introduction to Queer Theory,* (Edinburgh: University Press 2003), 1.
4   Joseph Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism,' Middle East Journal 49/3 (1995), 467–483.
5   Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine,' 477.
6   Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine,' 467–483.
7   Andrea Smith 'American Studies without America: Native Feminisms and the Nation-State,' *American Quarterly* 60/2 (June 2008), 312.
8   Nigel Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority: from Oslo to Alaqsa*, (London: Routeldge, 2005).
9   Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine,' 479.
10 Anne Le More, *International Assistance to the Palestinians After Oslo: Political Guilt, Wasted Money* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 6.
11 Le More, *International Assistance*, 6.

12 Le More, *International Assistance, 6.*

13 Slavoj Žižek*, Mapping Ideology*, (London: Verso 1995), 11.

14 Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (New York: Verso 2010), 110.

15 Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2007), 161.

16 Maya Mikdashi, 'Gay Rights as Human Rights: Pinkwashing and Homonationalism,' *Jadaliyya*, 16 December 2011, accessed 28 April 2015, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3560/gay-rights-as-human-rights_pinkwashing-homonationa.

17 Aeyal Gross, 'Challenges to Compulsory Heterosexuality: Recognition and Non-Recognition of Same-Sex Couples in Israeli Law,' in *Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Partnerships: A Study of National, European and International Law*, edited by Robert Wintermute Mads Andenaes (Oxford: Hart Publishing 2001), 391–414.

18 Maikey, Haneen, 'The History and Contemporary State of Palestinian Sexual Liberation Struggle,' in *The Case for Sanction Against Israel*, ed. Audrea Lim (London, New York: Verso, 2012), 122.

19 In reference to the ones excluded from political community and reduced to 'bare life' , see Slavoj Žižek 'Against Human Rights,' *New Left Review* 34 (July/August 2005), 115–33.

20 Lee Walzer, *Between Sodom and Eden: A gay journey through today's changing Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 235.

21 This refers to the attack incident that took place in a gay bar in Tel Aviv which led to the killing of two people.

22 Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonisation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 16.

23 Dana, Tariq. 'The Beginning of the End of Palestinian Security Coordination with Israel?' *Jadaliyaa* (2014) Accessed 28 April 2015, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18379/the-beginning-of-the-end-of-palestinian-security-c

24 Mohammed Daraghmeh and Karin Laub, 'Palestinian Presidential Guard unveils its first female fighters—headscarved commandos taking new ground,' *The Independent* (2014) Accessed 28 April 2015, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/palestinian-presidential-guard-unveils-its-first-female-fighters--headscarved-commandos-taking-new-ground-9244604.html.

25 Allister Chang, 'Exploring gay Palestine,' *Passport*, accessed 23 September 2016, http://www.passportmagazine.com/exploring-gay-palestine/.

26 Schotten, Heike, Maikey, Haneen, 'Queers Resisting Zionism: On Authority and Accountability Beyond Homonationalism,' *Jadaliyya* (2012) Accessed 28 April 2015, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7738/queers-resisting-zionism_on-authority-and-accounta.

27 Schotten et al., 'Queers Resisting Zionism.'

28 This can be manifested in a few emblematic examples such as the 2003 Citizenship and Entry Emergency Law that bars Palestinians married to Israelis from becoming citizens, ultra-Orthodox Jewish campaigns for

gender segregation in public spaces, and the denial of Jewish-Jewish mar-
riages inside Israel unless the couple is 'converted' according to Orthodox
principles.

29 Echoing the famous Žižek understanding of 'too much of this' 'not enough
of that,' in Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, 11.

31 See *GAY TLV Guide*, accessed 23 September 2016, http://www.gaytlvguide.
com/.

32 Besides the fragmentation policies it is important to mention how separat-
ing Palestinians is also materialized by 99 fixed checkpoints (59 internal and
40 as the inspection point before entering Israel); more than 500 physical
obstructions (iron gates, concrete blocks, and more) blocking the access
roads to main traffic arteries in the West Bank; 65 kilometres of closed
roads inside the West Bank that is open for Israelis only; and the 430 miles
of Apartheid wall.

33 The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
(PACBI) has defined normalization specifically in a Palestinian and Arab
context 'as the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine
or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together
Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without
placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and
all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people.'
See *PACBI*, accessed 23 September 2016, http://pacbi.org/etemplate.
php?id=1749

34 See Haneen Maikey and Sami Shamali, 'International Day Against
Homophobia: Between the Western Experience and the Reality of Gay
Communities,' *ESSF*, accessed 23 September 2016, http://www.europe-sol-
idaire.org/spip.php?article25411.

Decolonial Activism in White French Feminist Land

Lesbiennes of Color (Sabreen, Moruni, and Aria)

Introduction

It is necessary to state who founded the group 'LOCs' (Lesbiennes of color) in order to understand why and how it was created. The group was founded in 2009 by three political lesbians of color: Nawo (African American-French), Moruni (Indian exiled in France) and myself (Djiboutian exiled in France), who had been involved in lesbian and feminist spaces for many years. Despite our different activist experience and personal trajectories, we shared the same conclusions. The issues raised concerned the French LGBT, lesbian and feminist spaces which had a white vision with no interest in other activism strategies or other struggles in terms of racism, nor a capacity to build a real international solidarity without being maternalistic. Something else was missing too: the white French feminist approach was seen as the best manner to lead the struggle against sexism, avoiding and marginalizing other feminists and lesbians of color. Facing these conclusions, the group issued a manifesto co-written with other lesbians of color from Guadeloupe, Tunisia, and Seychelles. LOCs is an informal, autonomous group, 'non-mixed,' made up of French lesbians of migrant origins, of exiled lesbians, lesbian refugees, lesbians who share migration or exile journeys, stories linked to colonialism, slavery or institutional racism; lesbians who have in common experiences of being made invisible in lesbian feminist or LGBT circles in general. Consequently, LOCs is not a part of any feminist or lesbian collective, and certainly not of the Inter-LGBT, the umbrella LGBT organization in France.

Before developing our ideas further, let us consider the expression 'lesbiennes of color.' It is definitely not a question of critical analysis based on the ideology of racial/color hierarchy. Our aim is to borrow, reclaim, and extend the work of our African American feminist and

lesbian predecessors who framed their political theory and militant practice against the onslaught of WASP feminism. Using a materialist approach, we continue our struggle against the reality of oppressions articulated around racism, sexism, and lesbophobia. In this regard, we draw upon the work of the Combahee River Collective, Patricia Smith, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Angela Davis, and many others. We do appreciate that the term 'lesbiennes of color' can create confusion and restrict the group to an ideology of color. However, our group is impelled by a political vision, a specific militant practice and intersectional analysis.

Similarly, LOCs claim their inspiration from feminist and lesbian of color groups in France. Indeed, LOCs was not born ex nihilo, even if it is proud of its own specific approach and activist practice. The group owes its analyses and tools partly to the work of groups who developed an intersectional approach of sexism and racism in France. Being activists fighting specifically against the invisibilization of expressions, we need to remember the groups which, before us, carried out analyses and reflections on the invisibility of women of color, questioned racism and attempted to build distinctive spaces. We need to look back in history to understand where we come from and where we want to go, how we have evolved and what we are creating. Among them, we can point out the Ma Divine group—created by West Indian lesbians, the 6 November Group—a political non-mixed group started in November 1999 by lesbians sharing a background linked to slavery, imperialism, colonization, or forced migration; the Black Women's Coordinating Movement (Coordination des Femmes Noires), a group created in May 1976 composed chiefly of African women and some West Indian women who joined them; the N'DéeSses, created in 2001, a collective of lesbians who are either Arab or share Arabic languages and cultures, and who live either in their native country or in exile; and the LDR (Lesbians against Discrimination and Racism), created in November 2005, a group which united together white lesbians and lesbians of color in the fight against all forms of racism and discriminations within the lesbian communities in France.

Our use of the word 'lesbian' arises from our firm commitment to reinforce the visibility of specific lesbian thinking and activism. The term lesbian transcends the question of sentiments for us. For us, it is a vision of the everyday against established hetero-social order and its attendant constraints. We underscore its significance for us since lesbians face specific acts of violence, such as corrective rape and forced marriage. It is for this reason that we strongly condemn lesbophobia. It is for the same reason that the word 'queer,' as it is currently used, renders our struggle invisible by occluding our thinking and specificity, which are the primary constitutive aspects of our resistance.

Part 1: Two Standpoints Leading to the Creation of LOCs

Two main ideas led to the creation of our group: a conflicting experience, and a wish to take action and fight in accordance with our real-life experience, whilst making our actions and analyses visible.

As lesbians and feminists, we tend to prefer communities with whom we have something in common and with which whom can identify or feel at ease, that is to say, the LGBT or feminist communities. In principle, these communities should be more open and therefore free from oppression of any type. However, we experience exoticism, a certain maternalistic attitude towards us, and from gays, we experience frank chauvinism. We find racism on the inside as well as racism on the outside, in other words, institutional racism. We are present but not seen; we are made invisible. Others speak for us, our words are ignored or seized upon, and often some feminists, lesbians, or queers continuously 'anthropologize' us, an attitude already denounced by members of the Black Women's Coordinating Movement. For example, in lesbian gatherings, there have been some instances during debates where feminism of color has been discussed whilst the theoretical and activist contributions made by lesbians of color in France have been ignored. These contributions include those of the 6 November Group, Ma Divine, and the Black Women's Coordinating Movement.

The second idea which led to the creation of LOCs is the hierarchical approach of struggle within the LGBT and feminist-lesbian organizations. Thus, the fight against lesbophobia/homophobia does not satisfy us because this approach gives secondary importance to or even hides the question of color and the factors underlying it, namely social relations of race and class, thus reflecting society in general. This was a very unique fight relating to our real-life experience as lesbians of color and lesbians of color activists, since we experienced these interlinked oppressions. Unless we chose between our identity as lesbians and our life experience as racialized women, moving in these communities sometimes took on a schizophrenic turn. The problem is that these organizations, groups or movements have never questioned these relations and their effects (or had only questioned them very little), and have never really understood these issues and have actively maintained a lack of interest in them. They have not taken into account the feminist and lesbian diversity and have constricted themselves to a binary mode. For instance, feminists have long been focusing on gender in their analyses as the only factor of women's oppression. Therefore, as Paola Bacchetta writes, '[The lesbians of color] actions remain incomprehensible in the dominant framework of understanding, the latter being incapable of expressing the inseparability of gender,

sexuality, racism, classes, slavery and its consequences, colonialism and postcolonialism.'[1]

These conflicting experiences of inclusion and exclusion reinforce a process of 'invisibilization' of the voices of lesbians of color and confirm that feminist and LGBT communities are not above reproducing oppressive patterns.

Part 2: How LOCs Acts and Reacts

2.1 LOCs Rethinking Resistance

On this basis, it became urgent for us to create our own exclusive space for resistance with our own modes of expression. The concepts of space and expression are fundamental and at the heart of our activism: a space which is safe, secure, serene, 'non-mixed,' and free from any relationships of domination or oppression, in order to make visible in concrete terms our political, theoretical, artistic, and activist expressions. In other words, to break away from a single reference point to feminism, to break away from the monolithic block of LGBT communities, single-colored, and uniform, that is to say white and hegemonic.

As lesbians of color, this meant existing fully in our own right as independent actors of our struggles and producers of our analyses. In other words, this is a way of decolonizing lesbian activism in the same way that bell hooks talked about decolonizing feminism. LOCs is part of an intellectual, political, activist, supportive, and international approach, armed with individual and collective knowledge serving the lesbian of color stance which is anti-lesbophobic, anti-sexist, anti-racist (hatred of Muslims, xenophobia, anti-Semitism), anti-capitalist, anti-fundamentalist, and anti-imperialist.

We thus needed to rethink resistance to racism inside these communities as well as to State racism. We needed to reconfigure mobilizations, refuse any hegemonic feminism or lesbianism and resist whiteness and the shift to the right which pervades manners of thinking, of acting, of expression and of functioning, while imposing ones supposedly immutable and universal. For us, it was about constructing our own unique space and guaranteeing organizational, theoretical, and political autonomy. Of course there was the question of how to conduct our actions at the crossroads of sexist, racist, and lesbophobic oppressions on a materialist basis. We grappled with questions of building our lesbian of color activism and the spaces where our voices would be audible. We thought about allies and ways of working. Vigilance is

essential in the face of the issues we are subjected to, so how do we maintain this vigilance intact? How do we guarantee our autonomy? How do we develop a decolonial activism echoing our concerns?

We strive to translate these theories and analyses into concrete actions, such as organizing protest marches (for instance, the women of Maghreb march, Antifa march), gatherings, concerts and cultural events, political events (for instance, RAL and music-related events, lesbopride, Foot for Love, the LOCs fest), welcoming and assisting lesbian refugees, articulating solidarity by inviting lesbian rape survivors and victims of lesbophobia, setting up transnational networks of lesbians and feminists especially from India, North Africa, the Middle East and Africa. Additionally, we attach great importance to the production of texts and essays, announcements, interviews, talks, debates, and meetings in order to analyze and denounce the existing aggressive political, socio-economic, and international context.

Again, it is imperative to underline that in terms of theoretical paradigm or practice, our actions aim to make visible the articulation of lesbians of color. They always tend to highlight the struggle of feminists, women, and lesbians of color.

2.2 LOCs Building Actions

Ever since its creation, LOCs has been committed to a pragmatic and proactive functioning. In this regard, our group condemns those instances of current affairs that appear to re/impose a moral order, a radicalization of conservative attitudes, and a resurgence of racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

In France, we have to face the challenging context of the shift towards right-wing politics and the nationalist impulse of LGBT struggle with which we do not identify. The Pride March poster (*La Marche des Fiertés*) exemplified the national(ist) surge of the Inter-LGBT organization. As soon as the poster for the Paris Pride March 2011 was launched, LOCs campaigned for its immediate withdrawal. We denounced its sexist, racist, petainist, and homonationalist character, which trivialized the '*lepenisation*' (swing to the far right) of some LGBT organizations in a political context where the Right Party in power was displaying stark racism and xenophobia. This poster reminded us of the Vichy maxim as it was a recycled version that the chauvinistic French members of the government enthusiastic for the national identity discourse were keen to impose. Why on earth a rooster, traditionally recognized as a national symbol of France? The poster imposed on the entire LGBT communities to identify with the French rooster, without taking into account those within it—female

or male—who came from different origins, cultures, or horizons. Why link patriotism, nationalism, national identity, and national preference to LGBT spaces, spaces that should avoid these oppressive patterns and discourses? These dangerous liaisons in fact contribute towards weakening the fight against the very same oppressive patterns because, in the final analysis, they reproduce and perpetuate them. The campaign was a success and the poster was removed from the advertisements for Paris Pride 2011.

The emphasis on gay marriage and reproductive rights for same-sex couples appears as the overarching narrative of struggle that neatly folds into a logic of assimilation to the heterosexual norm. Indeed, the 'marriage for all' ('*mariage pour tous*') project under the guise of equal rights imposes a heteronormative vision as the unique valid institution that guarantees our rights. We question the validity of this vision and wonder how these heterosocial norms are transformed by such demands. The underlying focus of some groups, especially gay men, remains on surrogacy. We strongly oppose surrogate reproductive arrangements since they control women's bodies in a triple bind of sexist, racist, and capitalist exploitation. As a reminder, it suffices to note that the events leading up to the passage of the same-sex marriage law generated an unprecedented movement of reactionary comments from all political sides in France. The socialist (or rather the social-democrat) government made it a symbolic struggle to demonstrate its commitment to the political left. It refused to contain the hatred and violence of reactionary, far-right, and conservative groups nevertheless. We have consciously decided to make the focus of our activism this context of the advancement of the French far right, and of nationalist, racist, and sexist ideas that inevitably contribute to essentialist and hierarchical relations between men and women.

As political lesbian feminists of color, this demand of being proactive is all the more urgent for us, given the rapid expansion of the far right in France as well as Europe. In times such as the current increase of right-wing ideas our group is extremely vigilant.

In addition, it should be noted that we strongly condemn any form of military intervention that directly stems from the neo-colonial positioning of France. These interventions have in the past included rapes in the war in Rwanda and have often been justified through a recourse to democratic values and women's rights. As with the asylum issue, the French authorities do not make specific efforts to take into account lesbians who have fled their countries to find asylum and security.

Brutal paramilitary and police repression increases manifold with every new blow. The sad state of affairs, currently seen on our screens and streets, is that of militarized surveillance which carries out its

threats under the benign protection of the French state. The recent death of an environmental activist is just the tip of the iceberg. Police and paramilitary forces carry on killing, maiming, imprisoning, repressing, and the list goes on. However, when we, as women, as feminists, as lesbians, and as activists of color are detained, rape threats and actual rapes become increasingly instrumental in securing hierarchical power relations. Certainly, we, LOCs, cannot regard this armed wing of the state as a shield of protection for us. We further condemn the apparent difference of treatment even within this state of paramilitary and police repression. Given the dissimilarities in terms of our social class, our skin color, our names, and our political commitments, all of us do not fear the police state in the same way. We urge you all to join us in large numbers and condemn the violence, the atrocities and the humiliation suffered by women, feminists and lesbians at the hands of the police and paramilitary forces.

Conclusion

We feel that it is possible and necessary to initiate or to join in collective protest actions with other lesbians, other white feminists, and other structures within the scope of temporary strategic alliances. We refuse to be guided, as it is important for us to create our own opportunities or to seize them. Hence we control all aspects of our actions and our ways of organizing ourselves, which is essential to our objective of being autonomous politically, organizationally, and to our objective of having visibility for our action and analyses. We refuse any attempt to force an amalgamation or assimilation with any other group as this could depoliticize our analyses or our expression.

However, we need to acknowledge that things are actually changing in the feminist and lesbian community, in particular within some groups of political lesbians or groups of feminists. We can mention, as an example, the press movement that compiled the history of the MLF (*le Mouvement de Libération des Femmes*—the Women's Liberation Movement) and which made a point of mentioning the existence and the contribution made by feminist or lesbian groups of black African, North African, or West Indies origin between 1970 and 2010. There is also the Coordinating Movement of Lesbians in France (CLF) with whom we organized the Lesbian Action Rally (RAL). Let us not forget the Batucadykes (lesbians who play the batucada), who have been precious allies with their music in demonstrations and marches. Our collaboration was based on a political agreement and a wish to maintain the necessity of 'non-mixed' events.

There are also feminist collectives which have included the double violence against migrant women in manifestos and claims. Or other groups defining themselves as predominantly white queers which denounce racism or islamophobia. Even if we are not in agreement with their approach to anti-racist struggles, we mention them out of activist honesty.

More than ever, today, it is necessary to work in a shared frame of struggles in order to reinforce resistance against a shared oppressor who has become stronger with time. This dynamic frame will have to be constituted of 'mixed' and/or multiple spaces with several other activist formations. From time to time, we have strategically articulated our struggle alongside other activist organizations in order to resist the increasing march of far-right ideas. However, we retained our group-specific demands of the fight against lesbophobia and all kinds of racism since activism against the far right does not imply anti-sexist coalition by default. These antifascist groups are largely comprised of white males. Their articulation of struggle and modes of expression do not necessarily guarantee the non-reproduction of power relations and domination. As LOCs, we participate in only those coalitions and alliances that respect our position and political demands. We believe that a shared frame of struggle is only possible in such circumstances. We put forward this condition in our alliances with other groups who are exclusively involved in anti-racist work as well.

We notice that our demands are becoming visible and even gradually being accepted. However, we are aware that intersectional analysis (racism/sexism and/or lesbophobia) that constitutes the locus of our struggle and activism appears to be disruptive within mainstream LGBT politics. It also unsettles feminists with universalizing tendencies and certain self-proclaimed antiracist and antifascist groups with a largely white European membership.

Post-Charlie

Almost three months after the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and the supermarket Hyper Cacher, and in Montrouge (Paris), the context in France is ripe for a decolonial and feminist, lesbian of color analysis. As a group, we are currently in the midst of a shaky political, social, and economic context. Any activist mobilization, analysis, feminist or lesbian movement therefore needs to adopt concrete methods of activism in order to change this context that does not satisfy us.

Our group, LOCs, strongly condemns the attacks of 7 and 9 January 2015 and stands with the victims without any regard for the justification

of the attacks.

First of all, the mandate of '*Je suis Charlie*,' set up by the state appeared as the uncontested national standard. It dominated the people's emotion to such an extent that hundreds and thousands of people, who never participated in protests before, came out in the streets of France in solidarity. It further pointed to the risks involved in such protests, such as the linking of Islam with Islamic fundamentalism, the militarization of society, the stepping up of the Vigipirate (surveillance) plan. France was in a state of war. The French President, its leader as head of the army, was selling weapons and starting French military interventions in Mali and the Central African Republic thereby reinforcing French neo-colonial, imperialist, and interventionist politics in the formerly colonized African countries. Additionally, the march included heads of state, most of whom represented autocratic regimes, military dictators, colonizing states, and others that prohibit freedom of expression and thinking, and freedom to love which affects the lives of lesbians, gays, transgender people and ethnic minorities. We, LOCs refused to officially participate in this national mobilization, given the hypocrisy of the mandate. This injunction to participate was the manipulation of emotion by the state and capitalist media. It is true that *Charlie Hebdo* supported struggles, such as the ones for reproductive rights, which are crucial for us. However, ever since 2005 and the caricatures' lawsuit, their editorial strategy has largely participated in feeding racism and anti-Muslim sentiments in the French context. This strategy is extremely profitable and has resulted in increasing the prejudice even hatred against Muslims in France, including by the French left.

Second, anti-Muslim acts and discourse have congealed into various forms of aggression against women wearing the headscarf. In numerous instances, newspapers carry headlines showing women in headscarves and symbolically pointing to the Islamization of France. The French concept of '*laïcité*,' that some call '*néolaïcité*' is at the very heart of public debates. It served the interests of both the French right and left parties who insisted on the inter-connectedness of the attacks in January and the alleged threats to *laïcité*. We knew that there was a strong desire to roll out the 'Patriot Act à la *française*' which would reinforce the home security when Nicolas Sarkozy was President and which was never annulled by the socialist party currently in power. The aim is to replicate the same laws as those in the US which were against fundamental liberties. We need to therefore question the tenuous relation between the January attacks and the political and legislative responses to them. There is a reinforcement of securitization laws, immigration and asylum laws, and laws against the headscarf (even in

the universities). Although everything is tokenized, nothing is actually done to fight against structural factors that lead to the revolt of French youth and their radical(-ized) position against their own country that is France. The headscarf question, especially in the post-Charlie era, raises three issues: the temptation of its complete ban, the disturbing silence of feminists and the manipulation of the concept of *laïcité*.

Pascale Boistard, the Secretary of State for Women's Rights under the current socialist government, considers that the headscarf has no place in the University. It was only after a strong mobilization from academics that Pascale Boistard reconsidered her position. However, it might be slightly late. The dangerous connection between Muslim head-scarf-wearing women who are the main target of successive debates and laws on *laïcité* and the constant reference to jihadist violence has been clearly outlined. In other words, Boistard, a socialist minister continues the legacy of securitization logic that Sarkozy started with the prohi-bition of hoods and caps, which are often seen as markers of popular cultures in deprived French suburbs ('*banlieues*'). The public call for the need to separate political violence and Islam has already been crushed. French feminists have often equated the two and have even reinforced the idea by regarding the headscarf as a symbol of oppression and forgetting women who are victims of aggression and stigmatization. It is through the same logic that French feminists remained silent on the racist slurs hurled by right-wing and far-right politicians at Christiane Taubira, the Justice Minister. It is at this moment that we allied our efforts with the group '*R=Respect et Contre le Racisme'* (R=Respect and Against Racism), a group founded by women of color against increasing racism towards North African ('*les Arabes*') and black people in France.

'White French feminists' as we would like to call them indirectly contribute to Islamphobia by reinforcing the entrenched idea, held by all parties alike, of a monolithic and homogeneous 'Muslim commu-nity.' Thus, for us, they form an atavistic alliance that incites deeply held anti-Muslim racism. Levelling the critique against women in headscarves just after the January attacks becomes a way to hold them responsible or suspect them of solidarity with actions that they did not perpetrate. And yet, Muslim women are victims in a double bind since they are both women and Muslims.

Instead of fighting against the rising tide of Islamophobia, which in particular affects headscarf wearing women, universalizing 'laïcardes' and institutional feminists fail to see the double-pronged violence of racism and sexism and choose to focus on the so-called intrinsically discriminatory nature of Islam. We think that such feminists refuse to acknowledge the very foundation of feminism that lies in solidarity with women from all over the world against the patriarchal order. Theirs is

a hierarchical and hegemonic vision of the fight against sexism.

Finally, the bill (to be voted on 5 May 2015) which aims to increase the powers of the French secret services will certainly be adopted by a majority vote. LOCs is against this project and there is a long line of contestation from other quarters as well, including by human rights organizations, legal experts, and other actors of the digital economy. A debate around the theme of security-liberty is ensuing since the apparatuses put into place will ensure a shift from 'targeted surveillance' to 'mass surveillance.' Even though this project was agreed upon in July 2014, it will find widespread support after the January attacks. In fact, a clause was added to the bill after January 2015, which consists of a new function on internet provider networks that will automatically detect the 'terrorist threat' by analyzing 'successive suspicious connection data.' For the National Council of Digital Economy ('Conseil National du Numérique') this equates to mass surveillance strategies that have proven ineffective in the case of the US. The Special Parliamentary Committee that deals with questions of the digital economy advised the deletion of this article since it opens up the idea of a 'mass collection of data.' But the current government thinks that this measure is only a form of 'targeted surveillance', since the data would be de-anonymized only when the terrorist threat is detected by the system. Our group has always denounced a police state, whether of the right or the left parties, because populations under heavy surveillance run the risk of relinquishing their freedom to organize against abuse of power by the State.

The Necessity of Feminist Mobilization Against Fortress Europe

As a politically active lesbian of color and decolonial feminist group, we are concerned by migration and asylum politics in western countries often called 'host' countries but which should be labelled 'arrival' nations. We have the duty to protest the assassination of refugees who died by drowning in the Mediterranean Sea since France, among other countries, does not possess the means to welcome and host first-time arriving refugees on its territory.

On Sunday 12 April 2015, a makeshift boat capsized in the sea drowning around 400 migrants, all of whom died. The weekend of 18–19 April 2015 witnessed the deaths of almost 800 migrants. These events were certainly a huge human tragedy that resulted in more than 1000 lost lives in a single week. However, there were no marches in Paris or elsewhere to condemn the protectionist, nationalist and securitization policies of Europe. Our group with its motto of international

feminist solidarity had the responsibility to initiate a gathering in order to commemorate our refugee sisters and brothers who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. No other feminist or political organization called for a mobilization against Fortress Europe who is the key culprit of this terrible human tragedy.

Thus, our group organized a congregation in order to pay tribute to the deaths in the Mediterranean Sea without forgetting our sisters and brothers who were able to survive but are detained in prisons and immigration retention centers where rapes, violence, and intimidation against refugees, especially against women and children happen on a permanent basis.

The 28-EU countries organized an emergency summit and decided to treble the resources deployed by the Triton mission handled by Frontex, an agency that is responsible for the guarding the European coastal borders along the Mediterranean Sea.

We need to remember that the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union was formed in November 2014. It oversees and supports member states in their mission to safeguard external borders of the EU and control illegal immigration. In other words, via the operation called Triton, Frontex is not primarily responsible for saving refugee lives. Instead, it monitors their movement, thus participating directly in these human tragedies.

If Europe retreats into its fortress, Africa and its politicians stand as inactive witnesses to the tragedies that originate from their continent. Their silence attests to the lack of interest in their youth populations who risk their lives and often flee the continent due to political persecutions, injustice, and poverty.

At LOCs, it is our attempt to make feminist voices heard and make the voice of women from the whole world more visible. We know that women and feminists do not give up but often analyze, act, create, and contribute to change in their continents. Two African women have stood up to contest the silence displayed by African and European leaders. They have pointed to European and global complicity in the deaths of thousands of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea.

Inspired by migrant trajectories and her own migration to France, the Senegalese writer, Fatou Diome remarks, 'we'll be rich together or we'll drown together.'[2] She denounces the European hypocrisy of always fearing the migrants and considering them like a permanent enemy or potential terrorists.

The former Culture Minister of Mali, Amina Traoré, a writer and alter-globalization activist, condemns the 'macabre and infernal account' of the way in which Europe handles the migrant crisis. She

critiques the development model imposed by Europe with its arms such as the IMF and WTO. The economic consequences of this imposition mainly affect the youth who have to live in exile in order to have a life of dignity. Traoré also decries the military interventions in Mali and Libya which resulted in the departure of hundreds of thousands workers from sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb. The workers had lost their employment.

Our group, LOCs, is faithful to its vision of solidarity without borders. We believe that it is urgent to rethink the inter-relations between Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia such that they reflect a real partnership instead of solely serving Europe's financial and trade interests. We would like to see the emergence of solidarity in a Europe without borders.

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Notes

1   Paola Bacchetta, 'Co-Formations : Sur les spatialités de résistance de lesbiennes "of color" en France,' *Genre, Sexualité et Société* 1/1 (2009), accessed 21 September 2016, https://gss.revues.org/810, doi 10.4000/gss.810.
2   Fatou Diome, 'On sera riche ensemble ou on va se noyer tous ensemble.' *Les Inrocks*, accessed 21 September 2016, http://www.lesinrocks.com/inrocks.tv/fatou-diome-on-sera-riche-ensemble-ou-on-va-se-noyer-tous-ensemble/.

Lesbian of Colour Activism
and Racist Violence in Contemporary Europe

Fatima El-Tayeb

The following short essay is based on a talk given at Euro Pride 2013 in Marseilles at the invitation of the Paris-based activist group Lesbiennes of Color (LOCs). The event itself illustrates some of the problematics I am addressing here, namely the normalization of an alliance between white queers, from progressive to homonormative, and a neoliberal model of civil and human rights. In it, rights are framed within a market logic, in which agency and active citizenship is equated with the performance of consumption, in particular public, collective rituals of consumption, such as Gay Pride parades. This model is depoliticizing queer politics and separates it from larger struggles for social justice. Current LGBT activism has a lot to say about 'marriage as a human right,' but virtually nothing about human rights such as the right to food, work, and a living wage or to be protected from arbitrary detention (UN Charter 1948). Real gains in a narrowly defined area, such as same sex marriage, are taken as proof of the narrative of constant progress and humanitarian commitment in the West, and in particular in Europe, which is seen as most advanced with regard to women's and gay rights. However, these gains are not framed as part of a larger push towards equality and social justice, nor is there any recognition of the (old and new) violence that comes with a neoliberal multiculturalism that offers inclusion to some formerly excluded groups, as long as they fit the model of the consumer citizen.

In the case of the Euro Pride event in Marseilles that meant a focus on gay tourism. Targets were affluent queer consumers from across Europe, not local populations, whose unemployment rate and poverty level has long been above the national average and who are not coincidentally more racially and religiously diverse than the European average (since poverty and racialization tend to go together in Europe).[1] In 2013, Marseilles was also the official European Cultural Capital. This designation, given out annually by the European Union, is coveted by cities across the continent hoping to quite literally monetize their

cultural capital via this title.[2] Tourism plays a key role in this strategy, of which the Euro Pride in Marseilles, themed 'Love and Marriage,' was a key part. Both the European Cultural Capital and Euro Pride are explicitly built around the commercialization of culture, suggesting that the value of culture can be measured in market terms, the more the better, inviting tourism and multinationals into the creative city.[3] This model applies across Europe, to cities like Amsterdam, Berlin, Madrid, Riga or Stockholm (all of which have held both designations). It is attractive to municipalities facing growing pressure to generate revenue as federal funding is declining everywhere. They buy into a competitive market model, in which creative cities compete for affluent customers, including gay ones. Communities of colour play a very different role within this concept, not consumers, but objects of consumption—be it by offering a colourful, exciting, and slightly dangerous backdrop to a touristic adventure that otherwise might be a little too dull and predictable or by offering literal goods of consumption—colourful 'oriental' markets, 'ethnic' food, and exotic yet affordable sex.

Like other cities, Marseilles hoped to benefit from the cultural capital status and the Euro Pride was one example of how the city planned to generate revenue and improve its image of a dangerous, criminal, barely European city, and turn it into that of a dynamic, multicultural, and cosmopolitan metropole. The success of this strategy is disputed, but it is certain that it did not benefit local communities of colour, including queers of colour.[4] This is true not only for Marseilles, but for the neoliberal multicultural city in general, which tends to deteriorate the situation of racialized communities. Due to their lacking ability to consume, they fall out of the model of (consumer-)citizenship. Their already tenuous ownership of the spaces they made habitable after being segregated into them is lost in more and more explicit gentrification battles. In these conflicts, it is more often than not communities of colour that are presented as invaders, illegal inhabitants, not the usually white urban professionals who force them out through rising rents and moral panics around urban violence. The conflict has crystalized around a narrative of young (Muslim) men of colour threatening the safety of gay (male) urbanites.[5] Thus it is not gentrification, but homophobic racialized violence that threatens the balance of the metropole. This frames poor communities of colour as those who cannot share space with others, because they cannot tolerate Otherness. This in turn fits into a larger narrative of failed multiculturalism, in which racialized migrants have failed to 'assimilate' into the functional European system. This essentialist story of incompatible cultures erases all other factors, such as economic and racial inequality. The marginalization of people of colour not only in the European mainstream but also in radical queer,

feminist and other progressive circles, finds its explanation in these groups' cultural inability to handle the kind of plurality characteristic for the rest of society. Their absence from the middle class consumer party of gay rights is not explained by economic disparity or racist exclusion but 'culture,' more specifically, a pervasive homophobia and sexism that makes members of these communities antagonistic to the values celebrated at Euro Pride.

This binary model fulfills a number of functions, central among them the illusion of two completely opposing ways of life, erasing intersections and complexities, represented for example by queer people of colour, who remain invisible, if not impossible in this scenario. The model was actively challenged by the activist group Lesbiennes of Color at Euro Pride 2013. The LOCs organized a series of panels focusing on lesbian of colour activism in Europe and beyond as well as addressing the complicity of white lesbian and feminist activism in a global racial capitalism that hides its exploitative structure behind the idea of Western progress and humanitarianism. That this image of a peaceful, human rights focused Europe survives in the face of thousands of people dying on its borders every year and in the face of ongoing racist attacks on Europeans of colour has to do with the refusal of the majority to address racism as structural. Progressive queer and feminist activists are no exception in rejecting responsibility for this racist violence by framing it as located on the fringe, as anachronistic and as out of touch with the new, liberal, flexible times as are its targets, communities of colour.

Right wing movements have been on the rise across Europe, from the Greek Golden Dawn to the Belgian Vlamse Belang, the Hungarian Jobbik, and the Swiss People's Party.[6] Their violent rhetoric, and frequently physical violence, is directed primarily at so-called foreigners, that is, communities of colour, in particular Black, Muslim, and Roma, all groups that rather than being recent additions to the continental landscape, i.e. 'foreigners,' have been present in Europe for decades or even centuries, but are still perceived as not fully belonging.[7] Gaining momentum in the 1990s, after the collapse of Europe's post-World War II division into East and West, there has been a stream of racist violence, from beatings to shootings and lethal arson attacks, in particular in the continent's prosperous and avowedly liberal Northwest.[8] Among the most recent examples is the so-called 'National Socialist Underground' in Germany, a white supremacist group whose contacts reached from the American KKK to the very authorities tasked with prosecuting them.[9] The NSU injured dozens and murdered at least nine Muslim men over a seven year period, randomly picking and executing them simply because they assumed them to be Muslim.[10] In Norway, Anders

Breivik slaughtered more than 70 people, many of them teenagers, in proclaimed protest of the 'Islamization' of Europe.[11]

Nearly as disturbing as the regularity with which these incidents occur is their perception by politics, media and the general public: right wing violence is not qualified as (racial) 'terror,' requiring the kind of collective identification with the victims that was seen in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attack or the taking on of collective responsibility for terrorist acts often requested wholesale from Muslims. Instead, systemic racist violence is reframed as isolated acts committed by disturbed individuals or fringe groups, in stark contrast to the perception of the violence by, say, Michael Adebolajo, who in 2013 murdered a British soldier, or Mohammed Merah, whose 2012 killing of seven people in Toulouse immediately fit the framework of 'Islamic terrorism' attacking Europe's core;[12] a terrorism that in turn is seen as indicative of a 'Muslim culture' threatening Europe's stability and identity, in a way that racist violence is not seen as indicative of dominant European culture threatening its racialized populations. Rather, if these communities face violence and exclusion, it must be because they are doing something wrong. That is, politics and media tend to condemn outright acts of 'xenophobic' violence, while showing understanding if not sympathy for a feeling among substantial parts of the population (imagined as white and normative) of being beseeched by a threatening foreignness. This frequently results in demands towards 'both sides' to change their behavior, thus applying equal responsibility to victims and perpetrators (while affirming a clear separation between those that 'belong here' and need to learn how to deal with newcomers and said newcomers who have no right to or history of belonging).

This cycle of violent outbursts, condemnations and a search for the roots of xenophobic sentiments that gradually shifts the blame to 'migrants' (including those born and raised in their countries of residence) and their failed integration has been going on nearly unchanged for decades. That there is little progress in discussions and analyses of this dynamic has a lot to do with the fact that racism as an analytical category has been virtually absent until very recently. That is, the idea that there is a structural racism that shapes European societies, is inherent to them, rather than a sporadic reaction to behaviors of racialized Others, has been rejected almost wholesale by continental European scholars, policymakers, media and white progressive activists. The very idea of race was invented in Europe and spread across the world through Enlightenment science and colonialism, with devastating, ongoing consequences. Still, most Europeans believe that this history has had no impact on the continent itself and its internal structures, that 'race' matters everywhere but in Europe.[13] Attempts to point to the

ongoing relevance of race for European identity formations—usually by activists and scholars of colour—are frequently framed as enforcing an Americanized 'political correctness' supposedly meant to silence necessary critiques of migrant communities and their supposed innate sexism, anti-Semitism and homophobia.[14]

And indeed, at first glance it might seem as if Europe exists outside of the US American (post)racial temporality. While the latter is built on a narrative of having successfully overcome intolerance and discrimination, the myth of European 'colourblindness' claims that Europe never was 'racial' in the first place.[15] The racial is implicitly tied to non-whiteness, which in turn is defined as external to Europe. Race and the trouble it brings with it can thus be perceived as something brought in only recently, by 'foreigners' from Europe's non-white outside. This of course among other things ignores the centuries-long presence, and persecution, of explicitly racialized European Roma and Sinti and leads to anti-Semitism often being treated as both an exception to European non-racist normalcy and as clearly separable from racism.[16] This denial of the internal roots of race, and racism, makes it hard to challenge the narrative from within a continental European theoretical framework that constantly externalizes race, that is, places it outside of the domain of what needs to be theorized. Accordingly, the European Left has produced no theory of racialization, instead class remains central, which is ironic since class is deeply racialized in Europe, with unemployment, low wage labour, school segregation and incarceration having a disproportionate effect on racialized communities.[17]

As a result Europe, in its national and postnational variations, is maintaining a normalized Christian(ized secular) whiteness through an ideology of colourblindness that claims not to 'see' racialized difference and thus both stabilizes and silences race as a framework inherent to the continent, while using race (currently expressed via religion and culture) to constantly produce non-white populations as necessarily non-European. Instead, terms like 'third generation migrant' affirm that racialized populations are permanently perceived as a temporary presence in their home nations. An ongoing racial amnesia, made possible through the erasure of the history of European racism and the history of Europeans of colour, makes unspeakable processes of internal racialization and the ways in which they are inseparable from the after effects of European colonialism and from neocolonial economic structures. The latter posit racialized communities increasingly as disposable populations, neither included nor expelled. Instead kept in a state of suspension that does not allow for the acquisition of rights—be that through restrictive citizenship laws or the segregation of children of colour in special education classes that provide no economic future or

other measures that cement racialized populations as aberration from the norm—as a problem that needs to be solved through repressive state intervention. Since these populations are not able to help themselves, i.e, help themselves become more like 'us' to be precise, the European majority community remains the unquestioned model of a democratic polity.

In international politics, the view of Europe as a beacon of human rights is used as justification for 'humanitarian' interventions in the Global South by a US and Europe led NATO. These humanitarian interventions, supposedly necessary to control a chaotic Third World, are used to ensure Western domination threatened by political movements in the Global South: the violence in the Global South often caused by Western economic exploitation is presented as a result of the 'primitive,' 'chaotic,' 'violent' nature/culture of people of colour.[18] The same violent nature is ascribed to communities of colour in the West: they become a threat to human rights undisputed among 'real' Europeans, namely gender equality and sexual and religious tolerance. A threat from which Europe needs to be protected, as expressed in the frequent claim that people of colour need to learn to act civilized before they can 'become' European. White, Christian(ized secular) Europeans are assumed to already possess this civilized nature, they are the ones whose behavior is never examined and who have the unquestioned right to decide who is European and who is not.[19] In this model, religion, secularism, and race are mapped onto each other in a way that produces white, Christian(ized secular) Europe as always ahead, always the location of progress. That is, the enlightened 'natural order of things' created a hierarchical link between religion and secularism, not by replacing one with the other, but by privileging religions able to co-exist with the secularized world order. Within this secular religious hierarchy, Protestantism and, with it, northwestern Europe were located in the crown of the evolutionary tree, and colonialism as a so-called civilizing mission intended (forced) conversion as a means to move primitive (non-Christian) races into adulthood.

The discourse on people of colour and recently in particular Muslims as 'un-European' follows this tradition by focusing on issues of gender and sexuality, that is, these groups' supposedly pervasive cultural misogyny and homophobia. Muslim minorities as the last remaining source of gay and lesbian victimization in Western Europe retrospectively validates queer suffering as it is finally recognized by the majority, which now becomes the protector, rather than the persecutor of the LGBT minority; just like mainstream Europe protects Muslimas from Muslim men and the Jewish community from a Muslim anti-Semitism deemed more dangerous than its European version ever was.[20] This culturalist

projection of various forms of intolerance on communities of colour inside and outside of the West protects the identification of humanism and Europe unexplored and conveniently defines any European failure to live up to these humanitarian standards as exception rather than symptomatic (see the discussion of right wing violence above), while also erasing the violent inequality produced by neoliberal economic globalization.[21]

Even queer organizations critical of homonationalism become complicit in this process by failing to address structural racism as foundational for post-World War II West European societies.[22] Thus, they play into a system in which queerness becomes tolerable if it is perceived as being compatible with a neoliberal project that produces new forms of exclusion: the seemingly fluid, but in fact strictly hierarchical spatial governance provided by the multicultural metropole tolerates poor communities of colour in its cityscape, but contains and isolates them. They are conceived of primarily as an expendable resource of labour, food, sex and other commodities valued by the consumer-citizen, including the queer consumer-citizen. The regulation of space, the question of who has legitimate claims to it and to whose needs it is meant to cater to is relevant in European cities, where the rise in popularity of creative city models goes along with an increasing pitting of 'gay' against 'migrant' communities that completely erases class as an analytical category and instead replaces it with an essentialist understanding of culture, i.e. one in which the legitimate inhabitants of the creative city, central among them gay men, produce desirable, apolitical forms of culture, while its illegitimate inhabitants, central among them communities of colour, provide the raw cultural material that increases the city's value (without being considered part of the creative class themselves). This formation also expresses itself in the new dynamic model of urban spaces, framing the latter not as constructed and controlled from above but as both produced by and producing practices of living, as both created by and creating citizens. Public spaces thus are no neutral ground but sites of production and consumption, contested markets, in which 'diversity' is a coveted cultural product. Urban commercialized Pride events like Euro Pride cater to this model and are a prime site of gay cosmopolitan tourism to the neoliberal multicultural city. This tourism equates mobility with the ability to consume transnationally, often expressed in the ability to consume and/or save queers of colour.

The dominant dichotomy to which homonationalist as well as progressive white queers subscribe to sees the European Muslim/PoC community as a whole as embodying the wrong, that is, misogynist and homophobic, type of heterosexuality. This dichotomy puts racialized

queers in an even more impossible position however: communities of colour appear as by default heterosexual, the queer community as by default white. This reflects a global discourse of progress and human rights in which the white West invariably takes the lead; while it may not always be progressive enough, it certainly always is more so than anyone else. Within this binary discursive formation, the Western LGBT community has the role of civilizer, while racialized queers have nothing to offer as they, like all people of colour, are products of a culture that is fundamentally inferior to the secular West, making them necessarily 'un-European.' This trope can be reinforced quickly because it references well-known clichés affirming Europe's status as the center of progress and humanism. Queers of colour, like people of colour in general, appear as 'not yet there,' the there being the normative state of successful development represented by the white West/man/queer. One example of this is the coming out trope, built around an individualist narrative of progress from shame, isolation and closetedness to pride, liberation, and outness. This discourse neither addresses the reality of 'coming out' as an ongoing, layered process, nor accounts for other forms of oppression, such as racism, that make the equation of liberation and coming out more than questionable. A successful challenge to this dynamic therefore requires an intersectional engagement with all of these discursive tropes and their anchoring in European conceptions of public space and time used to subordinate the rest of the world and people of colour. And it is no coincidence that queer racialized Europeans, perfectly representing the subaltern of contemporary European discourses around race, religion, gender, sexuality and migration, are at the center of this challenge. Lesbians and trans*people of colour in particular have to not only deal with structural racism, sexism, queer- and transphobia in society in general, but simultaneously with these issues within activist communities. They don't ever have the luxury to take it for granted that their voices will be heard and their interests included, the solidarity that they are asked to provide to feminist, LGBT, Black, Muslim communities is often not granted to them in return, because they remain deviant even in these communities.

Nonetheless, lesbians and trans*people of colour remain key to anti-racist, feminist and queer movements, often doing the least valued work while being faced with constant ignorance and aggression. At the same time, they have also formed their own spaces of resistance, from the German black women's collective Adefra, which for more than twenty-five years has been doing queer and feminist organizing within and beyond the Black German community, or the Dutch black lesbian group Sister Outsider, the first of its kind in the Netherlands, founded

in the mid-80s in response to the work of black lesbian feminists like Audre Lorde and active simultaneously in feminist, queer and anti-racist movements to the British Muslim lesbian/trans collective Safra Project, which works within the Muslim community as much or more than with white queer groups and, of course, Lesbiennes of Color in France.[23] What these groups have in common is an approach that is attentive to the intersectional lives of queer people of colour, as Audre Lorde put it, 'there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives.'[24] Accordingly, they rejected the call to separate struggles around race, class, gender and sexuality, a strategy often leading to the demand to ignore some issues until others, supposedly more important ones, are solved. They also reject calls to take sides, claims of 'you are either with us or against us,' loyalty demands directed at those considered politically suspect from all privileged perspectives, especially if they challenge the dominant progressive consensus.

While this constellation plays out differently in different context, a systemic marginalization of those who face multiple oppressions is a characteristic of progressive politics across Europe (and beyond). A statement published by Berlin QTIBPoC activists challenging the racism within the radically anti-homonationalist but normatively white alternative pride march in 2013 describes a situation familiar to activists of colour across the continent, who have to waste precious time and energy fighting racism within 'anti-racist' coalitions:

> We are queer, trans*, inter* Black and People of Colour (QTIBPoC), we are many, we are fundamentally different and we are pissed off. Have you ever asked yourself, why we're so angry? Suddenly you discovered racism? What you learn about in a workshop is our everyday reality—and this includes our reality with you, too. We have been watching you for a long time now. Is your memory really that bad? We are not the first ones to express this—there has been a long history of QTIBPoC and we will no longer educate you … In this scene there is no critical reflection on social structures, but rather a tradition of finding scapegoats*, that makes it easy to divert from one's own complicity. Some of us think: I want to stay away from white people in order not to be consumed, not to have my knowledge, experiences and processes exposed to them to then find them published on a 'antiracist' blog at the end of the day. Some of us think: whites use a 'critique of sexism' in order to legitimize their racism.[25]

Lesbians and trans*people of colour appear as deviant in racist discourse, sexist discourse, revolutionary nationalist discourse, but also in feminist discourse, liberal discourse, LGBT discourse. Their radical, intersectional activism receives little recognition—and if so, often hostile in form of claims of 'reverse racism,' of betraying the

movement, etc.—and often gets erased in claims that 'they' are 'not yet ready' to speak for themselves and thus need to be helped by the very organizations that exclude them (while these same organizations appropriate and depoliticize models of resistance originating in this radical activism).[26]

All this leads to the realization that we must start our political work from the recognition that multiple systems of oppression are in operation, not side by side, but intersecting and depending on each other. Therefore, it is impossible to dismantle homophobia without dismantling racism, which cannot be dismantled without dismantling sexism and so on. This does not mean that particular struggles cannot be prioritized, but it means that inclusion in the existing system is not enough, the system itself needs to be changed.[27] Same sex marriage as a civil right is good and well, but to quote black lesbian feminist Cathy Cohen:

> Civil rights do not change the social order in dramatic ways; they change only the privileges of the group asserting those rights … homophobia does not originate in our lack of full civil equality. Rather, homophobia arises from the nature and construction of the political, legal, economic, sexual, racial and family systems within which we live.[28]

In other words, the legalization of same sex marriage is an important gain on many levels, from the material—access to health care, job and housing security, visitation rights, etc.—to the immaterial, the symbolic importance of inclusion into an institution around which moral value, and the very idea of normalcy, is constructed. It does not however fundamentally change a system that frames rights as privileges that need to be earned (and conversely can be withheld from 'undeserving' groups or individuals), nor does it address dramatic disparities in access to health care, child care, housing and other basic needs, disparities that disadvantage a large number of LGBT folks, who are poor, Black, indigenous, female, trans*, while privileging others, who are white, male, middle class.

Therefore, all of these intersecting systems need to be changed before liberation can be achieved, if we understand liberation as the absence of a system of scarcity in which the withholding of basic human rights is not an exception but the very logic around which the system is built. This also means that in order to form successful coalitions, we need to be honest about the ways in which these intersecting power structures affect us differently and create relative privilege for some of us because of our gender, race, religion, nationality or social class, privileges, for which we have to take responsibility if we want to create lasting coalitions. This is a daunting task. The realization that all oppression

is connected can be threatening: questioning the dominant narrative does not only change our image of the other but also the image of ourselves. It reminds us that being part of the same community, sharing the same identity, does not automatically mean we fight the same fight. But it also shows that common interests exist across national, religious, gender, ethnic lines. All oppression is connected, but so is resistance across the globe and new kinds of coalitions, connections, and unity can emerge at any point; and they do. Even if these coalitions—for example, between socialist, feminist, queer, revolutionary Muslim activists in the squares of Cairo, Istanbul, or Barcelona—are ephemeral and often end up seemingly domesticated into traditional single-issue formations, they show constellations emerging that are often deemed impossible. It is this politics of possibility, however momentary, that makes intersectional coalitions so powerful. But in order to build them, we have to be attentive both to histories of struggles and to current constellations. This means that we cannot follow a path that others have created, even if it worked for them. If we want to create truly transformative change, we cannot look to leaders, instead we have to learn to trust ourselves. As poet, activist and academic June Jordan observed almost four decades ago: 'We are not powerless. We are indispensable despite all atrocities of the state and corporate policy to the contrary. At the very least, if we cannot control things, we certainly can mess them up.'[29]

Notes

1   European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia,* (Vienna: EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2006); European Commission, *Migrants in Europe—A statistical portrait of the first and second generation*, (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011).
2   'Creative Europe Project,' *European Commission*, accessed 26 September 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm.
3   Richard Florida's (pseudo)quantitative creative city model, which gained popularity with city planners in the early 2000s, offers ethnic diversity, patent applications per head and the number of gay (male) residents as the three main indicators of an urban community's desirability within

the new 'creative' economy See Richard Florida, 'Bohemia and Economic Geography,' *Journal of Economic Geography* 2 (2002), 55–71. While this index seemingly legitimizes the presence of sexual as well as racial minorities, thus presenting a move beyond earlier models aimed at pushing non-normative populations outside the city limits, there is a difference not only between types of culture but also between those embodying creativity, the 'gay residents,' and those representing 'ethnic diversity,' with the former defined along the lines of a rather tired stereotype—the wealthy, artistic (white) gay man, favoring the aesthetic over the political, consumption over activism, and participation in the status quo over change—that gained new credibility and positive value with the discovery of the gay market in the 1990s. Thus, despite the stated openness of the creative city, white middle-class men seem to end up once again in the position of the normative and certain groups occupy similar marginal positions in hetero- and homonormative discourses, among them the Muslim community, which provides colour, exotic food, and sexual objects, but also stands for restrictive morality, crime, and poverty.

4   European Commission, *Ex-post Evaluation of the 2013 European Capitals of Culture*, (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014).

5   Jin Haritaworn, 'Queer Injuries: The Racial Politics of "Homophobic Hate Crime" in Germany,' *Social Justice* (2010), 69–89.

6   'Far-right Parties in European Elections Fact Sheet,' *Human Rights First*, May 2014, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www. humanrightsfirst.org/resource/far-right-parties-european-elections.

7   'Country Monitoring Work 1994-2014,' *European Commission*, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/library/publications.asp.

8   For the purpose of clarity and brevity, I will largely focus on the German example here. For a more comprehensive overview of racist violence across Europe, see European Network against Racism, *Racism in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2011-2012* (Brussels, 2013), *ENAR Foundation*, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.enarfoundation.eu/news/article/new-shadow-report-on-racism-in?news=oui.

9   During the ongoing trial against the sole surviving member of the group, it became increasingly obvious that police and secret service had actively undermined investigations into the group's activities, in part to protect their own network of informers. See Micha Brumlik/Hajo Funke, 'Der deutsche Staat und der NSU. Land im Ausnahmezustand,' *Die Tageszeitung*, 24 April 2014, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.taz.de/!137385/.

10 Ben Knight, 'Germany's neo-Nazi investigation exposes institutional racism,' *The Guardian,* 13 Nov 2012, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/nov/13/germany-neo-nazi-investigation-institutional-racism.

11 Andrew Brown, 'Anders Breivik's spider web of hate,' *The Guardian,* 7

September 2011, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/sep/07/anders-breivik-hate-manifesto.

12 Dominic Casciani, 'Woolwich: How did Michael Adebolajo become a killer?' *BBC News*, 19 Dec 2013, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25424290; Edward Cody, 'Mohammed Merah, face of the new terrorism,' *The Washington Post,* 22 March 2012, accessed September 2016, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/mohammed-merah-face-of-the-new-terrorism/2012/03/22/gIQA2kL4TS_story.html.

13 Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

14 Haritaworn, 'Queer Injuries.'

15 European 'colourblindness' would more accurately be described as 'racism denial,' but it seems important to point out that colourblindness is actually valued as a political model—either as one that combats racism or one that explains why there supposedly is no racism in Europe—for its implied collective inability to 'see race,' which in turn is not only equated with an inability to be racist, but also implies that those who do 'see race,' including activists of colour, are the real racists. That is, 'colourblindness' is a highly problematic and highly powerful term that is used here because of its key role in white liberal racism denial. For the US American 'post-racial' narrative and its uses in post-World War II US imperialism, see Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the U.S. State* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2011); Neda Atanasoski, *Humanitarian Violence: The U.S. Deployment of Diversity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

16 Bizarrely and cynically, the gradual post-World War II inclusion of Jews into the community of 'proper' white Europeans (see Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, [New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1999].) is seen as confirming the colourblind narrative, since anti-Semitism is supposedly directed at a 'white' group. This perception simultaneously naturalizes race: racism is targeting visibly, biologically different populations, anti-Semitism is targeting a population that is racially similar to white people. This perception is of course wrong on multiple levels, most importantly in its completely denial of the process of construction of racial Otherness, which is as much about making the familiar unfamiliar than about rejecting the 'different.' That it can persist nonetheless has to do with the lack of serious engagement with theorizations of race and racism, and surprisingly also of anti-Semitism. While there is a large body of scholarship on national socialist anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, relatively little attention is paid to the larger context, both historically and within the European landscape. That is, anti-Semitism as structural to Europe, both before and after the Holocaust, and its connection to

larger racist formations that are equally fundamental in shaping European identity, are severely understudied. This is in part, because the model of the uniqueness of the Holocaust discourages comparative analyses that are often perceived as minimizing its impact. In Germany, for example, there is only now a hesitant scholarly debate on the impact of German colonialism on society, in which much time is wasted on debating whether acknowledging the existence of a pre-fascist colonial racism necessarily means claiming a direct line from it to the Holocaust (see e.g. Jürgen Zimmerer, ed., *Kein Platz an der Sonne: Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte* [Campus Verlag: Frankfurt a. M., 2013]). This despite the fact that important theorists like Hannah Arendt and Aimé Cesaire have emphasized the historical. This schematic either-or thought that tends to equate contextualizing the Holocaust with relativizing it, also explains that Holocaust and Anti-Semitism Studies in Europe have taken little interest in the insights of US based Race Studies.

17 European Commission, *Migrants in Europe*.

18 Atanasoski, *Humanitarian Violence*.

19 See, e.g. the declarations of the end of multiculturalism by among others British Prime Minister Dave Cameron and German chancellor Merkel in 2010, meaning the end of tolerance for those never considered real Europeans in the first place, now offered the impossible choice of assim-ilation into a racialized system dependent on their exclusion or to leave for ancestral nations still considered their real home; a choice closely tied to unfounded but thoroughly mainstreamed claims to the continent's imminent 'Islamization,' while Muslims make up no more that 6% of the population in most European nations (See Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Mapping the Global Muslim Population*, [Pew Research Center: Washington, 2009]).

20 See, e.g. Diana Pinto, historian and senior fellow at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in London, on Muslim anti-Semitism in contemporary Europe: 'The old anti-Semitism came from above, from the elites, and was used to mobilize the lower classes. The people who destroyed synagogues in 1938 did that on orders and had wives at home who ironed their brown shirts. The new anti-Semitism comes from below, from aggressive thugs with a violent potential that is directed towards Jews but not limited to them. ... Over the last ten years, Jew-hatred has been growing among blacks too. It is based on arguments such as: "Enough of the Holocaust! Our ancestors suffered under slavery; which lasted longer and cost more lives than the Holocaust. That is what we want to talk about!" Black anti-Semitism is lower in numbers than its Muslim counterpart, but is much more violent.' (Cited in Janek Schmidt, 'Der neue Antisemitismus in Frankreich kommt von unten. Die Historikerin Diana Pinto über die Ängste französischer Juden, extremistische Imane und religiöse Bandenkriege in Paris,' Süddeutsche Zeitung, 18 Juli 2008, 14). The discourse around 'Islamofascism' escalated after 9/11, but can be traced back to the first

Gulf War in 1991 and the framing of Saddam Hussein as 'the new Hitler,' framing the NATO intervention as a continuation of the WW II allies' 'good war' against the actual Hitler (see Fatima El-Tayeb, 'Germany and Europe: negotiating continental identity in the multicultural present,' in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary German Politics*, ed. Sarah Colvin (London: Routledge, 2015)).

21 Paola Bacchetta, Miriam Ticktin and Ruth Marshall, 'A Transnational Conversation on French Colonialism, Immigration, Violence and Sovereignty,' *S & F Online* 6/3 (2008), accessed 26 September 2016, http://sfonline.barnard.edu/immigration/index.htm.

22 For both a definition of homonationalism and an example of a failed attempt by progressive white queer academics to challenge it, reproducing it instead, see Mikki Stedler, 'Start in Amsterdam!', *Queer in Amsterdam, 4* February 2011, accessed 26 September 2016, https://queerintersectional.wordpress.com/2011/02/16/start-with-amsterdam-2/.

23 See 'Lesbiennes of color : y'a de quoi RALer!,' *Féministes radicales*, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.feministes-radicales.org/solidarites/lesbiennes-of-color-y-a-de-quoi-raler/ and 'Safra Project,' *Facebook*, accessed 26 September 2016, https://www.facebook.com/Safra-Project-116664066494/.

24 Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Freedom: The Crossing Press, 1984), 138.

25 From flyer handed out at Transgenialer CSD in Berlin, 2 June 2013.

26 See the mainstreaming of intersectionality in continental European feminist discourse over the last decade. There is often shockingly little awareness of the context out of which this mode of theorizing emerged, in fact, often it is not even recognized as proper theory. Ignoring the specific social, economic, legal and political histories that produced the intellectual discourse in which intersectionality is grounded, 'race' in the 'race, class, gender' framework in European feminist scholarship is replaced with categories deemed more 'appropriate' for the European context, such as age or region. See, e.g. Gabriela Winkler and Nina Degele, 'Intersektionalität als Mehrebenenanalyse,' *Feministisches Institut Hamburg*, 2007, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.feministisches-institut.de/intersektionalitaet/. 'Was also fehlt, ist eine Theorie der Unterscheidung: Wann sind welche Differenzkategorien relevant. Das Konzept der Intersektionalität liefert keine theoretische Begründung, warum gerade die Faktoren Rasse, Klasse und Geschlecht die zentralen Linien der Differenz markieren.' [What is thus missing is a theory of differentiation: when are which categories of difference relevant. The concept of intersectionality does not offer any theoretical justification why precisely the factors race, class and gender mark the central lines of difference.].

27 See, e.g. the protest against the lethal European border regime organized by Lesbiennes of Color in Paris on 21 April 2015 (thanks to Paola Bacchatta for the information). An example of this strategy from my current, US American, context is the Black Lives Matter movement, started by three Black queer women after the murder of Black teenager Trayvon Martin

(and the subsequent acquittal of his white killer). While the movement galvanized around the numerous, ongoing police murders of Black men, it remains attentive to the larger system of oppression and the intersecting forms of violence it produces to control Black and other racialized communities. See Black Lives Matter, http://blacklivesmatter.com/.

28 Cathy J. Cohen, 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3/4 (1997), 444.

29 June Jordan, *Civil Wars*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 187.

'Guarding Against Terrorism': Testimony of a Singaporean Muslim Lesbian

Jun Zubillaga-Pow

Might not racial differences continue to serve as a pretext for the increasing difficulty of living together, as unconsciously felt by a humanity in the grips of the population explosion?

— Claude Lévi-Strauss, The View from Afar[1]

The factioning, fractioning, and fractalizing of identity is a prime activity of societies of control, whereby subjects (the ethnic, the homonormative) orient themselves as subjects through their disassociation or disidentification from others disenfranchised in similar ways in favor of consolidation with axes of privilege.

— Jasbir Puar, Terrorist Assemblages[2]

When I was in school, the Chinese and Indians would keep to people of their own race. The Malays would stick together because with a common language; it was easier to get along when growing up. Moreover, that was the general consensus, to get along with people of your own race. My parents would ask who my friends are and what race they are. If I had not been well-versed in English, it would not have been easy to mix around. As I get to know people of other races, I realized they are more accepting of the way I [as a Malay person] behave and think. The Malays are not as open-mined and do not accept the Western culture…

— Interviewee in her early 40s (2011)

In and beyond the Asia-Pacific region, social identities are being differentiated and fractalized through the implications of 'living together' within 'societies of control.' A similar pressure to orientate one self—'stick together,' 'get along,' 'mix around'—also affects the gendered, racial and sexual minorities living in the city-state of Singapore. Relating cultural theory to everyday life, the public institutions of 'schools,' 'parents,' and a racialized 'culture' inevitably become ideological apparatuses, and subject the social minority to a personal experience of socio-political discipline. Our subject of interrogation herein—the Malay-Muslim lesbian—faces multiple wrenches of discrimination in

Singapore. Same-sex relations are being frowned upon by most sectors of the census, while the docile character trait of the Malays stands in contradiction to the national demands for its citizenry to strive for social security and economic progress towards neoliberal globalization. This chapter interrogates the multifold disciplinary straitjacket of ageism, racism, and sexism prevalent in the everyday life of the subject in question as interpellated through the terroristic lenses of homo-nationalism. The analysis is based on two sources: sociological surveys from recent history, and a biographical testimony from a middle-aged Malay-Muslim lesbian growing up in the 1980s and 1990s.

The former material sets Singapore within a transnational context as it sits at the historical juncture of decolonization from British rule and the embrace of Western globalization. For one, a conscious decision has also been made to use the term 'lesbian' as a coeval shorthand to refer to Singaporean subjects who have been informed and influenced by European and American parlance of the 1970s and 1980s with the industrialization and other economic development happening in the port-city. For another, the contemporary use of the word 'homosexual' to refer to people who are attracted to people of the same sex however remains derogatory in the local context.[3] Despite its shortcomings, one way of justifying these nominal ambiguities is to employ the method of soliciting personal testimonies.[4] After a few years as a volunteer with an LGBT organization in Singapore, I conducted an extended interview in October 2011 with a middle-aged Malay-Muslim woman, who revealed that she has had romantic relations with people of the same sex since the 1990s. While my interlocutor is well-read and well-informed, she felt obliged to share her experiences because she found little informa-tion on the challenges faced by Malay-Muslim lesbians in Singapore and the surrounding region.

Vastly similar to the global situation, the ambit of local knowledge on female same-sex relations in Singapore continues to tail behind her male counterpart in both breadth and depth. Discounting the heterosex-ual and homosocial aspects of sexuality research, academic research on same-sex relations and politics has only been extensively conducted on the Singaporean subject in the past decade. Before the 2000s, there were only a handful of researchers working on male same-sex behaviour and identities,[5] whereas published research on lesbians in Singapore began with the couple of articles on 'queer' cultural politics by Audrey Yue.[6] On the other hand, only two out of ten university theses in the last twenty-five years correlated Islam and female same-sex relations in Singapore as their focus, albeit drawing on the life experiences of younger informants.[7] The rest dealt with the psycho-sociological aspects of same-sex lives, behaviour, identities, and relations of primarily gays

and lesbians of Chinese descent. Current and recent research continues to reflect the socio-political hegemony of Siniticate gay men and women, and barely mentions the existence of minority races and religions within the modern global city.[8] I attribute this epistemic myopia to the inherent unconscious racial bias that stems from the national policies that subtly segregate the Singaporean populace, especially at the point after the merger with and separation from Malaysia in the 1960s. Notwithstanding the everyday lives of local happenstances, the implications of these political events have erected direct societal barriers for Malay-Muslim lesbians in Singapore.

In comparison, the age and gender demographics in recent transnational, anthropological, and sociological findings are more or less restricted to younger Chinese 'lalas' aged 15 to 35, or older Anglo-American 'dykes' above 55 years old within their respective queer communities.[9] The concerns of middle-aged lesbians, who were born between the 1960s and 1980s, have been very much left out of the socio-political agenda. This epistemological gap has only recently been given attention albeit by the journalist and activist, Julie Bindel, whose book contends that the radical aspirations of dismantling social institutions such as marriage, capitalism, and ghettoization have become lost causes.[10] In line with the vision of epistemic decolonization by indigenous intellectuals, any reference to scholarship carried out by scholars of area studies as well as comparisons between the life experiences of Malay-Muslim lesbians living outside of Singapore have not been carried out.[11] I maintain herein that Singaporeans growing up and living in one of the more developed and cosmopolitan cities in Asia can only be assessed more critically alongside their counterparts in Europe and the Americas, where the political and economic disparities are minimal. This methodology of demographic selection has its own cultural limitations, but adheres more congruently to the theoretical scope and soundness of this thesis than a sociological comparison with lesbians in other African and Asian contexts.[12]

As a final caveat, the diversity of my ascribed position as a mobile, English-educated, working-class, Anglophone, non-religious, gay, Singaporean of Han Chinese ethnicity cannot be discounted from the hermeneutics represented in this essay. With these subjective privileges, my ethnographic perspectives adhere to the traditional etic practice, where the subject reacts to an interlocutor, who differs in race, religion, age and gender. To the extent that this research focuses on the 'researched,' the following analyses organised along sexual, racial-religious, and national intersections also reflect on the corresponding relations with the 'researcher' in accordance to the abovementioned decolonial axes of privileges.

Homonationalism: Being Singapore's Socio-Economic Terrorist

> Yes, there is racial and sexual discrimination at work. When a
> Malay person comes into the company, the others doubt his or her
> capability. In my job, I have to constantly prove myself. The same
> applies for my Malay friends. However, this is only valid if it is a
> local company, not so for a multi-national company. I also have
> to hide my sexuality at work. It became a case of malicious attack
> when one of my subordinates reported to my boss that I had 'hit
> on her.' I was psychologically affected by such work politics. Even
> when the matter had been resolved, some of my colleagues began
> to distant themselves from me; but they have now resumed normal
> working relations. (Interviewee in her early 40s [2011])

In one of his recent public speeches at the opening ceremony of a
new building for the Indian communities, the current Deputy Prime
Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said:

It reflects our approach to ensure that Singapore remains a diverse
and multi-cultural society, where everyone integrates, feels Singaporean,
feels that they are first and foremost part of a Singaporean society, but
they also strive to keep their culture, keep their religion, keep their
languages, because that's what makes Singapore special.[13]

 In a single sentence, the office holder mentions the name Singapore
four times as a speech act of instilling national pride and 'excep-
tionalism' within the populace. Like Puar's conception of American
exceptionalism, the rhetoric of an 'excellent nationalism, a process
whereby a national population comes to believe in its own superiority
and its own singularity,' is politically inculcated in every Singaporean
with core national values being propagated among public institutions
and broadcast through the mass media.[14] Such 'calibrated coercion'
by the single-party regime has resulted in a citizenry that is docile and
conforming.[15] However, the colonial attitude towards the Malays in
Singapore has persisted.

On the one hand, the figure of a Malay-Muslim woman would come
to occupy almost congruently the position of an exceptional nationalist
subject. Two pieces of evidence can be used to support this thesis: (i)
other than being 'obedient, contented and without inquiring minds[,]
Malays have been involved in religion and gracious living,' and (ii)
'Malay/Muslims girls are expected to acquire … a virtuous disposition
by being obedient, quiet, demure, and gentle.'[16] The adherence to
these racial and gendered character traits begets a contingent of docile
subjects. On the other hand, the Malays have often been typecast as
being apathetic to material or intellectual progress, which in part has

hindered the Singaporean neoliberal project. This phenomenon, or what the sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas has attempted to defend as 'the myth of the lazy native,' always already aligns the Malays with being terroristic to Singapore's politico-economic endeavours.[17]

Here arrives the very crux of this thesis: *anyone who cannot conform to the national aspiration towards economic progress becomes a threat to national security*. In a nutshell, the national and social security of Singapore relies primarily on consumerism, investments, and a healthy economic productivity. Due to Singapore's lack of natural resources, its citizenry becomes a major constituent of the national capital, and any financial impediment resulting from an incompetent and unproductive workforce could be the greatest disaster for the country. An exemplary illustration to buttress my argument is the image used by the Ministry of Home Affairs for its counterterrorism campaign, *Guarding Against Terrorism* from 2004.

Printed as the cover of a pamphlet, which is also enlarged as a public banner, a phrase says 'Together we can make *Singapore* our *Safe* and *Secure Best Home*.' The image that accompanies this public message is a photo of the central business district facing the Singapore River. Taken as a whole, the information appears to convey that the financial sector is where the 'home' is positioned and needs to be 'safe and secure' against terrorist intervention. The inclusion of the superlative 'best' accentuates the government's direction for the people that 'home' represents neither the suburbs nor the shopping centres, but critically the financial hub of the nation-state. In this respect, being categorized as a Malay and a Muslim is already an interpellation that posits one to be terroristic to the Singaporean enterprise.

To return to the subject of the Malay-Muslim lesbian, her actions are not only 'fractalized' and sacrilegious, but she is also befitting of the terrorist label. From a Foucauldian perspective, the sexual deviant is associated with monstrosity 'through specific analyses of the deployment of gendered bodies, the regulation of proper desires, the manipulation of domestic spaces, and the taxonomy of sexual acts.'[18] As a 'kind of failed heterosexuality,' the homosexual adopts 'one category through which a multiform power operates [where] an implicit index of civilizational development and cultural adaptability' is presupposed.[19] Not only does this analogy alludes to Richard Florida's evaluation of 'creative cities' via the albeit positivist 'gay index,' but also to Lévi-Strauss's anti-racialist rhetoric that the dependence of cultural development on organic and natural evolution is 'simply ideological camouflage for more concrete oppositions based on a desire to subjugate other groups and maintain a position of power.'[20]

Conclusively, the figure of the terrorist has overtime become

subjugated by a nationalist because of its utility 'as a screen to project both the racist fantasies of the West and the disciplining agenda of … an aggressive heterosexual patriotism.'[21] Such an abuse of power, alongside its ability to consolidate vicissitudes, returns to what Puar has conjoined economically as the 'homonational' discourse, where sexual and national norms are being disciplined via the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism.[22] Analogous to how the mufti or Islamic leader from the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore has scrutinized homosexuality—'It's the best way for the community to tackle problems [of homosexuality] without alienating itself from the changes affecting Singapore,' the Malay-Muslim lesbian becomes the very target of what could very well be an internalized homonationalist tirades by the Islamic leadership themselves.[23] As evident throughout this chapter, the middle-aged Malay-Muslim lesbian is subsumed under the homonationalist politics of a neoliberal Singapore.

Notes

1   Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The View From Afar* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971/1992).

2   Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

3   Leow Yangfa, *I Will Survive: Personal Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Stories in Singapore* (Singapore: Monsoon Books, 2011).

4   John Beverley, *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

5   Roger V. P. Winder, *'I am Gay': Language and Identity in a Marginalized Community in Singapore*, (Singapore: Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore, 1994); Laurence Leong, 'Singapore,' in *Sociolegal Control of Homosexuality: A Multi-Nation Comparison*, eds. D.J. West & R. Green (New York: Plenum Publishing, 1997), 127–44; Laurence Wai Teng Leong, 'Walking the tightrope: the role of Action For Aids in the provision of social service in Singapore,' *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services* 3/3 (1995), 11–30; Ng King Kang. *The Rainbow Connection: The Internet and the Singapore Gay Community* (Singapore: KangCuBine Publishing, 1999); Tan See Kam and Michael Lee. 'Singapore gays go to West Hollywood: on doing research on minority representation in Singapore,' AMIC-SCS-SOAS Conference on Asian Media and Practice: Rethinking Communication and Media Research in Asia, Singapore, 11–12 June 1999.

6   Audrey Yue, 'Hawking in the creative city: *Rice Rhapsody*, sexuality and

the cultural politics of new Asia in Singapore,' *Feminist Media Studies* 7/4 (2007), 365–80.

7   Norhazlina Mohammad Yusop, 'Same Sex Sexuality and Islam in Singapore,' Masters Thesis, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, 2005; Nur'Adlina Maulod and Nurhaizatul Jamila Jamil, '"Because Allah says so": faithful bodies, female masculinities, and the Malay Muslim community of Singapore,' in *Islam and Homosexuality,* ed. Samar Habib (Oxford: Praeger, 2010), 163–91.

8   Shawna Tang, 'Transnational Lesbian Identities: Lessons from Singapore?' in *Queer Singapore: Illiberal Citizenship and Mediated Culture*, eds. Audrey Yue and Jun Zubillaga-Pow (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 83–96; Chris K. K. Tan, 'Rainbow Belt: Singapore's Gay Chinatown as a Lefebvrian Space,' *Urban Studies* 52/12 (2015), 2203–18.

9   Paige Averett, Intae Yoon, and Carol L. Jenkins, 'Older lesbians: Experiences of Aging, Discrimination and Resilience,' *Journal of Women Aging* 23/ 3 (2011), 216–32; Elisabeth L. Engebretsen, *Queer Women in Urban China: An Ethnography* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014); Lucetta Yip Lo Kam, *Shanghai Lalas: Female Tongzhi Communities and Politics in Urban China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012); Sue Westwood, 'Researching Older Lesbians: Problems and Partial Solutions,' *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 17/3–4 (2013), 380–92.

10 Julie Bindel, *Straight Expectations* (London: Guardian Books, 2014).

11 Evelyn Blackwood, *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices Across Cultures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Tom Boellstorff, *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Tom Boellstorff, *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

12 Huma Ahmed-Ghosh, 'Special Issue: Lesbians, Sexuality and Islam,' *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 16/4 (2012), 377–484; Saskia E. Wieringa, *Women-Loving-Women in Africa and Asia* (Amsterdam and The Hague: Riek Stienstra Fonds, 2011).

13 'Minority cultures, languages keep Singapore special: Tharman,' *The Straits Times*, 6 November 2011.

14 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 5.

15 Cherian George, 'Consolidating authoritarian rule: calibrated coercion in Singapore,' *The Pacific Review* 20/ 2 (2007),12–45.

16 Tania Li, *Malays in Singapore: Culture, Economy, and Ideology* (Singapore: OUP, 1989), 171; Maulod and Jamil, '"Because Allah says so",' 179.

17 Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: F. Cass, 1977).

18 Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, 'Monster, terrorist, fag: the war on terrorism and the production of docile patriots,' *Social Text* 20/3 (2002), 119.

19 Puar and Rai, 'Monster, terrorist, fag,' 119 and 124.
20 Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class, and How it's Transforming Work, Leisure and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Lévi-Strauss, *The View From Afar*, 20.
21 Puar and Rai, 'Monster, terrorist, fag,' 117 and 131.
22 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 38.
23 'MUIS spells out its stand on gay issue,' *The Straits Times*, 2 August 2003, emphasis mine.

Stopping a Racist March—Activism Beyond the Incommensurability of (Homo)Sexuality and Religion

Suhraiya Jivraj

> The journey for Muslims who have same-sex attractions and relationships is and must be different to that travelled by Western movements. It needs to reflect the authenticity of people's everyday lives and not a new imperialism. We live in many communities where our identities are not easy classifications, and why should they be, we are not to be catalogued like specimens.
>
> — Tamsila Tauqir[1]

Homophobic stickers declaring a 'Gay-Free Zone' appeared on street walls around the borough of Tower Hamlets, East London in February 2011.[2] The stickers seemingly quoting verses from the Quran were immediately condemned by the then Mayor of Tower Hamlets, the East London Mosque, Association of British Muslims and the inter-faith network of local Muslim groups, including two queer Muslim Groups: the Safra Project and Imaan.[3] Parts of the gay media downplayed these statements and the work of local Muslim organizers in addressing homophobia, choosing instead to put forward 'a narrative of homophobic Muslims.'[4] This fed into another kind of response to the stickers from a group of people wanting to organize an 'East End gay pride' (EEGP) to march through Tower Hamlets.[5] In and of itself a concern for tackling homophobia in the borough would be understandable and the local organizations that had condemned the stickers were already working together in a joined-up anti-discrimination approach. As these organizations pointed out at the time it was clear from their lack of engagement with the local grassroots groups and the rhetoric and imagery used on the EEGP website of wanting to 'reclaim' the area, that there was an underlying racist and Islamophobic agenda to their march.[6] Eventually it was revealed that the founding member had links to the far right group the English Defence League, which eventually

resulted in the march being stopped.

The EEGP march, similar to other instances of LGBT organizing against homophobia, have relied upon a presumption that religion and sexuality are incommensurable.[7] There is no denying that theological edicts across all of the major faiths do spread anti-gay rhetoric and there is a growing movement from within religious identified communities across the globe to combat this.[8] There is also an increasing number of LGBT events centering around the theme of 'reconciling religion and sexuality'; an approach which can be highly problematic as the starting point is that religion and sexuality is already and always conflictual.[9] Yet, this approach does not entirely reflect how queer/trans people of colour negotiate and *inhabit* their everyday lives. As Bilge's chapter in this volume demonstrates, certain articulations of intersectionality theory have done the crucial work of calling us to understand the multiplicities of individuals.[10] However, further insight and study of the complexity of how queer/trans people of colour negotiate and inhabit their sexual subjectivities is still needed. This will enable us to go beyond the reductive binaries of the supposed incommensurability of sexuality and religion and rather explore the potential for cross-cutting activism that was so clearly demonstrated in stopping the EEGP march in 2011.

Stopping a Racist March in the East End of London

Part of the strategy to deal with the homophobic stickers placed around Tower Hamlets in the East End of London was to organize community group meetings—hosted by Rainbow Hamlets and the local council—to which the EEGP organizers were invited but did not attend.[11] Seemingly uninterested in working with local communities, they set about organizing the march regardless of the fears voiced about fueling racism by the Safra Project and others locally and the fact that the march would effectively be forced onto the locality, with little involvement of residents, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) people of colour in the area. Those same alarm bells rang harder for the local activists concerned about the underlying racist agenda of the march. It became apparent that the English Defense League—a far-right nationalist group—who had been trying unsuccessfully to march in the borough of Tower Hamlets for years, most likely because of its high Muslim population, were calling for a national day of action on 2 April, the same day as the proposed EEGP march.[12] As the then Director of the Safra Project highlighted:

For most of us who have worked in anti-racist activism, even those with little historical knowledge of the East End, we had alarm bells ring out as soon as we heard the term 'marching on.' Our instincts were reinforced by the evidence of the EEGP website, the rhetoric and imagery. So we took immediate action to strategize and oppose the attempt to stoke a new turf war in our communities, our multiple communities.[13]

These images included a gay reproduction of a still of US marines planting a rainbow flag at Iwo Jima—an island belonging to Japan and taken over at the cost of huge numbers of Japanese deaths during World War II.[14] It turned out that these fears of a link between the EDL and planning an EEGP were not unfounded and evidence obtained by the Queer Muslim support group Imaan, published in their press statement, revealed that the then leader of the EEGP was in fact a founding member of the EDL.[15] It became apparent that after disagreements over changes in the EDL leadership he was nonetheless continuing to work 'with other disaffected members of the EDL to start new groups with similar objectives.'[16] Once this information was confirmed, a number of activists, individuals and organizations took up the call to stand up against the march, posting statements and analysis which highlighted the key point that most LGBTQ people don't live only under a singular identity based on gender/sexual orientation but, as the director of the Safra Project put it in the opening quote: 'We live in many communities where our identities are not easy classifications, and why should they be, we are not to be catalogued like specimens.'[17]

The march was eventually called off in what was felt by those involved to be a triumph of local activists working across multiple issues and seeking to take a more complex, nuanced approach to the lived realities of the people living in the area. Despite the seeming 'success' of the spontaneous campaign to stop the EEGP there has been relatively little examination or focus on how this moment of activism worked so well, managing to transcend and avoid the quagmire of debate around the supposed incommensurability or incompatibility of religion and sexuality. What might we learn from this moment where the activism that stopped a racist march that was both spontaneous and cut across social relations and realities, bringing different organizations and local people together in what has traditionally been a hugely deprived migrant area?

Sexualities Beyond the Universal Gay

Clearly the EEGP was yet another example of homonationalist and pinkwashing posturing and politics;[18] one in which the links and

infiltrations between the far-right racist politics of the EDL with gay stakeholders was brought to the fore and ultimately led to the cancellation of the march.[19] As many of the statements from local organizations responding to the announcement that the march had been cancelled made clear, it is key that any pride event in the area is inclusive of all local LGBT communities.[20] But how can this be achieved in a climate where far-right politics becomes increasingly acceptable and influential in the UK as we have seen in the anti-immigration rhetoric of the Brexit campaigns, with similar reverberations across Europe and elsewhere? The struggle to be, to live, to work and engage in activism in order to self-sustain is increasingly difficult. Queer/trans people of colour, particularly Muslims, constantly carry the heavy burden of having to combat the racist logics and practices of state actors, as well as surrounding LGBT movements, in addition to struggling against classed material realities that feed this increase in the far right's power.[21] The impact is spatial and affective, shrinking space for activism, shrinking hope. The constant, and I do mean *constant*, presence of race, whether as hyper-visibilization or in-visibilization, often produces a sense of suffocation.[22]

Of course structural inequalities, marginalization, and power relations are all key to this suffocation, as most chapters in this volume demonstrate. However, part of this dynamic goes beyond these material factors and invokes a sense of self. Numerous scholars have critiqued the figure of the universal gay that underpins mainstream LGBT politics including that of EEGP organizers who were seeking to 'march upon' and 'reclaim' territory from 'Muslim homophobia.'[23] As the EEGP initiative demonstrates clearly, Muslims could not be viewed as victims of this homophobia as they would have to de-racinate themselves from Muslim culture and belief—and become liberated into the *field* and space of western gayness.[24] Thanks to organizations like the Safra Project in the UK, similar grassroots organizations elsewhere (see LOCs chapter 12 in this volume), QTPOC, Chicana, and Indigenous writing and interventions including expanding theories of intersectionality, creolization, and the *mestiza*, our understanding of multiple subjectivities has moved on in different realms.[25] A more nuanced, more fluid and shifting conception of identity as lived experience is now more acknowledged. However, as many scholars have highlighted, the strong homonormative model of sexuality circulating within LGBT and state politics is enduring.[26]

One such leading example I have discussed elsewhere is a homo-emancipation policy initiative started in 2007 in the Netherlands, a country often viewed as the harbinger and leading light on gay issues.[27] This policy sought to make homosexuality *bespreekbaar* or 'speak-able,'

namely facilitating LGBT people from religious, particularly migrant Moroccan Muslim communities, to be able to come out.[28] Gloria Wekker draws on Foucault, to critique this Dutch policy as an example of a larger Western history in which sexuality as we understand it today in the west, has come into being primarily through the act of being articulated or spoken about.[29] This contrasts with her own work on non-white sexualities—including religious/cultural experience—which she argues comes to be marginalized through this homonormative paradigm with its coming/being out imperative.[30] She therefore calls for a greater awareness of the many variations of sexual cultures and in particular in relation to black, migrant and refugee lesbian organizing in the Netherlands and beyond. In doing so she draws on her studies of Afro-Surinam Mati Work which has been described as 'a surviving historical practice among Afro-Surinamese working-class women who create families from relationships that are not limited to blood ties, or a choice between heterosexuality or homosexuality.'[31] In the Afro-Surinam context Wekker argues that speaking is not the way to deal with the 'sexual Self' and so she argues expressions of sexual subjectivity need to be viewed through modes of 'doing' including understanding sexualities as behaviors that are intertwined with and even based on (religious) beliefs.[32] This more nuanced study posits other ways of understanding sexualities *and* simultaneously what we might term religion, in ways that challenge the western modes of understanding sexuality as coming into being through speech acts and/or through secular notions of 'identity,' that also come to be signifiers of modernity.[33] Exploring 'doing' modes of being for queer/trans people of colour is essential to resist having to perform the multiple complex and intersecting aspects of one self in what becomes alternative, yet nonetheless prescriptive ways, so that we may be accepted into the molds of western gayness or indeed the enlightenment's autonomous subject.[34]

What then are the conceptual frames that we might employ towards taking better account of what we might term complex sexual subjectivities; ones which are able to take their own trajectory, and yet also be part of a wider collective of grassroots organizations that work against hatred and violence in the way that those involved were able to come together to stop the EEGP march? Jack Gilbert and Rebecca Shaw, the then co-chairs of Rainbow Hamlets, in the response to the calling off of the EEGP, welcomed it and called instead for a pride event that was 'truly representative of LGBT life in the East End' that would 'enable LGBT Muslim groups to participate.'[35] This statement can be viewed as a call for awareness of the conditions of possibility of being queer/trans in different ways, and also of then being able to be with or part of wider communities. This really starts then with awareness of sexualities and

religion/race, of the diverse ways in which they can manifest themselves. However, as I have discussed above, much of the important work, particularly in queer/feminist intersectionality studies still struggles with being located in identity paradigms, which as Wekker highlights, is so deeply located in western enunciations and understandings of sexuality. I would add to this, that our understanding of 'religion' also needs to be more fully interrogated, both as a term in and of itself and also as some kind of category that is separate to sexuality. How can we understand the co-imbrications of religion/race/culture *and* sexuality in the complex lived experiences of queer/trans people of colour and indeed all of us?

Challenging the Incommensurability of Sexuality and Religion—Unpacking Religion

Scholars like Wekker have already begun the important work of complicating sexual subjectivities, including demonstrating how beliefs, rituals and various practices and cultures are co-imbricated with them.[36] Her work calls upon us to better understand how we behave and how we come to *inhabit* ourselves, as being subject to and contingent upon a complexity of multiple factors and conditions.[37] She draws on Bourdieu's notion of habitus to put forward what she refers to as an intersectional view of these complex sexual subjectivities that relates to all of us including in multi-cultural societies within the west.[38] I will begin exploring how this concept has been taken up by scholarship on religion and sexuality separately and together in order to challenge the supposed incommensurability of predominantly western notions of sexuality and religion. This approach might help to take us beyond identitarian activist politics. However, before I explore work on understanding religion through notions of habitus it is important to first take a moment to examine the imperatives for interrogating the term religion rather than accepting it as a fixed category of meaning.

Clearly, in the context of the EEGP march as with many other examples explored in this volume and elsewhere, both religion and the supposed secular are deployed, albeit silently, to refer to the binaries of the backward, un-emancipated and so-on, versus the free and modern. The seemingly neutral secularity of the EEGP organizers justifies their position of wanting to 'march on' and 'reclaim' or liberate the streets and people that are deemed to be trapped by the former, by religion. Of course, there is homophobia at play, the stickers quoting verses from the Quran were meant to be homophobic. However, it is far too simplistic, and frankly lazy to render this homophobia into a narrative of 'homophobic Muslims.' Religion in this instance, whether understood as

culture or theology becomes racialized and crystalized into a monolithic entity, as in many other instances. The commonplace racialization of religion is now well documented, but then what does the use of this term denote? It is crucial that our understanding of that which so reductively falls under the rubric of religion, is far more nuanced.

The emergence of the field of critical religion studies has for over a decade now been questioning the possibilities of 'religion' having any kind of stable meaning. As De Vries argues:

> 'Religion,' like everything else, is nothing outside or independent of the series of its metamorphoses ... But 'it' (but 'what,' exactly?) cannot fully be analyzed in terms of any single one—or even the sum total—of these instantiations, either.[39]

Critical scholars like De Vries, Talal Asad, and Timothy Fitzgerald also challenge the idea of making meaningful distinctions between 'the religious' and 'the secular'—or non-religious—particularly within a European context.[40] For example, De Vries challenges the very concept-ualizing of religion in 'onto-theological terms,' namely as having a theological 'essence' comprising of belief or faith in a transcendent type being (God-head).[41] Similarly, for Timothy Fitzgerald, '[R]eligion cannot reasonably be taken to be a valid analytical category since it does not pick out any distinctive cross cultural aspect of human life.'[42] Rather, these scholars seek to understand religion contextually or historically, as contingent upon and part of particular political, economic, and other circumstances.[43] This critical approach or methodology, they argue, tends to be marginalized in favour of understanding religion as a 'total social fact.'[44] De Vries highlights the extensive literature from various disciplines spanning centuries as well as a global geographic expanse that might challenge not only the onto-theological notion of religion through various methodological routes, but also the idea that there can be any fixed concept of religion at all.[45] He posits religion as a concept that has 'an excess of detail' as a 'saturated phenomenon' that blurs or obscures itself as a result of that detail.[46] Similarly, Fitzgerald draws our attention to how religion as an analytical category or concept has come to be filled with various theological and sociological phenomena which he seeks to analyze more clearly as relational ideologies and processes that inhabit the term.[47] This critical approach to religion is not just a limiting methodological approach but one that seeks to make the concept of religion readable in certain moments. As De Vries argues, religion, whilst being a 'saturated phenomenon,' can also be caught 'in a moment,' like a 'cinematic still,' where it shows itself whilst at the same time moves on and shifts.[48] It is also possible for various conceptualizations of religion to sit alongside each other as part of

a 'constellation' of conceptualizations' of the many ways in which religion can manifest itself, which in turn signals how it also therefore cannot be captured in its entirety.[49]

This approach allows us to examine the limitations of the modern definition of religion as primarily 'a set of beliefs,' as well as interrogate the racialization of peoples, as so many have already done in critical race/feminist/queer studies.[50] Highlighting the presence of race thinking and orientalist knowledge or way-finding that can bring non-Christian religion into being, in and through state and activist policy and discourse is crucial.[51] As Edward Said notes, the importance of studying representations is in uncovering their discursive power and material effects.[52] Yet, in doing so what we realize most importantly perhaps, is that religion is an invented concept and there can be no one 'truth' of the notion of religion.[53] Instead space is needed to study and foreground the different ways in which religion comes to circulate in 'cinematic stills' whether that be of people's everyday lives or various political discourse. This kind of study has been most notably taken on by Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood. Following on from Asad's seminal works on the genealogies of religion and secularism they have both analyzed how Muslims and Islam have come to be understood and signified in contemporary controversies such as the headscarf ban in France.[54] Both these scholars draw on Bourdieu's notion of habitus to elucidate more complex understandings of the experiences that come under the rubric of religion for individuals, as well as contrastingly, the significations that symbols such as the headscarf can take on.[55]

Towards Decolonializing Understandings of Religion/Sexuality

Broadly speaking habitus can be understood as a system of dispositions constituted by both objective and subjective, namely, culturally inscribed factors in a dynamic intersection of structure and action, of society and individual.[56] A central aspect of habitus for Bourdieu is how the self is brought into being with embodied action which embeds structures through practice, rather than functioning at the level of explicit discursive consciousness.[57] This enables us to think about people's social situations as being and becoming on levels that are deeper and often more pre-reflexive than how we normally conceive of the autonomous 'non-affectable' western subject.[58] That is not to say that the self has no agency or is determined only by their locations. Rather habitus denotes a non-essential self that 'is an embodied set of durable yet flexible dispositions … that serve to generate practices that are structured by existing patterns of social life yet able to (re)structure,

in turn, these very same patterns.'[59] This is by no means meant to be a definitive account of the concept or how Bourdieu has developed it in his own complex work, for example on the gendered habitus of Kabyle women.[60] As Maton points out habitus can be an 'enigmatic concept' that is distinctive to Bourdieu's approach to a philosophy of practice but has come to be widely (mis-)used by a range of scholarship.[61] Rather, my intention here, is to explore the potential of habitus to think more deeply about subjectivities in the way Wekker, discussed above, invites us to do. I will do so by touching briefly upon some of the increasing literature on habitus and religion and sexuality.[62]

Mahmood, in her study of the experience of religious piety in the Egyptian revival movement, draws on Bourdieu's notion of habitus to explain the coming into being of religious experiences through different reiterative modes of practices including sartorial practices such as veiling.[63] She explores how religion, as 'bodily behaviour' or embodied practices, can be better understood in terms of how such practices become meaningful to the self in relational contexts such as within the family, community and society.[64] Similarly in his work on the making of a Muslim moral habitus, Daniel Winchester highlights how recent research suggests ethical/religious morals translate into 'stable, durable dispositions through ongoing, everyday practice' which contends the idea that religious practices are undertaken mainly as a result of pre-existing moral beliefs.[65] This belief-practice model of religion is perpetuated through the dominant Kantian way of thinking about religion that would favour a cognitivist method of privileging mind over the embodied condition.[66] However, as Miller and Shilling explain, morality and ethics in themselves are inscribed and develop through practice in what they call a 'body pedagogics.'[67] This highlights the key point I wish to underscore, that one's 'religion'—embodied practices or culture—can take on a deeply affective, emotional as well as material quality that cannot just simply be put aside. This textured and complex religious subjectivity is important to grasp because, as Mahmood argues, these religious or ethical/moral—and I would add cultural—behaviours 'endow the self with certain kinds of capacities that provide the substance from which the world is acted upon.'[68] In other words, religious subjectivities once formed can inform how we might inhabit— or not—other integrated and intersecting parts of our selves.[69]

Apart from Wekker discussed above, there is very little work done on habitus, religion and sexuality.[70] However, as I have argued, working towards a better understanding of subject formation is necessary to understand the diversity of everyday lived experiences of *all* queer/trans people. It is particularly important to challenge the homonormative

model of the universal gay and instead ensure that the complexities of the lives of people of colour are taken account of. In her work on queer subjectivities, Alison Rooke outlines a theory of lesbian habitus. She explores how embodied practices of contemporary lesbian culture in city spaces give rise to lesbian identities whether through clothing, deportment, or other various 'everyday' activities including at a micro-level scale of 'emotion, bodily experience, [and] practical knowledge.'[71] Whilst part of this development of a lesbian habitus may be intentionally political in the sense of trying to gain recognition as a 'minority constituency,' she also highlights that 'the emphasis is on a tactical everyday queerness.'[72] What we can take from this important study is that subject formation is contingent, embodied, and affective. It is based on 'multiple and contradictory logics in society, small, sometimes fleeting moments of resistance, inventiveness, and agency within a commodified culture.'[73] In short, it is this kind of study of the everyday ways in which we come to inhabit and negotiate our lives that cannot and should not be so easily reduced to universalizing ideas of being gay.

Decolonizing Activism: Concluding Remarks

How might such explorations of the complexities of all that falls under the rubric of religion and sexuality, separately and as co-constituents of the self, inform our activist politics? To be confronted with a movement inflected with far-right racist hate as was the case in the EEGP march, leaves barely any space for queer/trans people of colour to 'act upon the world' in a way that would bypass that embodied and affective part of themselves. One would be forced to 'choose'—in the cognitivist paradigm—between the backward particularity of homophobic religion or the supposed neutral and liberated secular space that the universal gay claims to occupy. Rather LGBT organizations can choose to navigate situations like that of the homophobic stickers plastered around Tower Hamlets in the more complex ways that the local organizations sought to do. In challenging the EEGP the grassroots organizations have worked towards expanding the landscape for wider notions of complex subjectivities; ones that take account of how we all as individual selves are contingent upon multiple factors, relational conditions and processes that are re-iterated over time. This complexity should not be so easily reduced to false dichotomies of the terms religion and sexuality that circulate as emanations that are themselves so historically specific.

As Paola Bachetta argues so well in her archival work of the queer/trans people of colour activist scholars, we often have little choice about having to agitate and struggle around a complexity of issues.[74]

We cannot assume that marches and political activities under the LGBT banner will be the first go-to movement for all queer/trans people. Instead we need to reflect better on the complexities of subjectivization and the becoming of the self, compounded by unequal material conditions and virulent neo-colonial racism. It is these factors that impact the forms of politics and activism we decide to engage in as stakeholders of the decolonize sexualities movement. This is what we have been doing for years and will continue to do in both concerted and spontaneous ways; the way we did to stop and speak out against a racist march in the East End of London, and countless others.

Notes

1   Tamsila Tauqir, 'Averting a right-wing march on the East End of London April 2011' (paper presented at the Gay Liberation Front's 40th Anniversary Conference, London School of Economics, Friday 19 May 2011).
2   Stickers stating 'arise and warn. Gay free zone. Verily Allah is severe in punishment' appeared near to Tower Hamlets gay pubs and outside a school in Whitechapel, in East London, see 'East End Gay Pride cancelled over EDL claims' *BBC News London*, 17 March 2011, accessed 26 September 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-12569166.
3   'Safra Project statement on East End Gay Pride,' accessed 15 September 2016, http://nohomonationalism.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/safra-project-statement-on-east-end-gay.html; Andy Dangerfield, 'Residents tackle East End "gay free zone" stickers,' *BBC News London,* 22 February 2011, accessed 1 October 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-12526820; 'From Gay Pride to White Pride? Why marching on East London is racist,' *University of Kent*, *Decolonizing Sexualities Network*, accessed 26 September 2016, https://www.kent.ac.uk/law/dsn/decolonizequeer.html; The Bent Bars Collective, 'Why Bent Bars will not be marching at the East End Gay Pride,' *Tumblr*, accessed 26 September 2016, http://hackneypridemarch.tumblr.com/post/3881521246/statement-from-bent-bars; Luca Darkholme, PG Macioti, Simon Leahy, Caoimhe Mader McGuinness, Billy Phoenix, Sal Campbell and Kiera James, 'An open letter to London Pride and other groups and individuals who supported East End Gay Pride,' *Whitewashed*, 16 March 2011, accessed

15 September 2016, https://nonameasofyet.wordpress.com/2011/03/16/
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Pride,' Facebook, accessed 26 September 2016, https://www.facebook.com/
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and mayor condemn anti-gay stickers,' *Islamophobia Watch*, accessed
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Pride Cancelled,' *Black Looks*, 17 March 2011, accessed 26 September
2016, http://www.blacklooks.org/2011/03/east-end-white-pride-cancelled/.

4   Sarah Lamble, 'Queer Necropolitics and the Expanding Carceral State:
Interrogating Sexual Investments in Punishment,' *Law and Critique* 24
(2013), 229–53. Lamble cites Jessica Green's article in the Pink News
'Stickers declare 'gay-free zone' in east London' (http://www.pinknews.
co.uk/2011/02/14/stickers-declare-gay-free-zone-in-east-london/) which
was later updated with comment from the Muslim Council of Britain.

5   The history of racism in the East End including that against Irish immigrants
in the 1800s and the legalized racialization of Tower Hamlets mayor Lutfur
Rahman in a 2015 high court judgment. See Nadine El-Enany, 'Why
Muslims Can't Trust the Legal System: The Lutfur Rahman Judgement and
Institutional Racism,' *Critical Legal Thinking*, 16 May 2015, accessed 26
September 2016, http://criticallegalthinking.com/2015/05/16/why-muslims-
cant-trust-the-legal-system/ and '"The body that loses its chair": Law,
temporalities and the racialized subject,' paper presented at the Critical
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6   The prospect of this type of march rings alarm bells in the East End as
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from immigrants. One notable early example is the Battle of Cable Street,
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'blackshirts' marched in protest against the Jewish population that resided
there. See Kurt Barling, 'Cable Street: 'Solidarity stopped Mosley's fascists,'
BBC News London, 4 October 2011, accessed 26 September 2016, http://
www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-15171772; Richard Price and
Martin Sullivan, 'The Battle of Cable Street: Myths and Realities,' *What
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Pages/History/Cable.html. The East End has also been a particular target
area for contemporary nationalist/far-right organizations like the British
National Party and then the EDL. In September 2013 the EDL planned
a march which was advertised on their website as 'Tower Hamlets —
we're coming' (http://archive.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/uploadedImage/
pdf/2011_07_27_12_17_37_A5_TH_RallyCol_0726.pdf).

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Homonationalism, Homotransnationalism and Feminist-Queer-Trans of
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8   See the work of organizations like the Safra Project, Imaan and others cited in the Decolonizing Sexualities Network bibliography on https://www.kent.ac.uk/law/dsn; Suhraiya Jivraj and Anisa de Jong, *A Safra Project Resource on Sexuality, Gender and Islam* (Safra Project, 2003). (http://kar.kent.ac.uk/44090/).

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NOW

Building an Inclusive Mosque:
A Case Study

Dervla Zaynab Shannahan and Tamsila Tauqir

This chapter focuses on the Inclusive Mosque Initiative (IMI), and looks at its progress in the last two years from some different angles. It is less an exhaustive account of the organization's history than a reflective case study in three parts, followed by a brief discussion. In some ways the day-to-day operating of IMI is very generic and shared by activists and voluntary organizations in multiple sectors and sites, yet in others it is definitely British Muslim-specific. We hope that the overall content may be relevant to activists operating in different fields.

Whilst there is a minimal amount of existing literature available on progressive Muslim activism and activities,[1] there is minimal work done on the UK context and whilst IMI has chapters internationally, the London *Majlis* remains the most active to date, and the situation in the UK is particular, to a certain extent.[2] Reflecting on how IMI began, what it has achieved and has not achieved since then, has been an interesting process. This chapter is written by the two cofounders of IMI, yet has been discussed and approved by the current London *Majlis* volunteers, so could be considered a collective effort, just as all IMI's work is.

Background

The IMI began as an attempt by two female activists to put into 'practice' what we felt was missing from the UK mosque experience in regards to inclusion. Each of us had experienced in different yet parallel effects the exclusionary practices and policies of UK mosques for over nearly three decades. During our previous attempts to engage with mosque establishments—to be more open, accountable, representative, and accepting, to value plurality and to open up the narrow understanding of accessibility— this had little or no effect. Notably the initial

conversations were between two women, and even though the issue of gender justice in action was and still is a key component in the formulation of IMI, the differences in race, religious practice-denomination, age, and activist experience helped shape the IMI concept to be plural from its outset.

The fundamental inspiration for IMI comes from our belief that Islam is an inclusive religion, and that spaces of Islamic practice should be accessible and welcoming to everyone.[3] We take this from the Qur'an, primarily, and also the socio-political arrangements of the nascent Muslim community. Whilst we cannot map exactly how gender intersected with spatial experience originally in Al-Masjid al-Nabawi, it is significant that

> there appear to have been no walls or other barriers separating men and women, or any other known material evidence of gender segregation during the Madinan period… in the material as well as the textual sources dating to Islam's 'ideal' period, there appears to be no indication of gender apartheid; rather, evidence points to the conclusion that women had full access [to] the mosque.[4]

Relatedly, our experiences in UK mosques have been less positive than those we have visited internationally, especially in some of Islam's holiest sites (specifically Madinah and Makkah, Jerusalem, Najaf, and Karbala). It is this UK lagging-behind factor, the dire overall situation of numerous mosques not even offering women a cupboard to pray in, which affirmed our interest in creating an alternative. Kahera suggests 'the "manufactured" absence of women from mosques is an unnatural condition but because custom is often stronger than law, a number of adverse conditions do exist,'[5] and the differences between female spaces partly reflects how different Muslim cultures understand female mosque attendance. He continues to underline how there is

> no agreed upon American and European mosque prototype, architects and their clients depend similarly upon what can be called 'cultural or regional models'; these models have thus far shaped the awareness of customs, culture, and habit among American and European Muslims.[6]

It is this very grounded concern for a mosque prototype, and practical desire for a physical space to pray within that underlines IMI's attention to not reproduce the gender imbalance that we see far too often (in physical space, prioritizing, and organizational structure).

IMI was also inspired by activists' efforts to reclaim the inclusive spirit we see within early Islam. We trace our genealogy as an organization, thus, through Muslim activist efforts across the globe, particularly efforts around ritual and space-making practices which

reflect an inclusive, plural, and liberationist Islam, if not completely then at least in parts. These include, but are not limited to; Noose mosques,[7] Progressive Muslims Union,[8] Muslims for Progressive Values chapters across the United States,[9] and the El-Tawhid Jummah Circle in Canada.[10] Notably, since IMI's inception, we have heard of Ardeshir Bikakabadi,[11] of an inclusive mosque in Sweden, and more recently the 'The Women's Mosque Of America' located in Los Angeles, USA.[12] Other influences include the social media which relate to websites such as *Side Entrance*,[13] *Free Minds*,[14] and *Muslim WakeUp*! Relatedly, and thematically linking both the above channels of influence is the work of progressive, feminist and liberationist scholars rereading primarily Islamic sources in practice-based ways, such as Wadud's canonical work and practice on gender equality, and Asra Nomani's 'Islamic Bill of Rights for Women in the Mosque.'[15] Further, we agree with social commentators who have observed

> the emergence, and re-emergence, and expansion of female religious leadership in a wide variety of Muslim communities ... Over the past thirty years the ranks of Muslim women active as religious leaders have swelled to include individuals from almost all parts of the globe, including the Middle East; North, East, West, and South Africa; Central, South, Southeast, and East Asia; Europe; and North America.[16]

That said, we also understand inclusivity to stretch beyond gender segregation, affecting linguistic, ethnic, regional, denominational, class, sexual, and racial identities too. To summarize, then, the IMI began in the UK from conversations between Muslim women, inspired by egalitarian and inclusive threads within the Islamic tradition, existing spaces, and our own frustrations with some of the non-inclusive mosques that we had experienced. After a lot of thinking through, primarily around the question 'why isn't there an inclusive mosque space here?', we felt the need to open up the conversation and sought advice. This began a phase of discussion, debate and guidance-seeking across the globe with a number of leading Muslim theologians, sheikhs and imams, primarily through Skype and email. It also included information-seeking from founders of progressive Muslim organizations and spaces.

After this phase we took the vision (and embryonic idea of making it happen) to the public domain, which prompted the first physical meeting in central London. Details were shared across a number of online forums (particularly Islamic and feminist activist ones) and amongst network colleagues, friends, and family. Thus in November 2012, the first IMI meeting happened in a small London community centre; as in the counsel-seeking stage, feedback and responses were overwhelmingly positive and affirmative with an attendance of seven

adults and one child. Many of the interested individuals were located in different parts of England and had made the trip to London at their own expense, specifically for the meeting. It opened with a *dua* and ended with a more social tea and coffee. Whilst we spoke about a range of subjects, this first meeting was primarily focused on how to organize towards building an inclusive mosque, and was a brainstorming session as much as a connecting, strategizing event. We made a tentative plan, assigned ourselves different tasks towards this, and agreed to meet again a few weeks later. On this evening the management committee (*Majlis—As Shura*) of the IMI was formed, and many of the attendees have remained actively involved in the organization throughout. Perhaps for the first time, at least in the UK, the *Majlis* was predominantly women. It also contained a vast range of Islamic denominations, degrees of practice and observance, activist and mosque experiences, socio-economic status, age, ethnicity, and political affiliation. This was the first time, also, that we really began to see that the idea we had discussed so thoroughly, in theory, could work, and could indeed be much bigger than we had imagined. Inclusivity was the common thread which drew us all together, and the impetus for action was primarily negative experiences in existing mosques and Muslim spaces. The belief in a plural expression of Islam was held by all, that it is our differences that make us stronger as opposed to weaker.

Writing this more than two years later, IMI has definitely established itself within the melange that is British Islam and has made striking progress as a voluntary organization. Although we still do not have a permanent, physical space (and has been referred to as the 'nomadic' or 'pop-up' masjid[17]) we seem to have a permanent presence on social media and our events have been regular and successful. The number of individuals involved in different capacities has grown substantially; our London committee has twelve *Majlis* members, whose work is supported by numerous volunteers who contribute in different ways (such as volunteers at prayers and stewarding events, fundraising and graphic design). We also have an application to the charity commission currently under consideration, which will better enable us to secure our long-term goals. IMI regular conducts religious services such as prayer, Friday congregations, observance of religious festivals and holidays along with hosting discussion topics related to diverse Islamic thought and practice as well as social events including an inter-faith concert hosted in an Anglican church. Relatedly, we have established good working relationships with a whole range of established Muslim and non-Muslim organizations, and collaborated on some events and projects too.

Beyond the UK there are three IMI chapters globally, and local

activists have organized *jamaats* and events in sites as diverse as Kashmir, Zurich and Kuala Lumpa. These events have been organized via discussion with the original IMI committee, and internal policies and documents to support and perform religious services are shared globally; yet they remain grass-roots, reflecting the locally-informed environments. Without any formal funding the organization in its internationally settings relies on the time of its volunteers and the limited generous donations of each *Majlis* member as well as attendants and congregants to its events. Whilst the London IMI *Majlis* is most active, event-wise, we are in ongoing discussions with Muslims across the UK around establishing various sites nationally.

In other international sites, particularly Asia, IMI has had to operate 'underground' with the real threat of harassment, violence or even imprisonment from by both non-state and state actors. The experienced negativity that has been directed to IMIs across all its locations has predominantly been in written electronic form or verbally from individuals, and has included physical threats of violence. That said, 99% of the correspondence and messages to IMI have been overwhelming positive, supportive, and encouraging:

> I've just read the AFP article on your initiative, and it sounds like you're facing a tough time from cynics. Sending the organisation lots of love from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Xx – Mohani

> Attending IMI London was the first time I had felt respected as a human being and as a person with my own path to finding God in a way that was right for me. Nobody told me what I should do and how I should pray or what I should believe. I felt there was a strong need for regular inclusive prayers of this nature more often! – M. Hasani

> Impressive, keep it up, Inshallah, you shall play a very positive role in bringing the true Islam to commoners which has been hijacked by radicals. Speaking of your efforts to have attended the namaz by anyone, there is another sect of Islam where very such way it is practiced.

> Best of luck – Khana

> All the best whatever you do may Allah make it easy for you give you success our Allah bring you joy faith bring you success – Faisal [18]

Hence, from its inception IMI is broadening the mosque environment, to add to the huge diversity of the 1500 mosques in the UK and elsewhere with its sister sites in Asia and Europe.[19] It does not aim to be in competition but to offer an alternative to the current variety of mosques which are not meeting the needs of a significant number of

Muslims today globally. Further, IMI aims to respond to stakeholders concerns and interests as they arise, whilst also engaging with more people, particularly Muslims, around practical routes to further realizing social justice and inclusion within the wider community we live in.

Rationale

We are often asked about our definition of inclusive in a mosque context, and our general answer is practicing *adhab* (good manners) in a practical way (so that everyone is welcome in our spaces), and proactively striving to create spaces which are as accessible as possible. However, as we understand it, inclusive (understanding and practice of) Islam is theoretically distinct from liberal, progressive, or moderate Islam, although there may be much overlap on certain points. Inclusive Islam, as we understand it, does not set itself in opposition to the conservatives or the 'average' Muslim on the street. We simply aim to provide safe, respectful places for the practice of Islam, and work actively to ensure that everyone is made to feel welcome. Significantly, we aim to unite the cultural aspects of our work with the spiritual and practice-based experience of prayer. This is a vital characteristic of our work to date. In the UK context, Islamic events are usually divided into religious or cultural; in other words, there are already a range of fantastic discussions that happen in the UK (such as those offered by the City Circle and Muslim Institute), but they rarely synthesize the intellectual aspect of thinking about Islam, and lived practices, such as prayers, in the same event. Stakeholders frequently comment on how refreshing, and affirming, this approach is. It perhaps distinguishes our events from those offered by other organizations in London today.

As stated above, IMI UK has a range of volunteer contributors, including some who identify as conservative, ex-Salafi, or even traditionalist. Our events further reflect this, and aspire to give space for generic discussions as well as ones particularly significant to particular members of our community. We are also fully committed to engaging with the broader community and welcome non-Muslim attendants and participants in all our events and activities. It allows for a space of respectful dialogue for all the various expressions of Islam to engage with one another, not only with the sometimes vague notion of 'learning from one another,' but also participating in a variety of Islamic traditions and practices.

The IMI has five key aims:

• provide a peaceful, enriching environment for worship and

remembrance of Allah;
- create an inclusive sacred space that welcomes all people;
- respect the natural environment;
- value gender expression and gender justice as an integral manifestation of Islamic practice;
- facilitate inter-community and inter-faith dialogue and collaborate with others who are seeking change for social and economic welfare and justice.

Whilst it would be premature, if not impossible, to say that we have always successfully embodied our aspirations and aims in practice, we have come to see that there are certain principles and approaches necessary for our committee to develop in order for IMI to develop. The ethics of plurality, acceptance and non-compulsion, expecting heterogeneity, consciousness towards not causing harm and a consensual way of working, plus evidencing integrity and humbleness are especially central and remain a learning curve for us all. In practice this requires a conscious effort to understanding the barriers preventing full participation for a range of demographics. To utilize the talents, skills and expertise from traditionally excluded groups from the mosque *Majlis*; this includes but is not exclusive to women, the disabled, the young and old, gender and sexual minorities, a range of Muslim denominations, a mix of ethnicities and the socio-economically disadvantaged, as well as those who have multiple identities with the aforementioned.

IMI's purpose is encapsulated in six points:

- To proactively uphold, implement and embed the aims of the IMI in its activities as stated in its Statement of Intent;
- To maintain and conduct the religious and educational affairs of the Mosque;
- To conduct ceremonies, congregations and meetings of a religious and cultural nature under the guidance of the organisation's aims, Imams and Management Committee (Majlis As-Shura);
- To teach the spirit, culture, philosophy, ethics and fundamentals of Islam, with a view to improving the moral, intellectual and social condition of Muslims in their community;
- To expand the knowledge of Islam through discussions and Islamic literature by means of publishing and distributing such literature electronically and physically, and provide an Islamic resource facility for communities at large;
- To engage nationally and internationally with issues of social, economic and political justice, to promote the welfare of all living beings.

The aims and purposes of an inclusive mosque are perhaps best demonstrated in what we do or in our practices. These include, whilst continuing to widen as we learn, a range of practices such as full involvement of women at every level of the organization (including ritual leadership); truly democratic decision making processes and organizational practices; fully accessible venues; that the dominant language of any geographic area be spoken at mosques, and if other languages are used during formal talks/prayers, that they are translated including the use of Sign Language, whenever possible; considerations of whether a hearing induction loop is available at venues and to utilize it, if there is accessible public transport links nearby and suitable car parking. Relatedly, food offered at Friday prayers (jummah) and events aim to be vegetarian, gluten free, along with dairy alternatives and maintaining a high level of health and safety cleanliness during preparations and clearly labelling foods which may contain allergens. IMI texts are printed in a relevantly suitable size font and ideally on an off-white background against the text to improve contrast for those with visual impairments.

Looking forward, IMI is currently focusing on: securing a regular and appropriately accessible jummah space; funding for its core work and various sister groups; pro-actively engage in and follow-through on social justice campaigns; improving its capacity in volunteers and services it offers for sustainability; and developing the IMI profile in various media outlets. This is with the intention to widen the exposure of IMI's ethics and values amongst Muslims and the wider public, to improve the British perception of Muslims, and to grow as an organization. Simultaneously, developing the skills and knowledge of those involved in an inclusive mosque is an ongoing professional, ethical and personal development and investment in the future of Majlis and mosque leaders.

Addressing Challenges

So far the IMI has faced a range of challenges that fall into three loose categories. First, challenges faced by Muslim (relevant to other faith-based organizations to differing degrees, perhaps) bodies in the Global North. Second, challenges specific to, or stemming from, our particular ethos and perspective on Islam. Third and finally, we have faced the more generic, broad challenges that many young voluntary organizations encounter, which may best be described as structural ones. As there is abundant literature on the third type, we shall focus

here on the first and second ones, although there are evidently multiple areas of overlap between them all, and shall be discussed as they arise.

Funding

Historically mosques across the globe have raised funds through local community support, and often been built by, then attached to, a particular family's patronage. In the UK, mosque spaces began in the living rooms and personal homes of recently migrated Muslims, and slowly this pattern has been replicated, particularly with the influence of individuals and families with 'oil money.' As religious organizations are not eligible for any British government funding (and grant funding trusts in general also do not fund religious organizations) the traditional pattern of local communities sustaining their local mosques has continued, and funds are raised through a range of channels (personal donations of money or goods, fundraising activities, and sustained campaigns).

As the IMI is comparatively young, and we have not yet encountered a family able, and willing, to fund us completely, we have concentrated our energies on applying to grant funders. Despite spending weeks on various funding applications, IMI thus far appears to fall between categories; we are too religious for many secular funding bodies, and too radical, or inclusive, for mainstream generic religious ones. More broadly, since the financial crash of 2008 there has been a significant reduction in grant and philanthropic funding to the voluntary and community sector, which has increased the sense of competition between non-government organizations (NGOs) and there is a sense that there is a limited pot of funds available. The administrative processes involved in seeking and applying for funding is a highly-skilled and time-intensive task that even professional fundraisers struggle with, so, for a voluntary run organization reliant on voluntary staff, a cycle of interdependent factors obstruct successful fundraising.

Relatedly, grant funders who may consider funding us will often only transfer funds to larger established partners before the (smaller) inclusive mosque gets a cut, yet we have sought to remain as individual and non-affiliated an organization as possible. Further, finding established partners that genuinely value the service and vision that we offer without putting unacceptable demands in place, to share any potential grant award with, has proved extremely challenging. In this current political climate, Islamic organizations and mosques are also routinely approached by individuals, organizations and governments with questionably sourced funds (and/or agendas) in return for informing on community activities. Succumbing to any such temptations

reflects appallingly on the integrity of the mosque in addition to being detrimental to the wider Muslim community.

Consequently, we have worked to develop our fundraising skills within the IMI committee, especially around eliciting donations. By growing a public and media (social and print) profile we have spread awareness of IMI's existence to potential donors and are currently editing down material for our crowd funding video, which we hope will significantly facilitate our fundraising aims. Offline, through hosting a range of events and regular religious services, especially those which demonstrate inclusivity in practice, we have come into contact with a broad range of individuals, many who do spontaneously donate to IMI, and the *Majlis* volunteers also regularly donate from their own incomes. Overall, then, IMI is funded by donations from its supporters, but is definitely aiming to secure a more sustainable, long-term funding source within the next year.

Accessing and Accessible Space/s

Having access to and usage of a physical space is a common challenge for any new organization, and this is perhaps compounded for inclusive mosques due to the geographical diversity between congregants and the limited funds available for hiring suitable venues. We continue to be surprised and frustrated by the challenge of locating London event venues that meet our accessibility aims; we try as far as possible to only use spaces which are wheelchair accessible (with accessible toilets too), baby changing and feeding facilities, induction loop systems, nearby accessible public transport and car parking facilities. (When events involve eating we further aim for halal, vegetarian and vegan options to be available, and do not congregate in alcohol-serving venues, so the options become even fewer!). Whilst it may sound like our aspirations are too ambitious, finding venues which fit our various aims of promoting inclusivity in practice has been one of our most unexpected, and ceaseless, challenges to date. (It is worth noting that in the UK there is legislation that requires public buildings and businesses to be accessible, yet many of the UK's buildings are legally protected by virtue of their historical significance so cannot be adapted, or the cost of necessary adaptations is prohibitive.)

In response to our ongoing struggles with creating a permanent mosque space in one physical building, IMI has been dubbed the 'nomadic' mosque by the press, and we have sought to embrace the flexibility that this offers us. Currently, venue locations move around the UK and within cities to locations that are affordable, accessible and have availability (sometimes we simply meet up in parks, but this is

evidently limited by the weather). Of accessible and suitable spaces, we have found opportunities to collaborate with partners and established organizations, willing to hire or offer occasional space. Venue sites have therefore included cafes, secular community centres, a church, Buddhist centre, an Islamic institute and public parks. Despite requests to established mosques in sharing space, no effort to date has been successful. However, this too is a temporary solution and for a nomadic mosque, the administration demanded by sourcing, securing and negotiating venues, not only for weekly prayers but also additional events, becomes an onerous task on a voluntary organization with very limited capacity. That said, at the time of writing it looks like our application to the Charity Commission will be approved shortly; once IMI has charity status, our efforts to secure sustainable funding and donations should be more successful.

Capacity

Capacity is a significant challenge in establishing a mosque, or any kind of voluntary-led organization, from scratch. Compounded by funding and securing a safe permanent space, ensuring there are adequate numbers of trained *Majlis* and volunteers available to manage the mosque's activities and growth is another ongoing challenge for IMI. Additionally, the accountability, legal and financial structures are informed by the capacity of an organization and vice versa. Of the latter, legal structures vary in different contexts. In Malaysia the legal definition of mosque is very restrictive; an inclusive mosque at present could not be legally recognized as a mosque, so either needs a different legal structure or define itself (at least publicly) as a different entity. Whilst we have applied to the Charity Commission in England to register, in the Global North mosques and many Muslim organizations are under increasingly intense scrutiny and suspicion, even when attempting to register as a charity, so we find Islamophobia on multiple levels is a further challenge to our growth.

Regarding the former issue of people capacity, for an inclusive mosque, expressing the various Muslim denominations during prayer and events requires that volunteers, including the *Majlis*, are familiar with differing practices and can facilitate events appropriately. We have found a further need for training on health and safety (particularly around meeting additional physical needs), issues of conflict management, monitoring and recording data and ensuring confidentiality. Thus far IMI has facilitated volunteer enrolment on courses such as leadership training, disability awareness, and First Aid) and as our capacity grows we hope to be able to offer more. At this stage, however, without

adequate funding, the administration of the mosque and attendance by volunteers and invited speakers are limited by human capacity as well as financial resources. Like so many other activist endeavours, the *Majlis* members of the IMI all offer their time, money and energy without any financial reward or security of employment. All have either day jobs, studies and/or family commitments, to manage as well as their commitment to IMI. Whilst we have been incredibly impressed and inspired by all the IMI volunteers, collectively we seem to eternally have many more fantastic ideas than our current capacity can manifest.

The *Majlis* has regular planning meetings (sometimes a whole weekend) yet managing the day-to-day correspondence, training requirements, legal and financial administration, as well as long-term strategy, can be exhausting and 'burn out' remains a real possibility for us all. Sharing the responsibilities and authority to direct the mosque engenders a sense of ownership and in return encourages those currently involved to recruit others. Of course, success of securing funding and a permanent site is a huge morale builder and enables capacity building for staff and events.

The last six months (Winter 2014–Spring 2015) has seemed like a new chapter or phase for IMI as an organization. We have definitely established a presence within the national Muslim scene (in the UK), finally, and have reached a stage where new people who attend events frequently say 'Well I heard about your work for ages, and only now got time to come check it out.' Internally, we have worked hard on our events calendar and built up our social media presence, whilst simul-taneously strengthening how we work and are run as an organization. The roles of *Majlis* members, for example, have become more clearly defined, we have a more formal structure in place than ever (replete with chair and secretary, and specialist subcommittees, for jummah, events, funding, networking, inclusion) and are definitely becoming a more sustainable, self-sustaining organization. Consequently, our capacity is increasing, and we are better able to learn from what has past, and envision more sharply exactly how we are going to meet our future aims and aspirations.

There is a momentum building surrounding IMI in 2015, and this has been reflected in the success of our events during this phase, and the level of enthusiasm that said events display and generate. In March 2015 we had a truly wonderful inclusive jummah with Dr Wadud as Imamah, with over a hundred attendees, which seemed to encapsulate the current moment in IMI's development.[20] The engagement and support of freelance bloggers and writers has been instrumental in this; a short film made about the March jummah and circulated online received more than 13000 views,[21] and consequently our Facebook

presence significantly increased. Returning to the theme of capacity this recent phase has also seen the induction of seven new volunteers, all energetic, talented individuals who bring new energy, ideas and skill sets to the organization. This has been partly due to us exploring (in practice) and refining how we recruit volunteers, and a concentrated streamlining of the induction, and mentoring process. Simultaneously it is also reflective of how IMI is settling into itself as an organization, which feeds-back into the success of our events and the enthusiasm that *Majlis* members and volunteers feel for the work involved in making them happen. We have found that even without a venue of our own, the positivity that the individuals involved in IMI bring to the work itself increases our capacity, and with an inspiring and varied event calendar for the next year, this positivity will hopefully continue to spread.

Discussion

Looking back at IMI's beginning, we firmly believed, and still do, that it is possible to read Islamic sources (particularly the Qur'an) as inclusive of every human being, and that there are strong arguments for participating in ritual practice and religious discussion in actively inclusive ways. We also believed that the first mosques of the nascent Muslim community were open and welcoming to everyone, and it is easy to notice a rich realm of examples of ritual spaces where this still shines through; historically, but also in the incredibly varied range of Muslim spatial arrangements and ritual practices in the current day. We marvelled at the inclusivity and flexibility around gender, in particular, in some of Islam's holiest sites, and spent hours discussing our experiences of praying in international sites, especially the more practical aspects. We also marvelled at the differences, or lag, between gender inclusivity in many Muslim majority mosque sites and the UK.

Relatedly, reflecting on our different experiences of Muslim organizations in the UK, we found another divide; that of between religious discussions and religious practices. Whilst this does not necessarily reflect on the beliefs of the organization itself, it is difficult to find a progressive-orientated Islamic discussion or event which includes salaah, or a mosque which facilitates such speakers, which again reinforces a dualism between theories of (thinking or discussing) and doing (practicing) Islam. In her closing reflections in *Gender Jihad*, Wadud includes some rewritten journal entries under a call to action, entitled 'The Active Principle of Islam, or, Activating Islamic Principles.' She recalls:

When re-reading the inspirational words of past Muslim mystics, I encountered beautiful discourses on the qualities of spiritual realisation. Sadly, I found no social reality expressed as a component of that realisation. Does this mean that a spiritually qualitative life is unconnected to social realities?... it cannot be that one is meant to feel connected to the Creator with no creature-to-creature interaction in activating that connection. I see too few viable examples of spiritual motivation for social and political action, the actual sunnah of the Prophet, as also exemplified in the life and continued transformation in the transitions to Islam for Malcolm X. Yet there is overwhelming consensus that Islam is *din*, a living reality on the basis of one's connection to the divine principles, not just a personal feeling of faith.[22]

Whilst there are many arguments, and rationales, for the diminishing inclusivity in Muslim history and ritual spaces, we agreed that gender segregation in mosques and religious practice is not good or bad in itself. The problem seemed to be more about trends of male-privileging in existing spaces, as Maqsood summarises:

Sometimes women are very happy with separate facilities, such as another room, or a balcony, etc., but it can also discourage progress for women ... Sometimes the facilities for women are very inferior, cramped, and not at all conducive to the attitude of worship.[23]

The tension we were thinking through at that point was between this acceptance (and indeed, there are many, many occasions where gender segregated prayer may be chosen by women and men) and our aim of creating a space which offered more choice than we encountered at our local, or main London mosques (where families and wheelchair users often struggle to find anywhere to pray at all). We were also certain that inclusivity in ritual practice, and aspirations for being in inclusive Islamic environments, reaches far beyond gender politics or sexual identity. Returning to Wadud,

as *an* obedient servant of Allah, the goal of the traditional ascetic mystic, we attain the level of active participants, fully agent, *khalifa* only in coordinating worldly affairs. The formulation of a thought system meant to enhance the overall quality of everyday life for all of God's creatures must become the immediate articulation for a long-term goal. It cannot and will not be done by taking recluse in the mosques as a spiritual consolation from the status of a beleaguered world.[24]

This perspective resonates with IMI's beginning and aspirations for the future, and remains grounded in both spiritual dreams and actual-ising the political, doing of, such aspirations in practice. Yet it would be

premature to say that we have facilitated a sustainable, holistic 'social reality' that Wadud speaks so movingly of, and our collective plans for the future are definitely to make such dual grounding more regular, accessible, and active. Thus far, then, the events and *jamaats* that IMI holds are aspirational.

Reflecting back now, our initial vision was in some ways overambitious. We talked about buying land, and locations, and considered distances to accessible tube stations. We agreed to dedicate two years to building up the foundations of IMI as an organization, establishing a *Majlis*, and name for IMI, and securing funds. We were hoping, intending even, at that stage, to secure enough funding during this period to make this a reality, and agree that a part-time administrator would be a priority. We also explored architectural options for building from the ground-up a truly ecological, zero carbon, purpose-built structure. In this way, perhaps, we were overambitious in what could be done (by any voluntary organization) in two years.

On the other hand, we continue to be surprised, and astounded, by the enthusiasm generated by just having simple events, even dinners, by members. We have been overwhelmed and impressed by the commitment, energy, and persistence of *Majlis* volunteers, and have been happy to watch the organization be increasingly led by their visions of implementing inclusivity in practice, which are often very different to our initial one. Tsing identifies a

> central feature of all social mobilising: It is based on negotiating more or less recognized differences in the goals, objects, and strategies of the cause. The point of understanding this is not to homogenize perspectives but rather to appreciate how we can use diversity as well as possible.[25]

Using diversity and difference has been a steep learning curve for IMI thus far, and one that perhaps makes the initiative what it is. The many differences between our *Majlis* members have necessarily influenced and directed the growth of the organization in unexpected ways, and different political situations in the UK and internationally continue to challenge us to respond organizationally in diverse ways.

Conclusion

Overall this chapter has been a brief account of IMI as an organization to date. We began by introducing the initiative, outlining the history of its two-year existence, summarising some of the key processes of its development and the main influences. We then fast-forwarded to the current stage, two and a half years since its inception, and

summarized the main successes, threats, and responses received so far. We overviewed the rationale behind IMI, clarifying our understanding of inclusivity whilst linking with the lived practices that we continue to work with and attempt to develop. We summarized some of the challenges which we have faced organizationally so far. Whilst we have suggested that these are not exclusively linked to the particular ethos and aims of the organization, we also recognized that there are some which are specific to IMI. The ongoing challenges we have faced with securing sustainable funding, for example, is exasperated by the labels and categories that the organization falls into (too religious for much of the funding available to women's groups, for example, yet too woman-centric for religious funding bodies). Again, some of the challenges we have faced are found globally and experienced by IMI chapters beyond the UK too (such as finding and funding accessible spaces) yet some of them are particular to the national context (the nuances between accessibility legislation and its actual enforcement in listed buildings, for example). We close by offering a brief discussion reflecting on how far IMI has come in this short history.

In conclusion, the main intention that we began with was to pray together, regularly. We wanted the spaces that IMI offers and facilitates to be truly inclusive, to proactively engage with all members of Muslim communities, and to be as accessible to everyone as possible. Although IMI is not specifically dedicated to issues of sexuality or gender alone, IMI proactively attempts to be inclusive of all sexualities and genders by creating an atmosphere where homophobic and transphobic discrimination, victimization or harassment is not tolerated. The history of IMI has not been without its disappointments and limitations, yet overall our intentions around honouring inclusivity within our prayer spaces have been realized. Whilst IMI has morphed and continued to evolve over the last two years, we have consistently attracted a wide range of individuals to our prayers, whether in restaurant basements or car parks, people's homes or community rooms, rented rooms from other faith organizations, central London parks or private gardens, or even, spanning the ten weeks in summer 2014, in a regular jummah space. From this perspective, then, we have met the original aim of the initiative, and have had consistent positive feedback about people's experiences of these prayer sessions. This, and the fact that a new Muslim chose to embrace Islam within our *Majlis* group, during a planning meeting, is what affirms our involvement in IMI, and we look forward to watching how the initiative will continue to grow and develop, Insh'Allah.

Notes

We are grateful to the editors of this collection for the opportunity to contribute, and for their suggested changes. We would like to thank all the Majlis members who read earlier incarnations of this chapter, particularly Halima Gosai Hussain.

1   Good examples of this include Farid Esack, *On Being a Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2013) and Julianne Hammer, *More Than a Prayer: American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).

2   Relatedly, there is minimal work available on gender and UK mosques. Exceptions include Ruqaiyyah Maqsood, *The Role of the Mosque in Britain* [A Study Sponsored by The Muslim Institute Trust & Bait al-Mal al-Islami] (London: The Muslim Parliament of Great Britain, 2005); and a 2010 report by Faith Matters. For fuller discussion of existing literature, see Dervla Shannahan, 'Gender, Sexuality and Inclusivity in UK Mosques,' in Studying Islam in Practice, ed. Gabriele Marranci (London: Routledge, 2014), 124–134.

3   After a careful study of historical and textual sources, Reda concludes that 'the material, and textual records appear to support full female access to the major mosques during the Makkan and Madinan periods. Importantly, at the two earliest and most important Muslim shrines, there were no barriers separating women from men and no separate entrances. There also appears to be an indication that the thought of women being buried together with men in the inner sanctum was acceptable ... Both general and gender-specific Qur'anic verses indicate that women had full access to the mosque and that praying next to men was considered normal and legitimate.' (Nevin Reda, 'Women in the Mosque: Historical Perspectives on Segregation' *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21 [2004], 86.)

4   Reda, 'Women in the Mosque,' 86.

5   Akel Kahera, *Deconstructing the American Mosque: Space, Gender, and Aesthetics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 76.

6   Kahera, *Deconstructing the American Mosque*, 73.

7   Nüsi mosques are women only mosques with female imams. They were originally established by the Hui Muslims in China; see Bruno Philip, 'Women Imams of China,' *The Guardian*, 26 August 2015, accessed 26 August. 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2005/aug/26/guardianweekly.guardianweekly1.

8   Muslim WakeUp! and Progressive Muslims Union are now defunct, see 'Muslim,' *Wikipedia*, accessed 27 September 2016, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_WakeUp; see also 'Progressive Muslim Union,' *Wikipedia*, accessed 27 September 2016, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/

Progressive_Muslim_Union.

9   Muslims for Progressive Values was incorporated in 2007 and now has a number of Chapters across the United States of America, see *Muslims for Progressive Values*, accessed 17 April 2015, http://mpvusa.org/.

10 El-Tawhid Jummah Circle was founded in 2009 and has a number of Chapters across Canada.

11 Ardeshir Bikakabadi is the founder of Sweden's 'gay-friendly' mosque, see 'We speak to gay mosque founder,' *Radio Sweden*, accessed 26 August 2014, http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel. aspx?programid=2054&artikel=5389386.

12 The Women's Mosque of America, is an organization that begun in Los Angeles, USA in 2015. It is currently a Friday only service that takes place once a month in a shared interfaith building, see *The Women's Mosque of America*, accessed 17 April 2015, http://womensmosque.com/.

13 *Side Entrance*, accessed 17 April 2015, http://sideentrance.tumblr.com/, is a Tumblr website of mosque images across the globe, 'showcasing women's experience of sacred spaces, in relation to men.'

14 *Free Minds,* accessed 17 April 2015, http://free-minds.org/, is a website and forum inviting all to understand Islam via 'God alone.' This is often also referred to individuals that only utilize the Qur'an as their source of information in Islamic theology and practice, known as Quranists.

15 Asra Nomani, *Standing Alone in Mecca: An American Woman's Struggle for the Soul of Islam* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006).

16 Hilary Kalmbach, 'Introduction: Islamic authority and the Study of Female Religious Leaders,' in *Women, Leadership, and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority*, eds. Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach (Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden, 2012), 1.

17 N. Al-Ageli, 'The Pop-Up Mosque About To Go Viral!', *Nahlaink*, 2014, accessed 17 April 2015, http://www.nahlaink.com/features/ inclusive-mosque-initiative-imi-pop-mosque-about-go-virtual.

18 Quotes taken from IMI's website, email and Facebook messages.

19 See *Muslims in Britain*, accessed 10 June 2014 http://www.MuslimsInBritain. org/Maps.php.

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22 Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 260.

23 Maqsood, *The Role of the Mosque in Britain*, 7–8.

24 Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad*, 261.

25 Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), x.

Against Equality, Against Inclusion

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Against Equality (AE) is a small, all-volunteer, anti-capitalist collective based in North America that maintains an online archive of radical queer and trans critiques of the holy trinity of mainstream gay and lesbian politics: Gay marriage, gays in the military, and hate crime legislation. In 2009, a classist and urban-centric gay marriage campaign in rural Maine resulted in a successful referendum which repealed a gay marriage law. During this time, AE began as a blog by Ryan Conrad, initially designed to air frustrations and anger at marriage campaign politics. After receiving massive amounts of support and sensing a need for a record of queer resistance against mainstream gay politics, the blog was quickly transformed to its current form as a collectively organized online archive of written and visual materials from across the globe.

As an anti-capitalist collective, AE is quite skeptical of the non-profit organizational model employed by multi-million dollar organizations like the US-based Human Rights Campaign and The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. By functioning as anti-profit, not simply non-profit, we try to strike a balance between valuing our own labor and making our work as financially accessible as possible. All our publications and other cultural production (postcards, pins, tote bags, etc.) are kept as affordable as possible (and free to prisoners) while we cheat, steal, and talk our way out of the thousands of dollars of debt we accrued over the years (and have very recently paid off). While foregoing non-profit status and fiscal sponsors has rendered us ineligible for grants, it allows us to be more directly accountable to our community as opposed to funders. We've deliberately eschewed a non-profit structure, preferring to operate as a collective. Not being beholden to a board or conventional funders has meant that we've struggled financially, but that also keeps us focused on our work, not on endless grant writing, fundraising, and board development.

While AE members often write and make cultural work about our shared politics, we are first and foremost an archive. We are not an

organization, we do not have an office, we do not have a phone, we do not have a volunteer/intern coordinator, and we all have other jobs, often two! The collective maintains the archive in addition to each member's local community activism. We see the intellectual work in our archive as informing our activism and our activism informing our intellectual work. Both are forms of labor, and both are absolutely necessary for our movements to grow and deliver concrete beneficial changes for our entire community.

Beyond the immediate purpose of building a larger, more critically engaged community of radical queer and trans folks, we see the relevance of this collective as even more important today than ever before. The United States has seen the repeal of Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defined marriage as between one man and one woman in the summer of 2013, the end of the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) policy for gays and lesbians in autumn 2011, and the passage of federal hate crime laws that included sexual orientation and gender identity protections in the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act; we want to be sure that voices of resistance are not erased and written out of history. These pieces in our archive are like bread crumbs, laying out different pathways to justice and resistance for those that dare to imagine a more just world. When people look back on these desperately conservative gay times, we hope our collective voices can be an inspiration to those who come after us—those that look to our queer histories, just like we did, as a site of rejuvenation, excitement, and hope.

In this chapter, we outline some of our latest thinking on marriage, the military, and the prison industrial complex in an era where open service for gays and lesbians, and LGBT-inclusive hate crime laws have been achieved and federal marriage rights are literally on the horizon. We detail why we still see a focus on marriage as wrong-headed, and we further note how military inclusion and expanded hate crime laws have only served to exacerbate US militarism and the prison industrial complex. We begin with marriage, we then discuss the military, and conclude with prisons.

Marriage

This first section will in essence connect the dots between the rise of neoliberalism in the US and the rise of gay marriage. We define neoliberalism as the intense privatization of everyday life and the formation of a state that increasingly places the burden of care upon the family as a unit as opposed to the state. We situate gay marriage

within an economic context with particular emphasis on Edith Windsor, the plaintiff at the heart of the 2013 US Supreme Court case (*Windsor v US*) that decided the constitutionality of DOMA. We construct a brief history of how gay marriage came to be *the* cause for the gay movement, a history that has effectively been made invisible in all the discourse around marriage as an issue of 'equality.' We begin with a brief explanation of why we use the term 'gay marriage' rather than 'freedom to marry' or 'marriage equality,' because as Yasmin said in a recent article for the *Chicago Reader*, the term 'marriage equality,'

> occludes the fact that the institution many gays and lesbians (but by no means the majority of them) clamor for is in fact embedded in a long history of sexism, misogyny, and racism, which defines people and particularly women and children as objects of possession. Even more importantly, marriage is part of a larger neoliberal enterprise, a greater system of privatization, a state of things where people, increasingly, must enter into private contracts like marriage in order to gain the most basic benefits—like health care, or the ability to decide who can receive their estates, small or large, upon death.[1]

In using terms like marriage equality or equal marriage, gay marriage advocates attempt to divorce a problematic social construct, 'marriage' from its history, which has been about anything but equality. The fervor around marriage has intensified over the last decade or so, and marriage is now very big business. There are, as we write, innumerable television shows about wedding planning and bridal gowns, and the marriage industry has risen from the ashes of marriage itself: consider, for instance, the fact that American first marriages have drastically declined in the past few decades and that most marriages end in divorce. And yet, people more than ever feel the pressure to marry; most don't realize what the institution is like until they inevitably get divorced. In the state of Illinois, for instance, there is a waiting period before you can actually get divorced. This renders people, particularly women, as objects incapable of actually knowing what they want which is to say, women now have the right to initiate divorce, but they will still be told, like children, to wait and think it over. All of this is simply to point out that marriage has not, despite the claims of the US feminist Gloria Steinem, become better, and that it still remains for many, particularly the poor, women, and dependent children, a site of oppression.

Critiques of gay marriage have largely failed to tackle it head-on as an economic problem. The problem with gay marriage is not that it compels people to engage in forms of assimilation or that it cuts short their sex lives, or that it makes them less interesting. The problem with gay marriage in the United States is that it is part of the machinery of

neoliberalism and that it functions to both effectively end the state's interest in maintaining the wellbeing of people and to increase the economic power of the wealthy elite. If we are to combat neoliberalism we need to combat the institutions that enable it and make it stronger. In the US, unlike countries like Canada and Sweden, marriage is all that can supply myriad life-saving benefits including healthcare and immigration status. The point in the US, if we are to understand the deeply insidious nature of neoliberalism, is that it's now necessary to not just think beyond, but against marriage. We have to dismantle the structure that builds marriage into essential benefits.

Liberals, progressives, and most leftists praise gay marriage as a mark of civilized progress while they simultaneously scratch their heads trying to understand how and why the US is moving so inexorably and so brutally towards an intensely privatized state where the most basic needs of people, housing, food, healthcare and education are simply not being met. The question then remains, how did liberals and leftist alike who are otherwise constantly calling for a change in the economic structure of the US, fail to see that gay marriage is a part of neoliberalism? We now turn to Edith Windsor who is at the heart of the DOMA case. Windsor was not legally married to her longtime partner upon the latter's death and was left consequently with a large federal estate tax amounting to over $363,000 (she also owed the state of New York a $200,000 estate payment). Importantly, the issue was not ever that Windsor was unable to pay that amount because of poverty. The issue was that she felt it was unfair that she should have to pay that amount.

The fact of her wealth makes even more interesting a moment from Chicago's 2013 pride celebration after the DOMA win. A friend sent Yasmin a photo of a poster produced by the American Civil Liberties Union that apparently many people were carrying at the pride event. The poster reflects how gay marriage serves to occlude and obfuscate the ways in which it is wrapped up in neoliberalism. The poster in question featured Windsor's smiling face and the words 'I am Edie Windsor' (see fig. 3). In other words, there are now people marching and celebrating pride everywhere comfortable in the idea that they are all somehow Edith Windsor. This particular phrase of course is not to be taken literally, but it speaks to a general and pervasive idea in the gay community that Windsor represents a grassroots impulse towards marriage and she is in fact every woman.

It's important in the context of understanding gay marriage as a manifestation of neoliberalism to trace Windsor's actual history. The story of how she came to be at the center of one of the most famous legal cases in LGBT history has a lot to do with how the gay movement

strategically chose Windsor having carefully picked her out of a bevy of possible cases. She was chosen as a perfect candidate, a grieving and very presentable widow with nothing explosive in her past life, and with exemplary social networks and connections. She was often implicitly and sometimes explicitly portrayed as a stereotypical little old lady, perhaps living somewhere in a darkened New York City apartment barely able to keep her lights on as they flickered in the face of poverty.[2] All this of course was palatable for an average person.

Fig 3

In summer 2013, another Chicago-based organization for which Yasmin is a member, Gender JUST, began an ongoing research project which involves finding out the actual amounts of money that have been poured into marriage campaigns across this country. Gender JUST is doing this because as radical queer grassroots activists many are involved in queer projects of various kinds such as working with queers in the prison industrial complex, harm reduction programs around drug use, working with LGBTQ youth engaged in street trade that might involve sex work or drugs, as well as more well-known issues of LGBTQ housing and health care. Those agencies and organizations that work on these matters are always desperately scrambling for funds while marriage fundraisers raise literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in single nights. To put it bluntly, no one has ever seen a kickstarter for a marriage campaign. Every marriage campaign ever launched in big and small cities and states has been well funded by organizations like the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and many other state and local groups. What this means on the ground,

is that an agenda of neoliberal privatization is now at the forefront of this supposed battle for gay rights. This singular concern has in fact effectively swallowed up resources that could and should go to others. The point of all this is that Gender JUST discovered that Windsor is in fact worth, by a conservative estimate, in the region of seven million US dollars.[3] Which is to say, very few people, and certainly not the people holding that sign, can actually be Edith Windsor. Now in New York City a worth of seven million dollars might not allow one to live like billionaire ex-Mayor Michael Bloomberg, but we can agree that it takes you far in most parts of the world. We emphasize this matter of Windsor's financial worth because she represents the ways in which the gay marriage fight has been understood and regurgitated as a grassroots struggle engaged upon by millions of lovelorn gays and lesbians when in fact it is a massively well-coordinated campaign that has cost a few hundred million dollars since the mid-2000s.[4]

All of this matters because many of the central tenets on which gay marriage is being built as a movement towards equality are in fact benefits that only accrue to the wealthy few like Edith Windsor. One of the biggest arguments around *Windsor v US* was that this would positively affect all those gays and lesbians faced with estate taxes, but in fact very few of them will ever have to owe those kinds of estate taxes. This sort of argument that all gays will benefit whereas in fact only a few wealthy gays will benefit is also true in regards to immigration. Those in gay binational couples also benefit from DOMA because they may now sponsor their partners for immigration. While it may seem that this is beneficial to all gays and lesbians who might have partners that are not US citizens, what this ignores is that you still have to have a certain economic value in order to be able to sponsor your partner. You have to earn a certain income and you have to guarantee that you will have that level of income for a certain number of years. And of course if your partner happens to be someone who had a minor infraction or entered the country illegally there is no hope for a spousal sponsorship at all.

The many supposed benefits of gay marriage are primarily benefits the wealthy enjoy. The average gay and lesbian person, or average straight person for that matter, is not likely to accrue an estate worth as much as that left to Windsor. As it stands today, marriage in the US is a significant structural component of the neoliberal machinery of the state. In the end, to position the key problem with gay marriage as in essence somehow only being about people fucking differently, or horrors not at all, is to ignore the much more insidious and pervasive role that marriage plays in the neoliberal state. In the next section, we turn our attention to the question of the military in a post-DADT era.

Military

After the repeal of the US military's DADT policy in 2010, and the roll out of its implementation, most gays and lesbians in the United States praised the policy change. While many on the left in the United States denounce militarism, as we and many of our allies have continued to note, when it came to the DADT policy, for some reason, liberals felt that they could separate out the issue of support for gay and lesbian inclusion from support of the imperial war machine that is the US military. The argument usually went something like this: we may not support militarism, but people should still be able to serve. Or, given that it's mostly poor people and people of color who serve in the military, being against military inclusion is taking a stance against poor, queer people of color. We have always disagreed with these arguments, maintaining that we should not support US military imperialism and impunity under any conditions, or allow gays and lesbians to be used as a foil for the alleged spread of freedom and democracy via expanded militarism. We also believe that we should not support the US military as the only unemployment and jobs program for poor people and people of color in the US. But, isn't this debate over?

Not so quickly. In July 2013, The Palm Center, a policy and research center focused on enhancing the quality of public dialogue on controversial issues, announced a new multi-year research initiative in order to assess the possibility for transgender inclusion in the US military.[5] The key question for this initiative is whether it is possible to include transgender troops without undermining military readiness. This research, released in March 2014 analyzed other militaries that already include transgender people, as well as assess

> transgender inclusion in police and fire departments, reviews of relevant policies that prisons and athletic organizations have adopted, assessments of whether and how military doctors could better accommodate medical needs of transgender troops and of how military policies concerning appearance, hair and dress could be amended.[6]

As legal scholar and activist and AE contributor Dean Spade has noted, this call for new research and hence naming of this issue as key to the transgender movement has emerged as the result of a large, $1.35 million grant by the Tawani Foundation, founded by Jennifer Natalya Pritzker, an heir to the Hyatt fortune, a recently-out trans woman, and a former colonel in the National Guard.[7] Spade's critics argue that the issue is not one being put on the agenda because of one wealthy donor. Critics maintain that the Transgender American Veteran's [sic] Association, which formed in 2003 and has worked

on issues for transgender veterans since the 1990s has been a grass-roots organization leading the efforts in trans inclusion. Furthermore, OUT-Serve (the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network) comprised of former servicemembers, has advocated for LGB and T inclusion since 2002.[8] Nevertheless, the issue made headlines in July 2013 for the first time, drawing attention as a key concern for LGBT inclusion in an unprecedented way. Meanwhile, as Spade and others have repeatedly noted, trans and gender-non-conforming people, especially the poor and people of color, remain among the most likely to suffer from discrimination, violence, homelessness, and premature death. How military inclusion addresses these concerns of the broader trans community is unclear.

But there are more reasons that this debate is not yet over. The pathway to inclusion reflected in the DADT repeal and implementation are also the same logic being adopted more broadly by the US military and security apparatuses. In June 2009, Barack Obama picked up the tradition of the Clinton administration (dropped by the Bush administration) of deeming June LGBT Pride Month. After his 2012 declaration, institutions including the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Homeland Security, and US Customs and Border Patrol began officially celebrating Pride (although there had been some local celebrations in earlier years), recognizing their LGBT employees' groups, and providing training for staff about the importance of LGBT inclusion to each institution's mission. These events clearly coincide with the broader implementation of the repeal of DADT. To be sure, all people should be able to work in jobs where they are respected, treated with dignity, and safe. But, it is important to interrogate some of the ways that these institutions, each tasked with perpetuating militarism and militarization, offer this inclusionary.

Let's begin with the most obvious place, the DoD, which celebrated Pride for the first time in 2012. Then DoD General Counsel, now head of the Department of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, was the keynote speaker. During his speech, Johnson made it clear that he was not an activist on the matter of gay men and women in the US, and in fact, he entered into a sustained study of the DADT repeal without any particular outcome in mind. After revisiting some of the now familiar results from the study, Johnson also noted that the following long quotation had a lot of impact on the ultimate recommendation that the risks of repeal would be low:

> In the course of our assessment, it became apparent to us that aside from the moral and religious objections to homosexuality, much of the concern about open service is driven by mis-perceptions and stereotypes about

what it would mean if gay service members were allowed to be open about their sexual orientation. Repeatedly we heard service members express the view that open homosexuality would lead to widespread and overt displays of feminine behavior among men, homosexual promiscuity, harassment and unwelcome advanced [*sic*] within units, invasions of personal privacy and an overall erosion of standards of conduct, unit cohesion and morality. Based on our review, however, we conclude these concerns about gay and lesbian service members who are permitted to be open about their sexual orientation are exaggerated and not consistent with the reported experiences of many service members.

In communications with gay and lesbian current and former service members, we repeatedly heard a patriotic desire to serve and defend the nation, subject to the same rules as everyone else. In the words of one gay service member, 'Repeal would simply take a knife out of my back. You have no idea what it's like to serve in silence.' Most said they did not desire special treatment, to use the military for social experimentation or to advance a social agenda. Some of those separated under Don't Ask/Don't Tell would welcome the opportunity to rejoin the military if permitted.

From them we heard expressed many of the same values that we heard over and over again from service members at large. Love of country, honor, respect, integrity and service over self. We simply cannot square the reality of these people with the perceptions about open service.' End quote. And last but not least, was this noteworthy quote in the report, which seems to be the favorite of a lot of people. 'We have a gay guy in the unit. He's big, he's mean and he kills lots of bad guys. No one cared that he was gay.[9]

Johnson's remarks are incredibly telling about the stakes of inclusion. It is important to spend some time parsing these comments in order to drive home some key points that make military inclusion an ongoing concern for queers in a post-DADT era. First, are the concerns that presumably straight servicemembers had about what open service would mean—gross displays of male femininity, increased sexual harassment (presumably from gay men to straight men), unwanted advances (again presumably from gay men to straight men), and an overall decrease in morale. Johnson calls these stereotypes and misperceptions, and they may very well be that, at the very same time that these concerns doubly function to codify the misogyny of the military as straight men clearly seem to worry both about the correlation between an increasingly feminine environment and diminishing morale at the same time that they worry about being put in a feminized position—as the victims, not perpetrators, of harassment and unwanted advances (there's no mention here of sexual assault, though certainly that anxiety is present too).

Johnson would not of course be expected to take this as an opportunity to critique the existing misogyny and sexism embedded in military culture, but instead, he continues with the quotation which unsurprisingly confronts the misperceptions with images of and words from 'good soldiers,' those who we imagine would share with their straight comrades a disgust at an increasingly feminized military. In fact, these patriotic servicemembers wanted to be 'subject to the same rules as everyone else' and have no desire 'to advance a social agenda.' These homonationals then not only have no interest in changing business as usual even if business as usual is violent toward them and others like them, they want to prove everyone wrong. Some will go to great lengths to do it, a point proven by the 'favorite' quotation in the report: 'We have a gay guy in the unit. He's big, he's mean and he kills lots of bad guys. No one cared that he was gay.' And therein lies one of the many proverbial rubs. Just like allowing women in combat doesn't make for a kinder and gentler military, gays in the military do not lead to a more open and accepting environment. Instead, if we are to consider the logic that Johnson espouses here, gays can be just as mean and just as murderous as straight service members. And when they are able to prove the possession of such characteristics, the fact of their gayness is no concern at all, at least we presume, for mean, bad-guy killing gay men. But, what about those 'bad guys'?

In 2013, the DoD upped the ante, celebrating its first ever Pride in the Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan, one of the bloodiest and deadliest regions of the entire duration of Operation Enduring Freedom, better known as the War in Afghanistan. The DoD put out a short minute-long video to commemorate the event from the Kandahar Airfield.[10] The video opens with a young white woman, name and branch of military unknown, who says, 'I don't wanna be treated special. I just wanna be treated equal.' The video then moves to scenes of gay marriage protests or celebrations in the United States, full of homemade signs, HRC equal sign flags, and pride flags, followed by a clip of President Obama signing the DADT repeal. A voice over by the reporter who identifies himself as Marine Corporal Caz Krul explains what has happened in the time since repeal, and the support that members of the armed forces have offered to the LGB community. A man of color, also unnamed, then begins speaking about the importance of the repeal and the pride celebration as images of pride parades from the US cover the screen. 'It makes my military service well worth it,' he says. When he finishes, the reporter poses the question, 'what does celebrating LGBT pride in Afghanistan mean to the United States?' This question is answered by a white man in uniform, also never named who earnestly answers: 'I think it's very important that we are here

representing the United States of America, and we hope that when we leave here we have left all positive qualities on what America is like, and that we're an equal country. We treat all our citizens equally.'

Finding reports of the exact number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan is very difficult, and it is even more difficult to find accurate reports of locations of the deaths or the exact cause of those deaths. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released a report on civilian deaths and injuries from January 1–June 30, 2013 titled, *Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*. The report concludes:

> Escalating deaths and injuries to Afghan children, women and men led to a 23 percent resurgence in civilian casualties in the first six months of 2013 compared to the same period in 2012. UNAMA documented 1,319 civilian deaths and 2,533 injuries (3,852 casualties) from January to June 2013, marking a 14 percent increase in deaths, 28 percent increase in injuries and 23 percent increase in total civilian casualties compared to the same period in 2012. The rise in civilian casualties in the first half of 2013 reverses the decline recorded in 2012, and marks a return to the high numbers of civilian deaths and injuries documented in 2011.[11]

A majority of those casualties, 74%, are at the hands of what the report calls anti-government elements, which includes all those 'in armed conflict with or armed opposition against the Government of Afghanistan and/or international military forces' (13), whereas only 21% are directly attributed either to pro-government forces or conflict between pro- and anti-government forces (17). As the report simply put it, 'Civilians again increasingly bore the brunt of the armed conflict in Afghanistan in early 2013. Civilians particularly in conflict-affected areas experienced the grim reality of rising civilian deaths and injuries coupled with pervasive violence which threatened the lives, livelihood and wellbeing of thousands of Afghans' (24). The report also notes that Kandahar along with Helmand remains one of the two most impacted regions.

It is unclear to us how we reconcile the image of a young general enlist marine or soldier who doesn't want special treatment but just wants to be treated equal, with horrifying images such as the report's cover image of terrified people running literally for their lives. Are their lives and deaths the price of equality as so many inclusion champions suggest? Is the carnage of the now-inclusive war machine just an example of how freedom isn't free? How should LGB (and soon-to-be T) people respond to our inclusion in the US war machine? In the final section of this chapter we address the implications of inclusion in the protection categories of federal hate crime laws.

Prisons

LGBT inclusive federal hate crime law in the US—commonly referred to as the Matthew Shepard Act—was enacted into law as part of the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act. Hate crime laws work by increasing penalties for acts of violence and intimidation that are already illegal (ie. harassment, assault, rape, murder) if it can be proven that the violence carried out was motivated by anti-LGBT sentiments. Hate crime legislation in the United States has its roots in the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which protected victims of violence based on race, color, religion, or national origin. These protections were expanded in 1994 to include gender-based violence against women, and in 2009 to include perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

Regardless of the effectiveness of such laws, which have already been called into question by many feminists, people of color, and queer activists,[12] as prison abolitionists we oppose any expansion of the prison industrial complex including the expansion of policing, surveillance, and prosecutorial powers of the carceral state, even when such expansions are supposedly enacted on our own behalf, for our own safety. Historically, we know that neither prisons nor the carceral state have ever protected us from violence and in fact has been and continues to be the site of violence for queer, trans, and gender nonconforming people, particularly those who are also of low income, people of color, immigrants, young people, sex workers, and/or drug users.[13] Furthermore, as Chandan Reddy points out in his 2011 book *Freedom with Violence*, the *Matthew Shepard Act* was passed with specific penalties for young offenders.[14] With the already disproportionate surveillance, policing, arrests, and convictions for people of color in the US context, it is fair to assume that this expansion of hate crime laws will have a disproportionate impact on the lives of young people of color.[15]

We use a critique of hate crime legislation to provide an opening for a broader queer critique of the prison industrial complex. As we have been arguing, marriage, military service, and hate crime laws serve as the holy trinity of contemporary gay and lesbian assimilationist politics in the United States, and it is through this critique of inclusion in the heteronormative status quo that we aim to have broader political conversations about the prison industrial complex. As Dean Spade points out in five myth busting facts about violence and criminalization in the introduction to Against Equality's 2012 anthology *Prisons Will Not Protect You:*

- Jails and prisons are not overflowing with violent dangerous

people, but with the poor, the disabled, and people of color.
- Most violence does not happen on the street between strangers, but between people who know each other in places we are familiar with.
- The most dangerous people, those who end and destroy the most lives are on the outside running our banks, governments, courtrooms, and wearing military and police uniforms.
- Prisons aren't places to put serial rapists and murders, *they are* the serial rapists and murders.
- Increasing criminalization does not make us safer, it simply feeds the voracious law enforcement systems that devour our communities, often for profit.

Hate crime law also obscures sources of anti-queer and trans sentiment and violence by making it personal (bad people hate the gays) while leaving structural forms of violence in place. Police officers, the national guard, the US military, border guards, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and detention guards, prison guards, homeland security, private security firms, etc., these people will never be charged with a hate crime for the violence they uphold and inflict. Instead, more and more cases are springing up where laws that were intended to protect minorities are being used to prosecute them. In Boston in 2012 three lesbians were charged with an anti-gay hate crime for assaulting a gay man,[16] and hate crime charges have been brought against an African American teenager in Brooklyn for assaulting a white couple this past October.[17] This is what Paul Butler, author of *Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice,* points out as the use of hate crime laws to defend majority populations from minority populations.[18] Worse yet, are the hate crime charges sought against African American youths in the aftermath of the 2001 Cincinnati race riots spurned by the shooting death of an unarmed black teenager by a white police officer.[19]

By using hate crime laws as a way to open up a critical queer lens on the prison industrial complex there becomes a number of other queer issues relating to its seemingly unending expansion: the criminalization of self-defense as seen in the case of the New Jersey 4 and CeCe McDonald; the anti-gay witch hunts against school teachers and daycare workers accused of child sexual abuse like the San Antonio 4, Bernard Baran, Stephen and Melvin Mathews, amongst many others; the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure, a disease that disproportionately impacts gay and bisexual men, particularly men of color in the United States and Canada; and the legacy of brutal and ineffective laws organized around concepts of sexual deviancy (ie. sex offender registries, civil commitment) of which queers and gender nonconforming

people were primary targets. Against Equality explores each of these issues at length in the *Prisons Will Not Protect You* anthology.

AE's goal here isn't to critique the criminal punishment system for the sake of problematizing it, but to ask questions that help forge a pathway towards a form of restorative justice that moves beyond the punitive model, a model which more often than not compounds or hides problems rather than deals with them by restoring the dignity of all involved and repairing the harm done. We point our fingers in disgust at both liberals and conservatives who use the perennial 'get tough on crime' rhetoric to win elections and look forward to a day when getting tough on the causes of crime—poverty, inadequate safe and affordable housing, inadequate healthy food and water, lack of resources and treatment for drug users, lack of meaningful educational and employment opportunities, lack of access to health care, racist and exploitative immigration policies, again all problems we associate with neoliberal capitalism—becomes the focus of our spineless political leaders and our supposedly grassroots social movements. But we know this shift only comes through a combination of fierce critique and grassroots political action and we believe the collective work of Against Equality is an integral part of a process that envisions a future without prisons.

Conclusion

We fully recognize that the perspectives we offer are not those that most are used to hearing. We also understand that some of what we may have said could be off-putting to readers, make them mad, or want to dismiss us altogether. We hope readers will give our archive a close look. While the mainstream can be enticing for those of us LGBT people who most easily conform to gender, class, race, nation, language, education and ability norms of acceptability in North America, where does that leave those of us who can't, don't or won't conform? As the mainstream movement in the US and increasingly around the globe works to uphold and promote neoliberal capitalism, militarism and the prison industrial complex, what about the vast majority of queers and non-queers alike who only suffer under these oppressive structures? The time for radical queer critique and vigorous grassroots movement building against these structures is more vital now than ever before.

Notes

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12 Many of these critiques are republished in Dean Spade and Ryan Conrad

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Reasons For Optimism: Same Sex Marriage in Mexico City

Arturo Sánchez García

'There is nothing better than savouring a legislative triumph: to enrol oneself in history, to build from there new forms to relate to one another aspiring to equality and justice as values for democracy. [The same sex marriage reform] was not only a triumph for lesbians and homosexuals, but for society as a whole.'

— Lol Kin Castañeda[1]

'Solo le pido a Dios, que la guerra no me sea indiferente.'[2]

— León Gieco

In 2010 the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City approved the legal reform that extended the right to marry to lesbian and gay couples in the Mexican capital. As was predicted at the time, the law was challenged with an appeal presented to the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation ('SCJN'), but the SCJN rejected it, upholding the constitutionality of the same sex marriage reform. This marked the beginning of a series of SCJN decisions that slowly pointed towards a jurisprudential decision which in 2015 established judicial precedent for the legalization of same sex marriage across the country. I am here, therefore, celebrating the progressive 'judicialization of same sex marriage politics' and the accelerating reliance on the SCJN, which seems to have taken over the sexual rights agenda that the legislative assemblies of the states were not promoting, replacing political controversies with the defense of constitutional principles of human rights.[3]

The Mexican process brought 'something good' to the global sexual rights agenda. Now, it is time for us all to agree on the content of that something. Our personal position regarding same sex marriage politics,

and our own political commitments towards sexual rights will make us recognize different potential for optimism emerging from the reform. Let me insist here that same sex marriage reform was a good reform, not because of what it brought (it is doubtless positive that those who wish to establish marriage contracts can do so, it should be common sense in a democratic state), but because it helps us in thinking about the world we want, a world that is going to be better for everybody: The Mexican process offers us privileged knowledge about the material constraints that are preventing us from getting there.

Transnational networks of human rights activists have for decades now informed the imaginaries of grassroots activists. UN-style rights-phrasing has helped local activists to imagine ways to relate to their states, organizing expectations of accountability as strategies of action. Struggles around the world (particularly in sexual rights politics) aspire to similar standards of rights recognition largely based on demands for inclusion into the democratic state. In those standards we celebrate the SCJN promoting same sex marriage. The problem that I want to address here is that the reform contributed to the global agenda with a great addition to the list of accomplishments in lesbian and gay rights, but its celebration says very little about Mexico and its human rights culture. It postpones the analyses of the material constrains that separate different people in hierarchically organized legal relations with the state, and distributes hope for a better world to live in unevenly.

A Future That Is Yet To Come

What is it that we want in sexual politics? How can we contribute to the world? How is the world that we live in going to be better because of our work? These are good times for us to engage in a discussion about the capacity of sexuality to imagine, desire, and anticipate good things to come. Many of us engage in academic work or activism in the field of sexuality and gender with the hope that our work can reveal possibilities of politics born in processes of subjective embodiment. We all have trust in the expression of an ethical desire for alliances across the boundaries of race, age, ethnicity, sexual identities, preferences and practices (and so on); we put faith in our hypotheses and premises because they feel to us coherent with our hope. Our work is moved by a slightly utopian inspiration; we believe that there are good things that are yet to come, that the way we relate to each other can be better and fairer. But we do not always have a clear idea of what the good things that are yet to come will be, and there is great potential in that ambiguity, in that openness and generosity towards the uncertainty of

the 'something good' coming, because it becomes the main impulse that makes us move towards it.

Because we share a desire, we are bound to come together to assess the resources available in our present that enable us to anticipate good things that are *not yet* here. When we gather to celebrate political achievements, we always have to ask how closer they take us to the *not yet*, but more importantly, we need to defend the *not yet* as our own impulse. We then learn together to move beyond the present and the way it has been normalized (on behalf of rational coherence, racialized, and gendered orders, and sometimes on behalf of a democratic order); we learn that our needs have been socially directed, and that institutional political goals have the tendency to distract us with illusions of a better future that postpone our original desire. We have to learn how to daydream, says Ernst Bloch, to not take things the way they are, but always the way they should be: the not yet should become that site of struggle (not the goal) that moves our will to anticipate utopic ideals of a better life, that rushes natural dialectical movement towards a better word by making comprehensible the psychical and material visions that emerge from those same ideals.[4]

The first step in our path towards the not yet is to learn together about the limits of our imagination, and identify what keeps preventing our work and our achievements from materializing in concrete projects of justice (and this includes all forms of social and economic justice). The question takes a peculiar shape when we are assessing the capacity of Mexican legal culture to bring about progressive change: as is the case in many other peripheral places,[5] we first have to confront the fact that law often attains its value for something that it is not. When we celebrate legal achievements, the law claims for itself an aspirational idea that portrays it as if it has the capacity to fulfil that which is desired from it, against the grounded experience of legal systems and personalized politics with limited emancipatory potential.[6] And when the law becomes our object of desire, and our impulse for justice, our original hopes get postponed in an operation that gets normalized on behalf of democratic improvement.

In the dialogue that I am promoting, the quote from Lol Kin Castañeda that opens this chapter is deceiving the optimistic spirit. The Mexican reform is overrated, its capacity to inspire a better country is questionable. The reform did not represent a historical moment that could trigger further and better changes, nor democratic transformation. It certainly did not have a powerful resonance in Mexican society, apart from a small constituency who might choose an *attachment* to the reform, to the legal authorities that enacted it, and the judicial authorities that uphold it. Right after celebrating the reform, it is crucial

for 'us' to return to the triumphal event and consider the different ways in which it could have happened, testing the 'new' ways to relate to one another that it brought about, always against those that could have been opened, but were postponed instead.[7]

Lol Kin Castañeda is one of the activists who led the push for marriage reform in Mexico City. She reconciled the years-long struggle for civic recognition of same sex couples within the auspices of partisan politics in the Assembly. She presents her celebration here using a formula that is now commonly repeated for similar events of legal reform and judicial intervention: the call for historical novelty. The further this formula is used, the more complicated it gets for us. Legislative assemblies and supreme courts take 'historical decisions,' they are praised because they resolve a problem rooted in the past (homophobia and exclusion of lesbian and gay citizens from the state's project) with an offer for something good, the announcement of something so precious that it is expected to encompass the aspirations of a large public, of the whole nation. But in her enrolment of history, through the announcement of the *new relations that will grow in equality and justice*, Castañeda dismisses the critical scrutiny of the present: the social, political, and economic hierarchy that organizes the needs, and separates the desires and interests of lesbian and gay people (at least of those wanting civil recognition from the state), and of those living in a permanent state of illegality. There are material disadvantages that *make people illegal* in relation to the land they occupy, their economic activities, or because of the distance that separates them from governmental authorities and the projects of the state; there are people living under the most extreme historical and violent forms of exclusion that are untouched by Castañeda's announcement of a better world.[8]

This is not my claim to denounce the intentional exclusion orchestrated by the lesbian and gay agenda. Rather it is my strategy to unveil the symbolic overload of the democratic values of modernity—including equality, and even solidarity—'that we cannot not want'[9] that back the same sex marriage campaigns. Those values circulate as one homogeneous ensemble—together with liberty, autonomy, and subjectivity—with an excess of meaning that has trivialized (and neutralized) the possibilities of engaging ethically with each one of them, and with our plurality.[10]

The good intention to share the announcement of social change with all individuals does not help us to understand the material and epistemic distance *we* have from *them*. This is a separation organized in a global political culture overtly invested in mobilization for the resolution of fragmented versions of rights addressing only very specific forms of associational activity.[11] Different rights claims have to queue

in the legislative and electoral agenda, social groups have to compete for material and symbolic resources of mobilization. In this competition, sexuality has gained a privileged space, not in terms of material possibilities for politics based on empowerment or accountability, but due to the unprecedented symbolic markers of modernity and 'novel and civilized ways to be' that sex presents to global and local politics. It is from that privileged location we can commit to reboot (with a sense of urgency) our optimism as a method to analyze the present in anticipation of a better world to come. We need to renovate our capacity to desire, to educate our optimism together with our political communities, so we can then prefigure better ways to be with one another. After all, I firmly believe that sexuality can bring about a better world.

The Desires of Sexuality

Having been asked in an interview in 1981 to give advice to young gay readers on the way in which the 'problem of homosexuality' is to be articulated in politics, Michel Foucault connected the subjective acknowledgment of desire and the production of ethics that happens within transgressive sex, a model that I want to use here to start grounding my own sexual optimism. Homosexuality for Foucault, and I extend the argument to all forms of transgressive sexuality, is not a form of desire that translates directly into subjectivity but something desirable, a desirable place to be. Homosexuality is not an identity that should aim for recognition, but a relational development that unfolds in the form of friendship, a 'historical opportunity to reopen relational and affective virtualities.'[12]

For Foucault, *desire* sets up the foundation of our *way of life* when it is socialized, it gets organized by a *culture* (the homosexual culture) that recognizes and names the effect that power relations have in the way sexual norms get defined and implemented. Only then, after the exercise of cognitive socialization, does desire give way to *ethics*. Our desire can reorder relations of power as relations of reciprocity, affection, tenderness, friendship, loyalty, and companionship, the way the original desire was produced. For that, homosexuality has to remain *outside the limits of the law* and the norms. Foucault's path is presented as the politicization of a culture of intimate affection, where transgressive sex becomes a desirable place to do politics because of its condition of illegality—an *illegality chosen, and not enforced*—(different to the state of illegality mentioned earlier.) Transgressive sex has the potential to produce autonomous insights into the structures that produce the

cultural, social, economic, and legal power that determines the norms of sexuality, 'the diagonal lines [the homosexual] can lay out in the social fabric [which] allow these virtualities to come to light.'[13]

Now, the desire for a good future that I want to insist on is different from Foucault's desire. He is talking about the intimate bonds of homo-sexual friendship, the impulse that carries a man towards another. We can still infer in the path he draws that the same intimate movement can be replicated and expanded as political desire: the desire learnt in our intimate practices informing the ethical precepts with which we move towards others in the political scenario. I am advocating here for politics in friendship, reciprocity, and affection; the promotion of these virtual relational forms as a source of politics across social movements. We can invest our desires in the benefit of someone else's, in giving something good to someone in friendship, in order to assess, update, and expand the way we relate to each other.

A similar discussion is being articulated in western scholarship—with a certain sense of novelty—about new relationalities brought about by an ambition to overpass classical forms of political organization in advanced capitalist societies. These new relationalities are *appearing* in alternative political platforms (like global networks of exchange of information) with the capacity to inaugurate political ontologies and relations between the self and the other around the world.[14] In those new relationalities, it is the platform that supplies the conditions to anticipate a better future. There have been alternative efforts to engage with optimistic prescriptions, not focused only on the novel platforms but on the historical lack of platforms that connect the individual to a present of intervention and mobilization, and to the anticipation of a better future. For José Esteban Muñoz, for example, the desire for a better future grows from a collective relational longing of a desired queer identity. For him it is precisely not the platform that makes sense of politics and desire, but its nonexistence: optimism emerges in the recognition of absences, the animation of the past (no-longer-conscious) that is conducive of the explosion of the limits of the stultifying present moment,[15] in a project that compensates lack with aesthetic stimulation through 'a type of affective excess that presents the enabling force of a forward-dawning futurity.'[16]

When trying to relate that optimism with Latin American hope, those queer relationalities still appear as if they depend heavily on virtual detachments from the past, dismissing a cultural sense of community and an urgent conceptualization of need that are deeply implicated in our strategies to daydream and imagine the future. The past is still needed to inform social movements' action because it is not exhausted. New social movements are writing their history within the history of

the state, and the violence of inequality that we aspire to be emancipated from is not addressing the violence that other groups suffer in the current order of the state. The imaginaries of emancipation can be (or should be) compared—in an exercise of friendship—with the imaginaries of other groups. Informal and illegal platforms remain as a continuum in the project of futurity of Latin American democratization, they cannot be dismissed as an unbound past.

In the effort to rethink optimism I am trying to make explicit the connections that have built bridges between subjective *embodiment* and mobilization for collective action across movements in the region, suggesting a separation from western queer projects. What has been built as a theoretical account (that I explained with the quick mention of Foucault, and later with ideas of new platforms and new subjectivities) is what has been politicized in practice by Latin American women's movements as processes of *empowerment* for decades. In empowerment, feminists recognize themselves as agents of change individually (at the level of consciousness), when a woman recognizes the total experience of her body, acknowledging her own pleasure against the social constructs of desire; but also collectively when women vest their capacity to produce situated knowledge in the benefit of political action, creating autonomous political spaces outside of the margins of institutionally driven policies.[17] Feminist empowerment has been around as a strategy since the times of resistance against dictatorial and authoritarian governments, with the articulation of an original political agenda for a women's movement based on the differences between them: the oppression that affects them unevenly and the asymmetries of power between them as a collective, and the way those differences can determine (and fragment) their identities in specific moments, and specific circumstances.[18] Empowerment became the condition of recognition of the self in diversity that precedes the encounter of political activists with public policy and law, the activation of desire, sexuality, and well-being (including the bodily sensations of pleasure) as unique and formative experiences to enable the conditions of individuation that can create possibilities for freedom, cast in a collective dialogue as something concretely realizable and universally available.

An empowered individual who engages ethically with others recognizes herself, himself, or themselves located in a privileged location for enunciation and situated knowledge, and remains outside of the epistemic boundaries of the law because of the way those borders condition feasible futures. However, at this moment in the global sexual culture, the path towards ethical commitments seems to be interrupted when it is the law which organizes history: with the historical moments that we manufacture as the celebration of legal triumphs of sexuality

(and with the notions of emancipation and futurity that emerge there). We can explain this interruption using again Foucault's description: the subject founds a space for enunciation of her, his, or their desire in the sexual culture; there she, he, or they engages with the law in order to transform relations of power; but if the legal intervention takes the place of emancipation the individual only returns again to the sexual culture; there is no place for the other. If there is no transformation of power, sexual imagination gets interrupted, and the opportunity for ethics gets postponed. Sexual politics, with the overestimation of the historical relevance of legal reform, dismisses the possibility of ethical projects, and that endangers our capacity to imagine something else, and something better.

Sexual desire gets then diffused in the sexual culture. 'Culture' for contemporary social movements is represented in mobilization merging the needs, desires and identities of a group as *capitalizable* resources for instrumental relations with the state and its institutions.[19] While the homosexual culture of Foucault and the feminist culture of empowerment are *ways to do things* that lead to new ethical commitments, in the contemporary political scenario 'culture' appears as the origin, the agent, and the object of mobilization. Sexual culture produces knowledge that is shared with individuals aiming for identification, and perhaps membership, but is heavily dependent on assumptions about shared experiences of violence and suffering (or exposure to them) that run across class, race, ethnicity, and all other forms of associational identities,[20] and assumptions of a common desired future, that justify together the demand for law and new law-bound practices from the state.[21] It seems that we have renounced the location of creative transgressive illegality in exchange for protection (and recognition) within a discursive experience of a past of violence that we will be liberated from by the law.

In this interruption, transgressive sexuality can only stand as an oppositional identity against the fictional social order of heteronormativity, as if the latter entails a coherent ideological practice and predictable patterns of desirability. What has been explained in queer theory as an ethical commitment to distance oneself from the social order and its forms of futurity can reduce sexual transgression to rivalry between *cultures*.[22] Homosexual culture then competes for dictating the best ways to be with one another. The claim of novelty that often underpins political narratives of sexual transgression encourages *more modern* and *more civilized* expressions of democracy, markers that determine the measure of modern rights cultures.[23] In its own way, sexual transgression is compelled to confront, or discipline, those who are lagging behind, whose ability to catch up with progressive

developments proves slower than desired.[24] A modern sexual culture stands in superiority in relation to any autochthonous cultural referents, or any non-state-mediated political identity that insists upon backward positions towards sexuality.[25] The homosexual culture authorizes the representation of certain other subjects as 'object of democratic pedagogy,'[26] subjects in the making who are not yet included in the coherent path of modernity's destiny, who still need to be instructed on how to achieve the enterprise that the sexual rights agenda already initiated.

Our transgressive sexuality is actually a position of privilege, in as much as it renders the norms that mediate desire and practice visible. It is a position in which we can problematize the axis of intersectional oppressions that in practice condition the way in which those who are located in the lowest positions of the economic, racial, cultural, and sexual hierarchies imagine (or not) their own futures. From our privileged epistemic location we can name the 'limit situations,' the epistemic frontiers that negate and curb *some* people's capacity to hope or imagine the future because of material borders of possibility.[27] Having recognized those limit situations we make ethical choices, one of which can be to withdraw our allegiance from fictions of a heterosexual future that we do not seem to be part of. Another is to socialize our knowledge, to produce *together with* our communities a collective sense of longing that anticipates a future that is yet to come, demystifying limit situations and transforming them into direct critical actions towards the achievement of pragmatic possibilities.

Reasons for Optimism

In the privileged location of enunciation of our sexual culture, I adopt Paulo Freire's concept of critical optimism understood as an exercise of *serious and responsible* understanding of the political and historical praxis of social claims and social transformation, where the main task of our academic endeavours is the production of language to anticipate a new world to come of vindicated justice.[28]

Paulo Freire follows the same line of thinking as Ernest Bloch's, setting up hope as a principle for action in a horizon that ought to maintain itself optimistic, always driven by the utopian impulse of existential necessity to bring about social change and freedom. Freire's work has been characteristic for politicizing hope as a pedagogical instrument capable of updating and expanding ways to engage with each other, prioritizing new relationalities with other social agents over relations with institutions, because those two have a different relation to time and history. Institutions require closures in history

(to resolve conflicts of the past with promises of futurity) in order to maintain legitimate authority, but social agents ought to commit to transcendental projects of emancipation in militant optimism. Freire's project is an investment towards the pedagogical revelation of *untested feasibilities*, the political projects of action towards a future which we have yet to create (the 'not yet' of Ernst Bloch) that is revealed in the analyses of limit situations, and the capacity to acknowledge for oneself the conditions of the present that are impediments for the not yet.

We have to educate our optimism (in Bloch's terms, to educate our anticipatory consciousness), to learn how to maintain distance from the existing state of affairs that has, until the moment of enunciation, conditioned our desirability (the destabilization of that which we know that disarms the taking-for-granted of power). Our actions should, or ought to, acknowledge what we do, be determined by the evaluation of circumstances that allows us (and no others) to do it, in the light of what we could do. This is by no means a project of moral education, the spirit of the optimist is not evaluated according to pre-existing moral predicaments to predispose an individual to uniform expressions of desirability, but relies instead on the ongoing commitment to desire better in a constant renovation of rules of interpolation.[29]

The celebration of progressive legal reforms for a pro-marriage activist would imply, for example, the appraisal of one kind of capabilities that were valued, encouraged, and genuinely enabled in order to take the reform to the place it reached in Mexican politics, against that those that were blocked, suppressed or postponed, the rights claims that do not coincide with the contemporary legal thinkability. The non-critical celebration of a progressive legal reform can accommodate only a narrative of closure of a problem for the past, constructed as a historical moment because of something different than what it is: a fictional past where we have all been discriminated against, that now opens as an evolution (or revolution?) towards equality and justice, despite our full awareness of the conditions of exclusion and discrimination to which many people are still being objected to and for whom a legal reform bears little relevance.

The critique of the same sex marriage process in Mexico does not address only the images of normativity that have been questioned in other contexts (heteronormativity, or marriage normativity), nor even the images of futurity that emerge from them, but instead can emphasize the assessment of resources that the reform enables (or not) to other constituencies, the way the celebration of same sex marriage dismisses the analysis of the different legal relations people have with the state, or in short, the actual meanings of (Mexican) law in the lives of people.

Mexican Optimism

The celebration of Lol Kin Castañeda cited earlier was taken from a small book published in 2011 in Mexico. In it, different activists, artists, and intellectuals were invited to reflect upon indignation in the light of the ongoing war on drugs in the country. Castañeda's intervention is the only one in the book that is—in appearance—optimistic. Castañeda focuses on the transformation of political relations, while the rest of the interventions put forward gloomy views about the current state of illegality produced by the war. This war was initiated by the former conservative president Calderón, with no clear project for its conclusion; since its beginning in 2006, extreme forms of non-state violence have been normalized in the country. Castañeda's insistence on the way the triumph of lesbian and gay people benefits all Mexicans takes a whole different dimension when the text is read as a conversation happening (or not happening) with the other authors in the book. Her hope and her optimism are being invested in a future ambition of regulation that promises to resolve a past of discrimination, but it does not aspire to a radically open and ambiguous *not yet*, therefore it cannot work as an impulse that makes us fight for a better world, for everybody. The trajectories of legal futurity of sexual politics cannot comprehend the limit situation of a country going through a war. The progress that emanates from the reform suspends, at least temporary, the ethical project of sexual rights.

The reforms of same sex marriage in 2010 were the product of at least three different trajectories in Mexican politics: 1) the juridification of social relations and social movements using legal jargon, or law-like discourses, to expand grassroots politics, trusting the law's potential to assist them in the creation of a mere just order,[30] 2) The peculiar engagement of Mexico City's Legal Assembly with progressive legal reforms on sexuality: the left-wing government who profit from the alliances made with the feminist and lesbian and gay movements, because those legitimize an ideological confrontation with the conservative federal government, in an attempt to repair or compensate for the eventual fragmentation of the PRD's (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática* [Party of the Democratic Revolution]) ideological foundation that is endangering their electoral capital,[31] and 3) the development of a new political consciousness dependent on constitutions as an aspirational object of hope, moderated by constitutional courts. In this sense, constitutional texts inform the aspirations of a society well versed in the incapacity of its legal systems to bring about social change. Constitutions can defend principles of rights against the political unwillingness of the different actors in a federal arrangement.[32]

Mexican democracy is fairly young. The country finished more than 70 years of the one-party regime of the PRI (*Partido de la Revolución Institucional* [Party of the Institutional Revolution]) with the arrival of the conservative PAN (*Partido de Acción Nacional* [National Action Party]) to presidency only in 2000. Ever since the last years of the PRI, the country started to moderate political crises with constitutional reforms, offering to citizens a promise of renewal of political relations. The last president of the PRI, Ernesto Zedillo, anticipating the crisis that eventually ended the party's presidentialist authority, promoted a constitutional reform that distributed political power to the SCJN, endorsing for the first time a system of checks and balances with a democratic spirit that hold the stability of the political class across the transition.[33] The SCJN, which before used to act only to back the authority of the executive, started to moderate the authority of the legislative. Some first signs of hope for accountability were invested in our SCJN.

Further reforms articulated tools for constitutional control.[34] Although there has never been open access for NGOs or citizen representatives to present cases in the SCJN (only for citizens as individuals in isolated cases through *amparo*, as I explain later on) citizens started to find ways to use the SCJN in major human rights cases. Even though other elements of the Mexican judicial system suffered little transformation, the SCJN was put at the centre of the political life of a country in transition.

With the crisis of presidentialism of the PRI came one of the most powerful upheavals in the country, the Zapatista uprising in 1994. The struggle for Indigenous rights activated an encompassing critique of the Mexican neoliberal state, confronting the historical exclusions that had kept the status quo of the political elites since the postcolonial order. The Zapatista struggle established discursive alliances that brought together many social movements (including the feminist and lesbian and gay movements) in an ambitious attempt to reimagine the nation. The PRI lost the election in 2000, and the new president of the PAN promised to resolve the 'Zapatista crisis' with a constitutional reform. The new Congress received the following year a draft for a constitution negotiated between the Zapatistas and a mediation committee designated by the Mexican government—that included an ambitious project for the recognition of autonomy for Indigenous peoples and the recognition of Mexico as a plurinational state.[35] But the project was sabotaged in the Congress; the struggles for Indigenous rights were reduced to cultural features of the Mexican nation. However, it was the first time that sexuality entered the Constitution, in the first article that covers the list of categories of groups who suffer discrimination.

Lesbians and gay men were recognized by the constitution. And the reform was followed by a heavy investment in gender mainstreaming. The new leftist government of the PRD in Mexico City started promoting the sexual rights agenda, capitalizing on it as a political marker of difference in relation to the conservative federal state. In 2000 the PRD promoted a progressive reform that extended the regime of exceptions for abortion. In 2006 Mexico City promoted a law on civil partnership (*Sociedad de Convivencia)* negotiated with some members of the LGBT movement. In 2007 the Assembly pushed a bill to decriminalize abortion altogether.[36] In 2010 we arrived at our same sex marriage law. All those legal reforms (except for the *Sociedad de Convivencia*) confronted challenges of constitutional control in the SCJN.[37]

The SCJN issued very weak decisions about the right of the legislator to legislate (as opposed to the rights of women over their bodies, or the rights of same sex couples to marry) that resulted in the support of the laws, but that did not help the expansion of similar legal strategies. The campaigns for the decriminalization of abortion suffered in fact a harsh backlash: after the loopholes that enabled the reform in Mexico City were highlighted in the judicial intervention, 15 different states changed their constitutions to block any further reform. Two judicial actions followed asking the SCJN to declare the unconstitutionality of those new reforms, but as it did in the first case, the SCJN declared the right of the legislator, without making any binding clarification about women's rights. The reforms were accompanied by heavy policing and persecution of women who had practiced abortions or were perceived by medical practitioners to have done so.[38]

The new political role of the SCJN was overwhelming. In a new constitutional reform in 2011, the tools for constitutional control were reduced and moderated. Citizens were left with only the *amparo* as the main (or only) access to judicial control.[39] Whereas this reduced the scope of action for social movements that were using the court, this reform was good news for the same sex marriage campaigners.

A young Mexican lawyer, Alex Alí Méndez Díaz, started promoting individual *amparos* (appeals) across the country, fighting one case at a time with the hope of a jurisprudential decision from the SCJN. The prohibition of same sex marriage finally became unconstitutional in Mexico in July 2015 when the SCJN finally produced jurisprudence, and judges across the country have to apply it.[40] Through *amparos*, however, there is no general declaration towards a legal reform; state by state, lawyers are presenting cases, and we have to wait for the political will of legislatives that the judiciary cannot force.

The process did not make Mexico a better country. All possibilities to invest hope in the law, in the Mexican case, have been informed

mostly by state-led promises of transformation of social relations, and sexuality has been one of the most visible devices for it. But the promises have consisted in more civilized relations between citizens and the state (mediated by the expert tutors, the political parties, and the SCJN itself), and never about all individuals and social groups sharing the access to the political institutional agenda in order to ease the uneven recognition the state grants to legal and illegal spaces. Not all people have access to the democratic state, and if only some can attribute meanings to the contemporary understanding of human rights, then human rights mean fewer things. We need, therefore more, and better, optimism.

Solo Le Pido A Dios…

The democratic development of the Mexican culture of rights seems to be teaching us to desire less. The crisis that came with the war on drugs still has no discursive relation to the expansion of our human rights culture (not to mention the uprising against the disappearance of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa, presumably by political authorities, and the narratives of violence and impunity that arise within, including the femicides against women in Ciudad Juárez and the rest of the country). We do not have an object of critical optimism in our Constitution, or more precisely, we do not have a court which is accountable to our desire. Judicialization in Mexico does not come after a collective construction of longing invested in institutional politics.

The Mexican path of human rights that ended up with the same sex marriage reform was shaped by constitutional reforms that redistributed authority with a few institutional actors to maintain the stability of the democratic order. The sexual rights agenda has won a privileged space of enunciation, not because of what it has achieved (accountability for reproductive rights is still questionable, state homophobia will not be deactivated any time soon), but because it can illuminate hope, it can help us to recognize what a limit situation is, and who is left behind. The sexual rights movement has resources to re-imagine the not yet in ways that other social movements do not have. It is time to think about what a better Mexico will look like, and how its governmental institutions should be dealing with human rights cases.

The SCJN did not make historical decisions. The same sex marriage reform is a product of institutional adjustments that the sexual rights movements have managed to profit from. But history is still to come. The world will be better, and that is the main reason for optimism.

Notes

1   Lol Kin Castañeda, 'Respeto,' in *El México Indignado*, ed. Ricardo Raphael and Antonio Cervantes, (México DF: Destino, 2011), 86.
2   'I only ask of God he won't let me be indifferent to the wars.'
3   Mexico has a civil law system, all legislation has to be drafted by the legislative, the judiciary has the capacity to intervene only with claims of unconstitutionality. It is a rare exception to have the judiciary leading principles for legal reform, and for some, it is even anti-democratic.
4   Ernest Bloch, *The Principle of Hope. Volume One*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996).
5   I use the term peripheral as the discursive notion created to refer to developing contexts (also referred as Third World or semi-peripheral countries), demarcating clear distinctions of geopolitical identity in a complex combination of critique, appropriation, distance, emulation or codification of the 'knowledge produced in the West,' see Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,' *Feminist Review* 30 (1988), 333–58.
6   See Mauricio García Villegas, 'Constitucionalismo Aspiracional: Derecho, Democracia y Cambio Social en América Latina,' *Análisis Político* 75 (2001), 89–110. Julieta Lemaitre Ripoll, 'Legal Fetishism at Home and Abroad.' *Unbound Journal of the Legal Left*, 3/6 (2007), accessed 26 September 2016, http://legalleft.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/3UNB006-Lemaitre.pdf.
7   By 'us' I mean exclusively the community of scholars who are thinking and writing together about sex, sexuality, gender, transgressive and non-normative sexualities, desires, and practices, different from the activists whose language is a negotiation with political opportunities. I started the chapter talking about scholars and activists, but from now on I will only use the generic to talk about scholars in order to separate an epistemic project (how do we imagine a better future) from the political opportunities and strategic choices of activists on the ground.
8   The reference to the relation between illegality and exclusion is borrowed from Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'The heterogeneous state and legal pluralism in Mozambique,' *Law and Society Review* 40/1 (2006), 39–76.
9   Phrase borrowed from Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 45–46.
10 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Reinventar la democracia, reinventar el estado* (Buenos Aires, Ciudad de México, Madrid: Sequitur, 1999), 10–11.
11 See Upendra Baxi, *The Future of Human Rights* (Oxford and New York:

OUP, 2006); Wendy Brown, 'The most we can hope for...: Human Rights and the Politics of Fatalism,' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103/2–3 (2004).

12 Michel Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life,' in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984, V I*, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: The New Press, 1994), 136, 138.

13 Foucault, 'Friendship,' 138.

14 See Henrietta L. Moore, *Still Life: Hopes Desires and Satisfactions* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

15 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 4.

16 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 23.

17 Lorena Fries, 'Los derechos humanos de las mujeres: aportes y desafíos,' in *Las fisuras del patriarcado. Reflexiones sobre feminismo y derecho*, ed. Gioconda Herrera (Ecuador: FLACSO-CONAMU, 2000), 62–3; Magdalena León, 'El empoderamiento de las mujeres: Encuentro del primer y tercer mundos en los estudios de género.' *La Ventana* 13 (2001), 94–106.

18 Ana Elena Obando, '¿A qué tenemos derecho las mujeres?' (paper presented to the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica. 1997).

19 See Moore, *Still Life*, 33. George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture. Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 165.

20 See Heather Love, *Feeling Backward; Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007). The assumption is not exclusive of sexual cultures, it is a liberal tendency of the global human rights dialogues that engage with the notion of suffering, appropriating it as a universal experience; see Baxi, *The Future*.; Walter D. Mignolo, 'Who Speaks for the 'Human' in Human Rights?' *Hispanic Issues On Line 5.1. Human Rights in Latin American and Iberian Cultures*, (2009), accessed 1 January 2013, http://spanport.cla.umn.edu/publications/HispanicIssues/pdfs/MIGNOLO_HRLAIC.pdf; Jayan Nayar, 'The Politics of Hope and the Other-in-the-World: Thinking Exteriority,' *Law and Critique* 24 (2013), 63–85.

21 See Leslie Moran, 'The Emotional Dimensions of Lesbian and Gay Demands for Hate Crime Reform,' *McGill Law Journal* 49 (2004), 925–49.

22 Lee Edelman, *No Future. Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

23 See Jon Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality* (London: Sage, 2004)

24 Love, *Feeling Backward*, 6.

25 Williams, quoted in Dennis Altman, 'Global Gaze / Global Gays,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*; 3/4 (1997), 427.

26 The term marks the contrast between the 'gay subject' and an unliberated, 'prepolitical' subjects that ought to be liberated, politicized, and modernized with the gay subjectivity; see Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 88; Binnie, *The Globalization*, 60.

27 See Paulo Freire, Pedagogía de la esperanza. Un reencuentro con la

pedagogía del oprimido (Mexico: Siglo XXI Ed, 1992)

28 Freire, *Pedagogía*, 60–61.

29 Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5.

30 See Guillermo O'Donnell, afterword to *The Judicialization of Politics in Latin America*, ed. Rachel Sieder, Line Schjolden, and Alan Angell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 293; Juan E. Méndez, Guillermo O'Donnell and Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, eds., *The (Un)Rule of Law and the Underprivileged in Latin America* (Notre Dame, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 162.

31 See Arturo Alvarado and Diane Davis, 'Ciudad de México, El desafío de la transición.' in *La izquierda en la ciudad: participación en los gobiernos locales de América Latina*, ed. Daniel Chavez and Benjamin Goldfranck (Barcelona: Icaria, 2004); Reynanldo Yunuen Ortega Ortiz, 'El Partido de la Revolución Democrática y los Movimientos Sociales' in *Los grandes problemas de México. IV. Movimientos sociales*, ed. Ilán Bizberg and Francisco Zapata (Mexico: COLMEX, 2010), 3.

32 See García Villegas, 'Constitucionalismo Aspiracional.'

33 Zedillos's promotion of the Court has been interpreted as an 'insurance policy' for the party. Well aware of the crisis, the president orchestrated a system of checks and balances—not as we understand them in the rule of law—of personalized politics. See Jodi Finkel, 'Judicial Reform as Insurance Policy: Mexico in the 1990s,' *Latin American Politics and Society* 47/1 (2005).

34 Or rescued. There were tools in the text that were never used before, due to the political invisibility of the Court, or the judiciary in general.

35 The reform of 2001 was planned in the *Acuerdos de San Andrés*, an agreement between the Zapatistas and the COCOPA (*Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación*, Commission for Peace and Reconciliation). The Acuerdos gained unprecedented publicity and visibility among all citizens.

36 Surprisingly, it was a proposal from the PRI, not a feminist lobby project. There were still interests to profit from the sexual agenda confronting the PAN in presidency involved.

37 Only certain actors were enabled to stand in court (the General Attorney, the National Commission of Human Rights) and those happened to be the ones against the sexual rights agenda, social movements still do not have standing.

38 David Martínez Huerta, 'La criminalización del aborto va en aumento: ONG; 226 mujeres son denunciadas o procesadas al año,' *SinEmbargo. Mx,* 14 July 2013, accessed 15 February 2015, http://www.sinembargo.mx/14-07-2013/685459.

39 The A*mparo*, or *amparo* writ, is the faculty through which citizens with legitimate interest can request constitutional control over a law or legal reform after this has been enacted, or an act of application has been produced, and can declare the inapplicability of a law for the concrete case that

raises the action. See Ana Laura Magaloni and Layda Negrete, 'Desafueros del poder: la política judicial de decidir sin resolver,' *Trayectorias. Revista de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León*, 2 (2000), 54–68.

40 See Geraldina Gonzalez de la Vega, 'Matrimonio igualitario: El fin del litigio en la SCJN,' *Gera's Place*, 5 June 2015, accessed 16 July 2016, http://gerasplace-reloaded.blogspot.co.uk/2015/06/matrimonio-igualitario-el-fin-del.html.

(Decolonizing) The Ear of the Other: Subjectivity, Ethics and Politics in Question

Silvia Posocco

If I find that, despite my best efforts, a certain opacity persists and I cannot make myself fully accountable to you, is this ethical failure?

— Judith Butler[1]

Ideas run, like rivers, from the south to the north and are transformed into tributaries in major waves of thought. But just as in the global market for material goods, ideas leave the country converted into raw material, which become regurgitated and jumbled in the final product. Thus, a canon is formed for a new field of social scientific discourse, postcolonial thinking. This canon makes visible certain themes and sources but leaves others in the shadows. … Thus we have cooptation and mimesis, the selective incorporation of ideas and selective approval of those that better nourish a fashionable, depoliticized, and comfortable multiculturalism that allows one to accumulate exotic masks in one's living room and to engage in absurd discussions about the future of public sector reforms.

— Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui[2]

The real question on the table is not whether we should theorize. Rather, we need to ask how we can critically and intelligently theorize current conditions in diverse spaces inside and outside the academy, and how we can theorize our responses to these conditions.

— Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith[3]

Opacity, Impossibility, Imperatives

In this chapter, I discuss questions that pertain to a queer decolonial intersectional project, as matters of theory and situated political praxis. I propose to juxtapose the reading of two texts, one by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and the other by Jacques Derrida. I take these texts, in the resonance and dissonance they produce, to be points of departure for a reflection on key issues to do with subjectivity, ethics and politics. My aim is to think through critical modes of accounting for oneself and offer a discussion of 'wounded whiteness' as an example of the challenges inherent in such a project. Questions of subjectivity, ethics

and politics—in their interrelation and mutual constitution—appear to be opaque, fraught, and undecidable. Yet, they should be tenaciously pursued as part of larger efforts to imagine—and performatively bring forth—the conditions of possibility for queer decolonial intersectional horizons and a decolonizing reconfiguring of desire, including the desire for decolonizing queer politics.

Coloniality, decolonial intellectuals argue, is not a matter of the past, but rather the very condition of modernity that structures temporality, and thus also the present and the future.[4] It is a socio-epistemic formation that marks—determines, even—modes of being in the world *as well as* the knowledge practices through which experience can be understood, articulated and accounted for. Coloniality conjures up the persistence of colonial wounds alongside reflections on 'geo/body/political shifts' and the re/decomposition thus engendered.[5] In these terms, coloniality has to do with wounded body politics in the present;[6] and the figurations of past, present, and future that emerge from them. It concerns knowledge and experience; geopolitics and the body; world, politics, and desire. In coloniality, wide-ranging situated decolonizing projects raise questions about the challenges inherent in accounting for oneself, whilst nevertheless holding on to the task—in all its partiality and incompleteness—as fundamental. Accounting for oneself is as much an impossibility as it is an imperative, in the face of subjects' idiosyncratic relations to categories of identity, notably, but not exclusively, those pertaining to the domains of gender, 'race,' ethnicity, and sexuality, and their complex, contextually and temporally shifting imbrication. Categories may be at once inadequate markers and colonizing devices that capture, discipline, and diminish the complexity, flow, and multiplicity inherent in experience, relationality, and desire. They may entail compulsory (dis-)identificatory dynamics and (dis-)identificatory labor,[7] as they incite violent re-enactments of the histories they simultaneously harbor, dramatize, and conceal. In coloniality, how can one give an account of oneself? What will it take to do this, and do this well? Such questions of ethics accompany projects that aim to decolonize objects, subjects, and relations. These questions retain their central place even in the light of the constitutive failure to ever accomplishing the formulation of adequate responses. In decolonial analytical modalities, questions of ethics turn, in part, into questions about the connections between subjectivity and the political ontologies of knowledge creation and political act enabled through them.[8] Ethics thus connect to related problematics of context and temporality, as well as positionality, history, and epistemology. Never synonymous, but often mutually resonant, these terms delineate the scale of the theoretical, analytical, and political task set out by those seeking to

advance decolonizing projects.

To untangle and work towards generating a response to some of these challenges, I turn to Silvia Rivera Cusicansqui's interventions and the important reconfiguring of the terrain of analysis, theory and politics offered in her work. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has advocated a recovery of the term '*colonialismo interno*' ('internal colonialism'),[9] a notion that she draws from Pablo González Casanovas.[10] Rivera Cusicanqui argues that *colonialismo interno* refers to the condition of racist domination and exclusion historically endured by Indigenous people in Bolivia,[11] but also to the way non-Indigenous intellectuals position themselves vis-à-vis Indigenous intellectuals, fashioning themselves as worldly, cosmopolitan, urban, and superior. Rivera Cusicanqui argues that *colonialismo interno* is not exclusively exercised in the peripheries, but rather, it has 'an arborescent form' that extends transnationally in and through sites of power across the Global North and the Global South. As it encompasses centers of learning, internal colonialism produces a conundrum for those who are excluded from these sites of knowledge production, in that invitations to participate in these fora is always unsettled by the prospect that, by being folded in the echelons of power, one might be unwittingly be offering '*armas al enemigo*,' that is, 'providing the enemy with ammunition.'[12] For Rivera Cusicanqui, 'the arboreal structure of internal-external colonialism has centers and subcenters, nodes and subnodes, which connect certain universities, disciplinary trends, and academic fashions of the North with their counterparts in the South.'[13] Rivera Cusicanqui notes that her arguments concerning, inter alia, internal colonialism and the epistemology of oral history, have been appropriated. Rivera Cusicanqui writes that these appropriations substantively altered her ideas and 'regurgitated them entangled in a discourse of alterity that was profoundly depoliticized.'[14]

Neologisms such as 'decolonial,' Rivera Cusicanqui argues, presume a dialogic stance vis-à-vis objects of study—notably Indigenous peoples and of those of African descent—but in fact, leave such objects of study caught up in paralogical reasoning, '*dejando paralogizados a sus objetos de estudio*,' as she states.[15] Paralogy, here intended as a knowledge practice, masks a range of (re)colonizing gestures, leaving Rivera Cusicanqui to have to spell out that the development of her analysis was forged by an immersion in the writings of Halbwachs, Fanon, and Ferraroti and not the works by prominent decolonial intellectuals, which, she suggests, emerged after hers in any case. Rivera Cusicanqui argues that these decolonial critics have ignored the Katarista foundations of analyses of internal colonialism and the genealogy of theorizing developed since the 1980s by Katarista thinkers.[16] Sarcastically, at least in my reading of her text, she concludes: 'ideas run, like rivers, from the

south to the north and are transformed into tributaries in major waves of thought.'[17] This analysis draws attention to the uneven, unequal, and non-reciprocal dimensions inherent in the traffic in ideas and meta-theory in coloniality. In this view, the production of alterity within colonial epistemologies and internal colonialism becomes enmeshed in notions of hybridity and multiplicity that never quite leave exoticism behind. Rather, critique is excised from its conditions of emergence and from the political context that shapes and produces it, blunting it considerably. In turn, Rivera Cusicanqui shows how her work has been folded into a 'current of thought' seemingly greater than her own contribution. This at once gives credit to others for the establishment of a set of ideas, and locks Rivera Cusicanqui into the position of an intellectual irrevocably tied to a periphery which is at once objectified, exploited and denied worldliness.

The inception and premises of decolonial critique are therefore embattled. Rivera Cusicanqui is very clear: 'cooptation and mimesis' result not only in the undermining of those whose analyses and theorizations metropolitan bourgeois intellectuals coopt, but more fundamentally, they substantively depoliticize and 'neutralize decolonial practices.'[18] If 'decolonial theory' neutralizes a range of situated decolonial practices, how, then, in the light of such an indictment, can a (queer) decolonial analysis—one that is attuned to, inter alia, the critical unpacking of the workings of settler colonialism—proceed? More generally, how can Rivera Cusicanqui's diagnosis of the intersecting problematics of appropriation, cooptation, mimesis, and depoliticization connect and inform decolonial queer intersectional ethics of engagement that take seriously the call for the necessity—and impossibility—of accounting for oneself in coloniality?

Further, and in view of such contentions, it is possible to mount a set of additional critical questions concerning the historical and political genealogies and epistemological operations that nestle under the term 'queer.' A number of scholars have argued that settler common sense normalizes settler experiences, subjectivities, and belonging in and through the forms of sociality, intimacy, and desire associated with it.[19] Does queer have a white history?[20] Has queer been structured by a sort of variegated *colonialismo interno*, and if so, how? Can queer be understood as part of designations for conceptual categories, subjects, and relations that emerge in the condition of coloniality? If so, how can such complex connections and processes of sedimentation be accounted for? What would it take to re-member other histories and trace other genealogies?[21] How can desire be figured in these processes and dynamics?

Ch'ixi Subjectivities and Otobiographies:
Decolonizing the Ear of the Other

How, then, can one give an account of oneself in coloniality? Rivera Cusicanqui tackles the question as follows. She states:

> Personally, I don't consider myself *q'ara* (culturally stripped and usurped by others), because I recognize my fully double origin, Aymara and European, and because I live from my own efforts. Because of this, I consider myself *ch'ixi* and consider it the most appropriate translation of the motley mix that we, who are called *mestizas* and *mestizos*, are. The word *ch'ixi* has many connotations: it is a color that is the product of juxtaposition, in small points or spots, of opposed or contrasting colors: black and white, red and green, and so on. It is this heather gray that comes from the imperceptible mixing of black and white, which are confused by perception, without ever being completely mixed. The notion of *ch'ixi*, like many others (*allqa*, *ayni*), reflects the Aymara idea of something that is and is not at the same time. It is the logic of the included third. A *ch'ixi* color gray is white but is not white at the same time; it is both white and its opposite, black.[22]

In order to consider the challenges inherent in the articulation of a queer intersectional decolonial analysis and praxis, I propose to place Rivera Cusicanqui's theorization of *ch'ixi* subjectivity in conversation with the discussion of 'otobiography' offered by Jacques Derrida in a dialogic text developed with a number of interlocutors gathered together to consider issues to do with subjectivity and writing in 1979.[23] On that occasion, Derrida and his interlocutors were interested in understanding what they identified to be a tension between the project of crafting a history of a category or a genre of writing such as 'autobiography,' on the one hand, and the critical act of interpretation of a text, a narrative, a life. Juxtaposing Rivera Cusicanqui's figuration of *ch'ixi* subjectivity with Derrida's discussion of idea of 'otobiography' as I propose to do here, is not intended to be a deconstructive, translational, or paralogical reading of Aymara categories or knowledge practices, nor a mimetic re-appropriation. Rather, I aim to tentatively hold up such different and incommensurate figurations and practices of accounting for oneself, specifically for the purposes of thinking through and working towards the conditions of possibility for queer intersectional decolonial analytics, ethics, and politics.

In the essay 'Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name,'[24] Derrida proposes a reading of two texts by Friedrich Nietzsche to examine the problem of how to give an account of a life. How to give an account of the life of a philosopher, as Nietzsche does in *Ecce Homo*?, asks Derrida.[25] More elliptically,

Derrida states that in this text, '"academic freedom", the ear, and autobiography are my objects.'[26] Through a reading of Nietzsche, Derrida points to a shift from auto(biography) to oto(biography), a transformation that Derrida argues, takes place through 'the ear.' This expression has three important implications. First, Derrida explains, the transformation

> requires that we pass by way of the ear—the ear involved in any autobiographical discourse that is still at the stage of hearing oneself speak. (That is: I am telling myself my story, as Nietzsche said, here is the story that I am telling myself; and that means I hear myself speak). I speak myself to myself in a certain manner, and my ear is thus immediately plugged into my discourse and my writing.[27]

Passing through the ear here therefore refers to the circuit that is established when speaking oneself to oneself, so to say, when hearing oneself speak one's account. This leads to a second important implication, 'the difference in the ear.'[28] Derrida notes how Nietzsche stresses that ears are not all the same, there are small and large ears, keener ears and less attentive ones: '[t]he ear is not only an auditory organ; it is also a visible organ of the body.'[29] The third point regarding 'the difference in the ear' relates to how one's account of oneself, once signed, will be activated and literally restaged once it reaches attentive ears:

> The most important thing about the ear's difference … is that the signature becomes effective—performed and performing—not at the moment it apparently takes place, but only later, when ears will have managed to receive the message. In some way the signature will take place on the addressee's side.'[30]

For Derrida, this means that one's account (of oneself) is not sealed by the signature one gives to it, but rather, takes place afterwards—posthumously, in Nietzsche's own case. It is not the author of the account that signs the account as such: 'it is the ear of the other that signs. The ear of the other says me to me and constitutes the *autos* of my autobiography.'[31] Derrida stresses the point thus:

> Here one may derive the political import of this structure and of this signature in which the addressee signs with his/her ear, an organ for perceiving difference … A text is signed only much later by the other … and this testamentary structure doesn't befall a text as if by accident, but constructs it.[32]

Three facets of this dynamic should be highlighted here. First, it should be stressed how, for Derrida, the signature and its structure

are realized through the addressee through whose ears the account is signed. Second, this dynamic has an explicit political dimension and it is through the signature placed by the other that difference is produced. Third, and most importantly, the other who signs the account not only ratifies it, but in a substantive sense also produces it and constructs it. Therein lays the issue, when one places this testamentary structure *within* the temporality of coloniality, that is, when the signature ensues in coloniality.

The ear of the other also entails an account of gendering and desire which Derrida directly addresses, as he replies to a question explicitly asking him to consider whether the 'I' that speaks oneself to oneself has a gender. Derrida argues:

> The sex of the addresser awaits its determination by or from the other. It is the other who will perhaps decide who I am –man or woman. Nor is this decided once and for all. … This is what I risk, of course, but I will take the risk … After pursuing its consequences, one finds that this duality is not just any duality among others. It compels an irreducible and essential plurality.[33]

I find the points of resonance and dissonance between Rivera Cusicanqui's text and Derrida's arguments very productive. Whilst Rivera Cusicanqui foregrounds how the circulation of texts and ideas can be predicated on forms of (neo)colonial and (neo-)imperialist appropriation that bolster, rather than challenge, power asymmetries and related forms of exclusion globally, transnationally, and in ways that are geopolitically resonant, Derrida argues for an approach to texts and ideas that places emphasis on the necessary openness of reading and the fundamental instability of notions of authorship as well as meaning. The juxtaposition is not, however, exhausted in such substantive points of contrast. Both theorists articulate compelling theoretical accounts of subjectivity and ethics. Rivera Cusicanqui leans on Aymara formulations and the category *ch'ixi*, a term that encompasses oppositions, plurality and contrasts that are not synthetized, but rather coexist as separate within the same subject or object. For Derrida, on the other hand, 'autobiography' turns into 'otobiography.' Otobiographically, subjectivity is constituted through the ear of the other: the other's ear is required for an autobiographical account to be possible. These different and yet resonant perspectives on the conditions of possibility of the act of giving an account of oneself stress relationality. They challenge binarisms and essentialisms. When read jointly, not only do they offer compelling theorizations of subjectivity, but they also raise the question as to what kind of listening did it take for Rivera Cusicanqui's contributions to be heard in a way that returned her ideas all knotted up.

What ears were listening? Were they keen ears, small ears in Nietzsche's terms? Or were the ears that heard Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's reflections far from keen and attentive, so much so that they led to her ideas being depoliticized within an exoticizing and reductive discourse of alterity and conditional inclusion? Such is indeed a possibility, if Derrida's sense of the openness of autobiography and of reading is to be taken seriously. How did the other sign Rivera Cusicanqui's text, and how did they construct the text? How are we signing their texts in coloniality? Conversely, are the signature and the testamentary structure Derrida draws attention to also ways to figure a condition that *ch'ixi* modes of subjectivity and knowledge alert us to, namely, that mottled state and speckled mode of being tied to *ch'ixi* territory that seems to emerge and become audible in Rivera Cusicanqui's riposte? The mottledness and speckledness of *ch'ixi* subjectivity are particularly suggestive, in view of the specification that one's signature is not one's to offer, but can only be signed by the other. How did the other sign Rivera Cusicanqui's text? How is Derrida's text being signed? How is this text being signed? How is the testamentary structure of the signature marked by coloniality? How to establish the conditions of possibility for a decolonial otobiography? What will this sound like? Both Rivera Cusicanqui and Derrida articulate a commitment to conjuring up models of alterity. They underscore patterns and circuits of relational subjectivation. They also, in different ways, speak to the ethical imperatives and the challenges inherent in critical acts of accounting for oneself. I see the contrast that Rivera Cusicanqui points to as being one between a *ch'ixi* heteronomy—a formulation of *ch'ixi* alterity—and the depoliticized and decontextualized versions disseminated through circuits that disavow a relation of acoustic or other form of accountability vis-à-vis the context of *ch'ixi* emergence. Coloniality opens up one's account to the other's signature, so that the ear of the other may say me to me, in Derrida's terms. In the process, however, it entangles the account in the operations of internal colonialism, jeopardizing the articulation of *ch'ixi* heteronomy. Why can one not testify to the unbelievable?[34] How can one speak *ch'ixi* incommensurability in coloniality?

Wounded Whiteness

Queer intersectional decolonial activist assemblages performatively bring forth and precariously materialize conditions of possibility for the 'not yet here,' as they actively struggle—or more mundanely, endure[35]—against all odds. However, questions about the mutual imbrication of gender, 'race,' ethnicity, and sexuality are never resolved or settled.

Rather, they persist at the core of these 'social projects,'[36] unsettling any sense of certainty or accomplishment, whether in relation to intellectual, critical, and political interventions, or forms of being in the world and being in community they conjure up. These questions accrue renewed force, substance, and meaning with every re-inscription and re-enactment. They produce unexpected complexities with every re-contexualization, reiteration, and restaging. Here, I am interested in foregrounding a dazzlingly tenacious dynamic whose unfolding I have sensed through my participation in queer intersectional decolonial projects, namely the articulation of what I call 'wounded whiteness.'

I take wounded whiteness to refer to a set of racialized and racializing affective states. Wounded whiteness is not 'a position' as such, though at times it can appear to solidify and crystalize into a 'subject position' with associated 'politics of location.'[37] Wounded whiteness is pervasive and can be discerned in a range of contexts.[38] It is constitutive of (neo-)imperialist white savior projects, including those specifically gay. The imbrication of wounded whiteness and 'gay imperialism'[39] can be exemplified by white gay activists claiming to be at the receiving end of violence in the course of their neo-imperialist white savior activities; whether these be 'saving' gay people in African or Muslim contexts construed as 'inherently homophobic,' or 'rescuing' impoverished brown children in Latin America through transnational adoption. In some instances injured whiteness is said to ensue from homophobic abuse incurred in the course of such rescue activities, while in other cases, the injured racialized position takes a more baroque, hyperbolic expression and features the heroic (gay white) subject willingly submitting to attack in the course of—carefully staged and as painstakingly documented—political protest. Just like the claims to being a victim of queer of color critique, these diverse racializing modalities serve to express, congeal, and materialize whiteness.

The intensities of such materializations vary: they may be invoked through appeals to theatrical, even camp, figurations of martyrdom or more restrained and generic affront. In most instances, wounded whiteness is connected to affective states, that is, to the complex mix, distribution, and governance of dispositions variously described as feelings, moods, sentiments, sensibilities, and anxieties. Mood shifts, in this view, testify to the management and governance of feelings and related redrawing of distinctions between the private and the public.[40] As Stoler argues, postcolonial scholarship has powerfully examined the production of affective states in, for instance, analyses of the making of 'bourgeois subjects' in the age of empire. Postcolonial critics have unpacked discourses of humanitarianism, social reform and the rhetorical staging of 'civilizing' missions to show how 'in empires at

home and abroad, "compassion," "pity," and "empathy"—imposed and unsolicited—motivated reformist zealots who swarmed in the underworlds of Amsterdam, London, Paris, and their colonial "Other Worlds" overseas.'[41] Such crusades, far from uncontested, have been challenged in fundamental ways, first by exposing the motivations underlying moralizing missions: 'Impatient with benevolent, sentimental imperialisms and their self-serving justifications, we have looked more at the "rational" categories behind panics and the strategic disciplinary social reforms that followed.'[42] These critiques build upon the sustained efforts of early students of colonialism, e.g. Fanon, Bhabha, Cesaire, and Memmi who, as Stoler incisively points out, were profoundly invested in the identification of 'the psychic injuries of empire' … the "weeping wounds" imposed on the colonized.'[43]

Here I am interested in stressing the conjunction invoked through the expression 'affective states.' Following Stoler, I foreground how questions about the appropriateness of types of affect and affective intensity are always already questions that have to do with the state and the law. They mobilize and are mobilized through the apparatuses of state and law. As Stoler demonstrates, the expression 'affective states' plays not just with the idea of sentiments as matters of the heart, but also explicitly points to how

> the state's assessment of the intensity of 'feelings,' 'attachments,' and senses of belonging—that prompted loyalties to race over family, or family over state—were not metaphors for something else but instrumental as 'dense transfer points of power' in themselves (a term Michel Foucault uses to describe, not 'structures of feeling,' but the power inherent in discourses of sexuality).[44]

With regard to the specific affective states through which wounded whiteness is enacted, one seems to be never that far from the possibility of violence of the state and the law, the threat of sanction, the promise of a lawsuit. Surprisingly, perhaps, the act of invoking the law takes multiple forms: such acts can be calls to ask for the law's protection, to seek redress for whiteness's wounds. Or they can take the form of a dare addressed to those who silence (queer of color) critique through the threat of legal action.[45] Both modalities, however, fail to address the fact that risk, as punishment, are unevenly distributed and bodies and subjects racialized as white always seem to get off lightly. They fail to take into account that, in some spaces and places, a desire for decolonizing queer politics may be always already under threat of being deemed libelous. Some 'social projects'[46] simply do not hold the material and affective resources to be able to gamble their existence with a dare. One reckless dare and all would go under. This is why critique

sometimes has to proceed through ellipses and elisions, or tap into the critical thrust of reverberation and acoustic loop.

Wounded whiteness refers to dynamics of (dis-)identification and desire through which subjectivities, communities, and belonging are brought into being, and precarity, liability, and unbelonging are also produced. Wounded whiteness translates into a range of identifications which work to re-center whiteness, making whiteness suddenly appear wounded and simultaneously displacing the object and subject of racist aggression. Wounded whiteness occupies space and usurps territory through settler colonial practices of conquest and correspondent epistemologies of appropriation whose echoes could be discerned in Rivera Cusicanqui's denunciation of how her ideas were regurgitated and knotted up. It is the other that signs, in this case, it seems, in an acquisitive and not just constructivist or relational modality. In the name of solidarity, wounded whiteness effects a redirection of the injury caused by racist assault. It appropriates the racist assault, or the (just as concrete) fantasy of an assault. Wounded whiteness can even orchestrate the scene for a restaging of the assault, but this time it places whiteness at the center to say, 'Look, my (white) anti-racist critique is being silenced. I, too, like queer of color critics, am being wounded.' The wounds caused by racism are, clearly, not the exclusive property of some racialized bodies. They can be shared, they can be mobile; they may slide across subjects, spaces, and temporalities, as individuals and communities deal with assaults. They can be spacing devices that function to create proximity and distance. But in the condition of coloniality, and in coloniality's manifold racial formations, wounded whiteness marks a failure to listen to the 'ear of the other [saying] me to me.' It marks an appropriation of the wounds of others, that is, in part, also an expropriation.

In view of this, a decolonial critical mode of analysis calls for a focus on understanding the relations between wounded whiteness and the dynamics of internal colonialism so clearly foregrounded by Rivera Cusicanqui. It also refocuses attention on the politics of the testamentary structure underpinning declarations of wounded whiteness in the present, and how these may be implicated in the production of alterity. This task is pressing in the contemporary conjuncture and in the current necropolitical moment,[47] when wounded whiteness is invoked figuratively, but also in relation to specific 'wounded body politics,'[48] for example, 7/7 in London, the Charlie Hebdo events in Paris, or the recent attack in Nice in July 2016. These wounded body politics of whiteness are underpinned by differential regimes of grievability,[49] investments in judicial and extra-judicial forms of punishment, and the political anesthetizing of sensory capacities that further illustrate the challenges

inherent in relating to the wounds of others.[50] 'Decolonization is not a metaphor,'[51] though it also operates in and through figuration. Decolonization requires (re)imagining relations between subjectivity, ethics, and politics; in theory and with reference to the actualities of political praxis and modes of being in the world. Or, as Simpson and Smith have argued,[52] it requires a concerted effort in order to articulate theoretical interventions that tackle 'the current conditions in diverse spaces inside and outside the academy' in order to respond critically to these situated shifting circumstances. From this perspective, a queer decolonial intersectional ethics depends upon holding on to alterity and incommensurability, relationally. Decolonizing queer requires an attunement to otobiography, otosociality, otorelationality, otodesire, in our lifetime.

Notes

1 Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 22.
2 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization,' *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 111/1 (2012), 95–109, 104.
3 Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, 'Introduction: Theorizing Native Studies,' in *Theorizing Native Studies*, ed. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 7.
4 See, for example, Walter Mignolo, *Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and*

Border Thinking (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

5   Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 95.

6   Diane Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

7   José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1999).

8   For a loosely related discussion, see Silvia Posocco, 'Zoning: Environmental Cosmopolitics in and around the Maya Biosphere, Guatemala,' *Nature and Culture* 3/2 (2008), 204-224.

9   Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa.'

10 See Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa,' 101. The concept of 'internal colonialism' was developed by Mexican sociologists Pablo González-Casanova and Rodolfo Stavenhagen. They used the term to describe the relations between the state and Indigenous people since Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821. For a fuller account, see Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, eds., *The Pre-occupations of Postcolonial Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).

11 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization,' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111/1 (2012), 95–109.

12 Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa,' 101.

13 Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa,' 101.

14 Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa,' 102.

15 Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2010), 65. For this citation, I have returned to the Spanish version of this text. Here I offer my own translation.

16 The Katarista movement, or Katarismo, is a contemporary social movement in Bolivia named after the 18th century Aymara hero Tupaq Katari. This social movement (re-)emerged with (re)newed force in the 1960s and 1980s as an Aymara peasant movement. Canessa notes that 'the word katarismo is used … to describe Aymara-oriented nationalist groups because so many of them look for inspiration to the figure of Tupaq Katari, and regularly refer to themselves as kataristas. Tupaq Katari was the name taken by Julian Apaza, the Aymara-speaking leader of the indian rebellion in 1780–83 caused by an increase in indian tribute, mita, and repartimiento by the Spanish Crown,' Andrew Canessa, 'Contesting Hybridity: Evangelistas and Kataristas in Highland Bolivia,' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 32/1 (2000), 122–3. For a fuller account, see Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos: Luchas del Campesinado Aymara y Qhechwa de Bolivia 1900-1980* (La Paz: HISBOL-CUSTCB, 1984); Canessa 'Contesting Hybridity,' 122–31; Susan Eckestein, ed., *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2001).

17 Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa,' 104.

18 Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa,' 104.

19 See, for example, Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, eds., *Queer Indigenous Studies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011); Scott Lauria Morgensen 'Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities,' *GLQ* 16/1–2 (2011), 105–31; Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces between Us* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense*: *Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

20 See also, Maxime Cervulle, 'French Homonormativity and the Commodification of the Arab Body,' *Radical History Review* 100 (2008), 171–79.

21 See Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez, 'Introduction: Re-membering Gay Latino Studies,' in *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, eds. Michael Hames-García and Ernesto Javier Martínez (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 1–19.

22 Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa,' 105.

23 Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, trans. Avital Ronell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

24 The essay 'Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name' is the first section in Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 3–38.

25 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What One Is,* trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1979).

26 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 4.

27 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 49–50.

28 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 50.

29 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 50.

30 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 50.

31 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 51.

32 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 51.

33 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 52–3.

34 See Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

35 Elizabeth Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

36 Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*.

37 Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani, 'Crosscurrents, crosstalk: Race, 'Postcoloniality' and the politics of location,' *Cultural Studies* 7/2 (2003), 292–310; Adrienne Rich, 'Notes Towards a Politics of Location,' in *Women, Feminist Identity and Society in the 1980s*, eds. Myrian Díaz-Diocaretz and Iris M. Zavala (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984).

38 See, for example, the analysis of racialized and racializing dynamics in the management of 'emotional labour' and related racialized subject positions in social care contexts; Yasmin Gunaratnam and Gail Lewis, 'Racialising emotional labour and emotionalising racialised labour: Anger, fear and shame in social welfare,' *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 15/2 (2001), 131–148. Crang and Tolia-Kelly similarly reflect on the modalities of racialization and 'the organisation of sensibilities' that emerge in heritage encounters, see Mike Crang and Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, 'Nation, Race and Affect: Senses and Sensibilities at National Heritage Sites,' *Environment and planning A*, 42/10 (2010), 2315–31.

39 Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir and Esra Erdem, 'Gay Imperialism: `Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the 'War on Terror,' in *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality*, eds. Adi Kuntsman and Esperanza Miyake (Nottingham: Raw Nerve, 2008). See also, the work of Scott Long published in the blog *A Paper Bird*, accessed 29 July 2015, http://paper-bird.net/tag/scott-long/, as well as Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

40 Ann Laura Stoler 'Affective States,' in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, eds. David Nugent and Joan Vincent (London: Wiley, 2008), 4–20, 5.

41 Stoler, 'Affective States,' 7.

42 Stoler, 'Affective States,' 7.

43 Stoler, 'Affective States,' 6.

44 Stoler, 'Affective States,' 7.

45 See Stacey Douglas, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Sarah Lamble, 'Liabilities of Queer Anti-Racist Critique,' *Feminist Legal Studies* 19/2 (2011), 107–118.

46 Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*.

47 See Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics,' *Public Culture* 15/1 (2003), 11–40. See also, Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, eds., *Queer Necropolitics* (London: Routledge, 2014).

48 Diane Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound*.

49 See Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009) and Haritarworn et al., *Queer Necropolitics*.

50 Allen Feldman, *The Archives of the Insensible: Of War, Photopolitics, and Dead Memory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015).

51 Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor,' *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1/1 (2012), 1–40.

52 Simpson et al., 'Introduction: Theorizing Native Studies,' 7.

QTPOC Critiques of 'Post-Raciality,' Segregationality, Coloniality and Capitalism in France

Paola Bacchetta

This essay turns our attention to radical analytics and practices from France that have been rather systematically ignored in their site of production, and that are totally unknown beyond it, that is: Queer and Trans People of Colour (QTPOC) critiques of power today. My point is not to make an additive intervention by recovering invisibilized QTPOC theorizations. Instead I suggest that a focus on how these theorizations put into relief the ways in which multiple relations of power are co-constitutive of each other, and how they operate inseparably, can provoke a re-orientation in the kinds of questions that might most fruitfully be asked about how power operates in our times and about the conditions that power produces at present.

But, to begin with QTPOC in France is a very broad and complex assemblage of subaltern gendered, sexed, and racialized subjects. It includes QT people from all of France's colonies and neo-colonies. It also encompasses citizens, migrants, refugees, and exiled subjects of colour from elsewhere who live in France. It is impossible to account for all these subjects here. Moreover, there is, of course, no seamless essentialized connection from subjects to perspectives. Subaltern subject-positionalities are no guarantee for critical thought. Indeed, the very power that produces any subject always risks getting inadvertently reproduced by the subject, including the subaltern subject.[1] QTPOC in France, like all other subjects, have a plethora of approaches to power, including some in collaboration with power. In this book, Nawo Crawford's prologue insightfully and directly addresses this question of divergent political stances, the reproduction of power within QTPOC groups and some of its activist consequences.

Because of the vastness of QTPOC in France and the multiplicities of political analytics, here I will consider the critical production of QTPOC in France through the lens of one of its most effaced yet radical and subaltern *fragments*, in the sense of Gyan Pandey, that is: hyper

critical activist *lesbians of colour*.[2] Because lesbians of colour often work in fusion with radical non-lesbian women of colour—who may be heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, transgender or cisgender—they too comprise the *fragment* made central here. To allow for some depth instead of only thin breadth, the focus is also limited to Paris and its *banlieues* (racialized working class suburbs).

Under current conditions of extreme erasure, and of what I call *race-and-colonialism amnesia*, to perceive the insurgent theory and practices of these lesbians of colour requires a shift in the criteria for what actually constitutes theory and practice.[3] In dominant fields of intelligibility in the Global North, theory is imagined to be inscribed only in specific academic genres. Against this backdrop, Norma Alarcón's seminal text 'The Theoretical Subjects of This Bridge called My Back' demonstrates that feminist (and lesbian) of colour theory unfolds in many other genres, in forms that can include testimonio or witnessing or personal narratives, poetry, artistic productions, music, graffiti, and more.[4] Kath Weston flags what she calls 'street theory' or critical theory that lesbian subjects create far outside the academy from their own vantage points.[5] In the French situation, where there is not a single out lesbian of colour inside the French academy writing on lesbians of colour, this outside status is absolutely literal. But further, as Foucault reminds us, we can read manifestations of power in formations of resistance to power.[6] Here, in addition to genres that Alarcón and Weston highlight, I address power's apparition both in activist practices of oppositional resistance, and in what the cultural geographer Steve Pile calls 'non-oppositional resistance.'[7] In an influential article Jacques Derrida clarifies that every (literary) genre is a space-time in which some things can be said while other content must be excluded.[8] With all of this in mind, I want to suggest that by engaging with an array of genres produced by critical lesbians of colour in France—from written to oral to activist practices—we can access multiple dimensions of their critiques of power. Accordingly, the archive for this analysis includes all of these kinds of critical expressions.

In a well-known anthropological study of witchcraft in the Bocage, Jeanne Favret-Saada sustains that a condition for objectivity is subjectivity.[9] So, before I proceed I would like to briefly situate myself in this topic, but not to dwell on my positionality, nor to make of it a determinant factor. I will simply mention that I am a multiply racialized feminist-lesbian-queer subject, and have been involved in feminist, lesbian, and queer of colour groups and movements in France since the 1980s. I am co-founder of *collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-semitisme* (feminist collective against racism and anti-semitism), and the *collectif lesbien contre le racisme et le fascisme* (lesbian

collective against racism and fascism), created in 1984 in Paris. I was a member of *lesbiennes contre la discrimination et le racisme* (Lesbians against Discrimination and Racism) (2005). I am currently a member of both *Lesbiennes of Colour* (Lesbians of Colour), founded in 2009, and of *Marche des Femmes pour la Dignité* (Women's March for Dignity) or *MAFED*, the relatively new women of colour collective against police brutality, founded in 2015. All of them will be further discussed below. The point here is that the materials I analyze include data from my own situated participation in some—even if only a fraction—of the archival discursive and activist productions in question.

In what follows, I will first speak to the historical context of lesbians of colour in France. In the following sections I will address their critical work through the axes of 'post-raciality,' segregationality, coloniality, and capitalism, before offering some concluding remarks.

Historical Contextualization

In a recent article, Fatima El Tayeb, Jin Haritaworn, and I highlight the curious quasi-total absence of QTPOC in historiographies of queer, feminist, immigrant, and anti-racism theories and social movements across western Europe, a topic on which each of us had previously written individually.[10] We collectively observe for France, Germany, and The Netherlands that 'Europeans are generally presumed to be homogenously white, while racialized subjects are generally presumed to be uniformly straight and cis.'[11]

Lesbians of colour in France are perfectly aware of their erasure, then and now. In the 1990s, the autonomous group called *Groupe du 6 novembre: lesbiennes issues du colonialisme, l'esclavage et l'immigration* (6 November Group: Lesbians out of Colonialism, Slavery and Immigration) published these words about how they are heard: 'Our narratives are considered an immense brouhaha, the cry of savages, incoherent and inconsistent screams.' [12] In this book, Sabreen, Moruni, and Aria of LOCs write: 'we are present but not seen; we are made invisible.'

To begin to undo some of the erasure, invisibilization and distorted racialized reception, and to provide context for today, we can first turn to a genealogy of the present.[13] Current theoretical productions by lesbians in France constitute only a most recent phase. They arrive at the apex of much energetic organizing since the 1970s that is deeply entangled with colonialism, immigration, and the racism faced by all people of colour (POC) in France regardless of their sexuality.[14]

The earliest sizable population of POC in metropolitan France was

comprised of male colonial subjects who arrived between WWI and WWII. Most entered the labour market at its lowest rungs, in factories, and centred their activism around labour conditions. By the 1970s, under 'family reunification' laws, women immigrants entered in substantial numbers. These laws presume and reify a particular formation of the heterosexual family. They made women's legal status dependent upon the status of male counterparts: fathers, husbands, brothers. From then until now feminists of colour have fought for autonomous rights for immigrant women.

Given the French State's policy of bilateral treaties with its colonies and neo-colonies, and the entry into France of women from national liberation struggles in their home countries, it is not surprising that women of colour activists first organized largely along nation-of-origin lines. They created: *Groupe latino-américain des femmes* (Latin American Women's Group) (Paris 1972); *Association des femmes Khmères* (Association of Khmer Women) (Paris 1977); *Groupe femmes Algériennes* (Algerian Women's Group) (Paris 1978); and *Groupe femmes Marocaines* (Moroccan Women's Group) (Paris 1980). Some coalitional exceptions are: the *Coordination des femmes noires* (Network of Black Women) founded in Paris 1976, which was comprised of Black women from across the francophone world; the *Association nouvelle géneration immigrée* (Association of the New Immigrant Women Generation) of Aubervilliers in 1981; and the *Association des femmes arabes immigrées* (Arab Immigrant Women's Association) of Gennevilliers in 1982. Also in 1982 Franco-French feminists formed the *Collectif de soutien aux femmes sans papiers* (Collective of Support for Undocumented Women).

The 1980s was a highpoint for organizing for immigrant women's rights and against racism, but also of threats to that organizing. Youth of colour, including feminists, created new activisms. The *Nanas Beurs* (Arab Chicks in *verlan*, a specifically *banlieu* language), established in 1986, addressed gendered racialized issues such as unemployment, education, parental severity, battering, divorce, and single straight women's and lesbian's issues.[15] Soon they were joined by *Les Meufs Rebeux* (*verlan* for Beur Women) and then *Voix-Elles-Rebelles* (*verlan* for Their Rebellious Voices). There were lesbians in all these groups. Lesbians also participated in the December 1983 demonstration in Paris which was the culmination point for the '*Marche pour l'Égalité des droits*' that extended from Marseille to Paris, from October to December, that year.

In 1982, a number of feminist groups comprised of women of all origins gathered to open the *Maison des Femmes* (Women's Centre) at 8 citée Prost in Paris. About half of the groups were specifically women

of colour groups.

From 1984 to 1986 a series of brutal murders of racialized youth by white men mainly in the *banlieues* was widely reported in the press. In response, the coalitional *collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-semitisme*, mentioned above, was formed by feminists of many origins who were activists at the *Maison des femmes* in March of 1984. Some belonged to other groups at the site as well, such as the *Nanas Beurs* or *Solidarités entr'elles* (Solidarity among Women). The *collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-semitisme* formulated its own gendered, sexed, and racialized analysis of racism and activist agenda. The collective even worked to change some of the terms of the debates of the moment, including by forging its own identitarian designations. One such term it created was *femmes cibl*ées par le racisme (women targeted by racism). It emerged in the group from a desire to construct a distinctly political definition that would not reproduce the criteria put forth in racist discourse (i.e. morphology, geographical origin, national origin, etc.) and instead flag the racist conduct of racist subjects. Later the collective deemed *femmes cibl*ées par le racisme to be too aligned with passivity. It was abandoned and replaced with *femmes racisées* (racialized women), a term which acknowledges racism and puts into relief racialization as a process. Today *femmes racisées* is widely used by anti-racism activists. The *collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-semitisme* worked on a daily basis within the (all genders) immigrant rights movement and against racism. It also organized a women's contingent in the now enormously renowned demonstration in Paris on 1 December 1984, *Convergence pour l'Egalité* (Convergence for Equality), that drew 60,000 people.

In 1985, the *lesbian collective against racism and fascism*, mentioned above, was created by a heterogeneous collection of lesbians in Paris. This rather small collective did spectacular street theatre and issued press releases. Notably it once demobilized the entire Paris subway system to protest public indifference about rape on a subway.

As grassroots anti-racism organizing become more massive and began to be covered increasingly in the press, especially from 1984 onward, the French Socialist Party in power tried to control anti-racism and anti-sexism activism. In 1984 it founded an organization called *SOS Racisme* to draw attention away from concrete grassroots demands and towards paternalistic peace and love. Its slogan was '*Touche pas à mon pote*' ('Don't touch my pal,' in the masculine tense), which put white French people, presumably men and boys, in the position of saviours of men and boys of colour while erasing women, girls, and folks of all other genders altogether. As the government poured money into the organization it spread throughout France, completely

overtaking and marginalizing grassroots movements. Later, in 2002, the Socialist Party funded *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (Neither Whores Nor Submissive), which denounced sexism in the *banlieues* in ways that reinforced colonial-feminist representations of colonized men as always already more-sexist-and-queerphobic-than-thou.

In 1997, mainly white feminists but also some WOC, across all sexualities, organized *Reseau pour l'Autonomie Juridique des Femmes Immigrées et Réfugiées* (Network for the Legal Autonomy of Immigrant and Refugee Women) or RAJFIRE. It provides concrete legal support for immigrant and refugee women. But it is a difficult space for more radically oriented lesbians and women of colour as it is allied with the mainstream feminist movement which has no critique of colonialism.

Finally in November 1999 lesbians of Maghrebian, Subsaharan African, Afro-Carribean, Latin American and mixed racialized backgrounds, united in the first autonomous group of lesbians of colour, the *Groupe du 6 novembre*.[16] They created a book, website, journal special issue, and spaces of expression (art exhibits, film festivals). They spoke on immigrant radio, intervened in the UN Conference on racism in Durban, and organized demonstrations.

1999 is also the year of the founding of Ma Divine, a group discussed herein in the chapter by Sabreen, Moruni and Aria of the group LOCs.

In 2001, a collective of Arab lesbians called *Les N'Déesses* was founded after much communication between Arab lesbians in France and Algeria. In 2002 the N'Déesses created the website Sehakia (or lesbian in Arabic), publishing in French, Arabic, and English.

In 2005 a coalition of women of colour and white women created *Lesbiennes contre la discrimination et le racisme*. The group met at the *Maison des femmes de Paris* to discuss the reproduction of racism in among lesbians and what to do about it. Its members intervened in lesbian spaces, such the annual lesbian film festival in Paris, in an attempt to flag the absence of lesbians of colour in the films chosen for the festival, and to deconstruct the inadvertent reproduction of white supremacy in lesbian films and in the movement.

In 2009 a short-lived autonomous and pluralist group of lesbians of colour called *les 'L' en couleurs'* arose. (*'L' en couleurs* is a lovely play on words that translates as: L- for *lesbians* in Colours; L–for 'elles' or *they* in the feminine in colours; and 'L' for 'ailes' or *wings* in colours or colourful wings.

In 2009 the autonomous group *Lesbiennes of colour* (Lesbians of Colour), and LOCs for short, was founded for lesbians of colour of all origins.[17] It is a specifically decolonial feminist group. It remains very active and is discussed quite a bit below.

In 2014 activists created MWASI, for African and African diasporic

Black and Black racially mixed cisgender and transgender women.[18] MWASI works intersectionally. It is anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, pro-veil, for the rights of sex workers, anti-racist, and in favor of all people creating the modes of their own emancipation.[19]

In early summer 2015, MAFED standing for Marche des femmes pour la Dignité (Women's March for Dignity) because the collective's first action was the March for Dignity in Paris, an autonomous WOC group that includes some lesbians, was formed to fight police violence in the *banlieues*. One of its main actions is discussed below in some detail.

Finally, in 2015, *AssiègéEs* (Under Siege), a group of QT and straight POC, was established by the Black transman blogger, public intellectual and activist Joao Gabriell, and others.[20] *AssiègéEs* asserts Afro-feminism, Black feminism, Islamic feminism, intersectionality, decolonial analytics, and sex workers' struggles. It aims for total revolution.

In 2016 two young women of colour activists, Sihame Assbague and Fania Noel, created the idea of a Decolonial Summer Camp: Formation in Political Anti-Racism, for people of colour only. Its goal was to create a space where people of colour could participate in their own education about the conditions they experience and the history of movements by people of colour against racism, and think together about the future. The idea for such a camp received publicity and soon was denounced by a host of public officials including the Minister for Education, as 'communalist,' 'dangerous to democracy,' 'anti-semitic' and about 'reverse racism.'[21]

Also in 2016, Black lesbians were centrally involved in creating the first Paris Black Pride, a point that Nawo Crawford discusses in some details in her prologue to this book.

Post-Raciality

Today the notion of 'post-raciality' is first and foremost a kind of code word for how not to think about race. Across much of Western Europe, several differential yet convergent mythologies of 'post-raciality' abound. To approach them we can take some Irigarayan advice, that is, to regress in order to progress.[22] Each 'post-raciality formation is co-constituted with different versions of race, racialization and racism, and farther back, variant relations of colonialism and slavery.

France, of course, like other colonial powers, had many different colonial strategies, stylistics and racialized practices and they impact differently on the so-called 'post-racial' present.[23] For instance, settler

colonialism in Algeria laid the groundwork for what I call segregation-ality in current France. Instead of racialized postcolonial populations living in inner cities as, for instance, in Berlin's Kreutzberg area, in France, as in Algeria, postcolonial populations are separated, contained and controlled in working class racialized suburbs, or outer cities.[24]

Another strand of French 'post-raciality' is the widespread recognition that 'race' is an unstable historical construction. It was disseminated in mainstream media for decades. Following World War II, UNESCO, which is based in France, soon after its founding hired many social scientists, including the extremely well known French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strausse, to study race and create a critical statement about it. They produced 'The Race Question' in 1950. It was modified in 1951, 1967 and 1978. However, from 1951 onward the document rejected the idea that there were actual races. Other French scholars beyond the UNESCO groups also analyzed race, deconstructing years of contradictory scientific criteria and classifications. This work was well known to French audiences. A slippage developed from the idea that race categories are fiction to the idea that racism too doesn't exist. This logic is critiqued by Colette Guillaumin in her major work on race as she makes a point of developing the idea that racism exists 'with or without race.'[25]

An equally important element to French 'post-raciality' is the historical construction of *laicité* or French secularism as a main pillar of republicanism, most recently in relation to the colonial and postcolonial populations now in France. The definition of *laicité* has fluctuated considerably in different periods since the passage of the 1901 law that inscribed it majorly into the juridical sphere. According to its most recognized specialist, Jean Baubérot, there are seven different kinds of French *laicité* across the left and right today: anti-religious; Gaullic; strict separatist; open; identitary; and *concordataire*.[26] Instead of accepting the usual thesis of a particularly French *laicité*, for Baubèrot there is simply a dominant form of *laicité* that passes for the sole form even as many other kinds co-exist historically and today. From a comparative point of view, it seems to me important to also note that *laicité*'s elaboration takes place in the context of historically variable relations of separation between two very specific, even if dynamic, entities: the *Catholic* Church and the *French* State. Until today, an often overlooked aspect of Islamophobic paranoia targeting Islam in the *banlieues* is its continuity with the French State's paranoia around transnational Catholicism under the authority of the Pope, ostensibly in competition with the French State.

In France and elsewhere QTPOC organizing disturbs the tranquility of the 'post-raciality' mythology by foregrounding present racialized

conditions in continuity with colonial racism. No wonder such organiz-
ing, when noticed at all, is commonly met—on the right and left—with
a backlash of moralistic accusations about POC, as opposed to political
analysis. Autonomous groups of QTPOC that in general are specifically
not separatist are routinely reduced to identity politics and thus to
apolitical retrograde sociality.

How then do lesbians of colour and other QTPOC and allies of
all colours make 'raciality's' non 'post' status apparent? They expose
it in all sorts of oppositional and non-oppositional resistance. One
example that I provide elsewhere concerns how veiled Muslim lesbians
in a massive demonstration against the 2004 anti-veil law in France
disturbed the colonial-racialized construction of Muslim women as
always-already oppressed by their male counterparts (Bacchetta 2009).[27]
The veil, of course has different contextual significations for those who
wear it and for the audiences that spectacularize it. They range from
religious to social to political. Here I am concerned specifically with
veiled lesbians in a context where they are directly opposing a law
that disallows them their own relation to their religion. Importantly,
the veiled lesbians did not out themselves as lesbians in the march.
This calculated move thereby, among other things, circumvented their
fetishization through the colonial-racist gaze. In queerphobic xenopho-
bic discourse all Muslim lesbians are constructed in colonial terms as
sexual perverts whether veiled or not. To be out as veiled lesbians would
intensify and complicate this representation. In a colonial-feminist grid
of intelligibility veiled Muslim lesbians code as subjects of internalized
oppression, or as acting from (presumably hetero) sexual frustrations
due to presumed-to-be inherent sexist 'traditions' in Islam: polygamy
and the harem. Under such circumstances the self-invisibilization of
lesbian sexuality is a complex agentic act of self-preservation based
directly in lesbian of colour critiques of how 'post-raciality' and
coloniality are gendered and sexed. Such a move, which consists in
dodging and confusing the oppressive unavowed racist and colonial
gaze, also inadvertently troubles the otherwise presumed-to-be seamless
connection between the visuality of subjects and characteristics assigned
to subjects upon which colonial-racism relies.

In other cases, the calculated visibilization of lesbians of colour, too,
can trouble 'post-raciality' mythologies. An example is the public inter-
vention by LOCs and other QTPOC to destruct an offensive poster and
slogans proposed to a large lgbtiq coalition of about 200 queer groups,
the *Centre Gay et Lesbien* (Gay and Lesbian Centre), to announce
the 2011 Gay Pride March.[28] That year the CGL commissioned an
advertising agency—instead of relying upon the usual community call
for lgbtiq artists—to create the March materials. The agency proposed

a poster with a plethora of hardcore nationalist, racialized and sexist symbols. It featured a white rooster draped in a red boa, framed against a blue backdrop. A contentious discussion ensued. Radical QTPOC and allies objected to the poster on Facebook, in the blogosphere and finally in left media. The white rooster lent itself to interpretation as a 'white washed' version of a brown rooster, a traditional symbol of French nationalism. This seemingly innocuous colour choice was received by LOC and other QTPOC as code for white-supremacist France. The rooster's gender presentation was also significant. The rooster, dressed in a red feather boa that invoked a cross-dressing gay male, positioned that subject position as the central and even exclusive iconic representation of the LGBT community. Lastly, the poster contained the slogan 'For equality, in 2011 I march, in 2012 I vote' thereby completely erasing many post-colonial immigrant and refugee queers to whom the right to vote is denied along with many other citizen rights. The racialized disjuncture in the poster's reception can hyper problematize 'post-raciality' and also provide a glimpse into the wider politics of queer racialized disjunctions that continue to unfold in the French Hom(m)o-Republic. We can observe that the whole affair was about what Haritaworn et. al. have called 'murderous inclusion' wherein QTPOC were interpellated to whitewash ourselves to fit into dominant lgbtiq agendas.[29] Instead QTPOC, including LOCs, with a whole array of other discontented allies of all colours, formed a parallel, hyper-politicized, anti-colonial and anti-capitalist lgbtiq Pride March.

Since 2014 the International Women's Day March, too, has been spectacularly split, mainly along political and racialized lines. The separation first occurred when some white feminists in the mainstream march harassed hijabed Muslim women, transwomen and people from *STRAUSS*, the union of sex workers, a critical mass of whom are POC including QTPOC, who were also marching. Today there are two separate marches: the feminationalist-dominated March 8 International Women's Day, and the more radically critical POC-friendly *8 Mars pour tous* (March 8 For Everyone).

Segregationality

A next point of exposure for lesbians of colour is what we can call *segregationality*, or a *convergence of spatialized conditions* of bifurcation that are co-produced through relations of power that include coloniality, capitalism, racism, gender and sexuality.[30] In brief, the concept of *segregationality* explicitly re-orients the notion of segregation that relies upon the presupposition of what critical cultural

geographers call *abstract* space. In contrast, *segregationality* is about the *co-constitution* of spatial divides, borders, boundaries, essentializations and homogenizations, in relations of power. For *segregationality* all spatial formations have a genealogy, a present, and especially a multiplicity of dimensions that include and exceed the spatial, that are not fixed but rather constantly in dispute, motion and flux.

Segregationality has as its point of departure many prior insights into critical cultural geography, and especially the large threefold division of concepts of space that it proposes: *abstract space*; *relative space*; and *space as a production*. *Abstract* space or Euclidian space is an essentialist notion of space as a passive backdrop to human agency. *Abstract space* specifically informed colonialism and its forms of *segregationality*. *Abstract* space is presumed in the intrusive construction of separatist 'European' quarters in many French colonies, and in the current spatializations of race in subaltern *banlieues*. A second idea of space is *relative* space or space conceptualized in its relation to social relations. It corresponds to a structuralist approach to space. The third conceptualization of space is the Lefebvrean and post-Lefebvrean notion of the *production of space*.[31] It is a poststructuralist notion deeply inspired by Marxism.

Many manifestations of *segregationality* unfold across all of France and its overseas territories, and characterize the relationships between these entities as well. But here, in the interests of time, I am concerned specifically with the *racialization of space* and *spatialization of race* that traverse urban Paris and its *banlieues*. Urban Paris is segmented into *quartiers* or neighborhoods largely by class, race, religion, and, as the concentration of white gay male spaces in the *Marais* brings into relief, sexuality. In both urban Paris and the *banlieues*, the west side tends to be whitest and the east side most of colour. Other pertinent spaces of *segregationality* are the urban enclaves constituted by prisons, Roma settlements and refugee encampments.

The French *banlieues* were constructed as early as 1860, but have gone through major social and racial transformation since that time. By the 1990s their cheap housing was deteriorating. By 2005 unemployment ranged from 20% to 85%.[32] Residents have survived by creating an unofficial economy which includes open air markets for food, clothing and even cell phones. Nearly every aspect of life has an alternative mode of organization, including day care and transport.

Notwithstanding this intricate self-organization, the *banlieues* are represented in dominant discourses as lawless jungles requiring State intervention and control. They are pathologized as 'degenerate' spaces that are dangerous for women and queers.[33] Since at least the 1980s the *banlieues* have been sites of intense police presence, surveillance,

random stop-and-frisk and violence. For several scholars the police operate in the *banlieues* as a particularly violent paramilitary force beyond the visual scape of the rest of the public.[34] As part of the military apparatus of the State, as Althusser would have it, the police also work in complicity with other State elements such as the courts, career bureaucrats and elected politicians.[35]

From 2002 onward, the government funded women's organization *Ni Putes Ni Soumises*, mentioned above, helped extend and intensify the representation of the *banlieues* as hotbeds of sexism, sexual violence and later queerphobia. It confirmed men of colour as *more-sexist-than-thou*, that women of colour need to be saved by white people, and that all people of colour are inherently queerphobic. Within the past few years, these controlling images were revived in the centre-right and left mediatic representation of Houria Bouteldja, co-founder and spokesperson for the decolonial Party of the Indigenous of the Republic, as hyper queerphobic. These constructions are all the more paradoxical if we recall that rape occurs across all racialized and socio-economic groups, that the gendered conditions of women of colour are deeply racialized (for example, relative to women's employment, education, and housing), and that the entire leadership and overwhelming majority of participants in the massive queerphobic anti-gay-marriage movement in France—active from 2013 until today—are white French people.

Today, women of colour, queer, and straight in the *banlieues* are spectacularly exposing *banlieues* conditions and working to change them. An example is Amal Bentounsi, who founded the group *Urgence: Notre Police Tue* (Emergency: Our Police Kills) after her brother Amine was fatally shot in the back on 20 April 2012 during a search-and-frisk in *Noisy-le-sec*.[36] *Urgence* is comprised of family members of the murdered. In 2015 it was at Amal Bentounsi's initiative that the MAFED, which I mentioned earlier, formed to fight police violence. MAFED's first action was a massive demonstration on 31 October 2015 in Paris against police murders, led by women of colour. As Amal Bentounsi's activities have received increasing press coverage, she too has been ruthlessly and wrongly accused of being queerphobic.

Coloniality and Decolonial Critique

Let us now turn to coloniality. Drawing on Walter Mignolo, Ramon Grosfoguel, and María Lugones, we can think of coloniality as comprising the relations of power that characterize colonialism and its extension in discourses and practices today across the planet (Mignolo 2000; Grosfoguel 2008; Lugones 2008).[37] Additionally, coloniality for

me is a co-production that is inseparably constituted with many other relations of power, such as gender as Lugones insightfully argues, but also sexuality, race, and capitalism.[38]

In France, part of the national identification as 'post-racial' as I invoked earlier entails either imagining colonialism to be irrelevant or to be so wonderful as to deserve continual praise. The French law of 23 February 2005 stipulates that French history must be taught in public schools in ways that place French colonialism 'in a positive light.'

Lesbians of colour have long troubled the French State's dualistic invisibilization and spectacular deformed framing of colonialism. For instance, the *Groupe du 6 Novembre* defined its members and many struggles in direct opposition to colonialism. More recently, the group LOCs has been articulating a vision of decolonizing feminism which it also puts into practice in the kinds of issues it takes up.

Currently a major coloniality question for the LOCs is opposition to wars in the Global South, with particular attention to the situation of lesbian and women refugees that the wars produce. In this book, Sabreen, Moruni and Aria discuss the group's analysis and activist work on this question. I can only add that, while many organizations work with lesbian refugees, including queer ones such as *ARDHIS*, and feminists at the *Maison des femmes de Pari*s, LOCs' analysis and practical intervention differs fundamentally. Some LOCs members, including its founders, are refugees or living in exile. The group directly discusses colonialism, white saviour narratives, and forms of neo-liberal charity that maintain subaltern refugee and exiled subjects in relations of inferiority and dependency. LOCs works with lesbian refugees to help them legalize their situation, learn French, and get jobs. In doing so, LOCs members relate to lesbian refugees as sisters. Far from idealizing France as a safe haven for queers, they provide a useful critique of its racism and of lesbophobia.

LOCs members and often the lesbian former refugees whom they have brought to France, are in the forefront of organizing demonstrations against the French government's action in the wars that create refugees and its inaction in the refugee crisis itself. Some of LOCs' actions have been supported by broad coalitions including immigrant organizations and human rights groups such as Amnesty International.

Capitalism and Class

The most politicized lesbians and feminists of colour in France have taken a directly oppositional stance against capitalism, often in the first platforms at the founding of their groups. The relationship to

capitalism of many QTPOC groups in France is interestingly and productively complex. Many of the groups implicitly recognize capitalism as deeply gendered, sexed, racialized, and embedded in coloniality, and not simply as reduceable to class relations. Elsewhere I theorize this kind of approach where I argue that capitalism is a co-production in multiple relations of power at once.[39] From day one MWASI flagged its opposition specifically as a group of Black feminists to capitalism on its website. In practice, feminists and lesbians of colour are present as leaders and participants in every working class struggle, and bring to them gendered, sexed, racialized, and decolonial analytical perspectives. They speak from within. The overwhelming majority of women and lesbians of colour are working class, as are the majority of other people of colour. New research demonstrating the prevalence of racial discrimination in employment is currently getting some media attention.

Lesbians of colour are also leaders and participants in the *Nuit Debout* (Rise up at night) movement at this time.[40] The Nuit Debout demonstrations began in France on 31 March 2016 to protest anti-labour reforms known as the El Khomri Law. They demonstrate regularly at Place de la Republique near the centre of Paris. Like everywhere else, in France and in the *Nuit Debout* movement the relations of power in society are also sometimes reproduced in movements. In Occupy in New York some respectability-obsessed demonstrators tried to evict the homeless. In San Francisco people of colour were marginalized. In France, to counter the racialized relations of power that invisibilize subalternly racialized and gendered subjects and to foreground race, gender, and class together, MWASI helped to organize an autonomous Black and anti-racism mobilization on 9 April 2016 against the new anti-labour laws.

In both the broad and autonomous protests against the law, women and lesbians of colour reveal much about the gendered, sexed, and racialized conditions of racial capitalism. They open a critique of how neoliberal economies fetishize the mobile white heterosexual male worker while Eurocentric discourses about migration demonize the movement of all racialized bodies, thereby legitimizing policing, immobilization in prisons, and containment in the *banlieues*.[41] In lesbian of colour actions we can read the murderous logics of hyper privatization, the transformation of subjects into individualistic workers and consumers, the carving of niches such as the pink market for queers, and how all of this is informed by and in continuity with colonialism.

Under these conditions, women and lesbians of colour can trouble the dominant notion of capitalism as a question of presumed-to-be neutral economic classes in which the dominant model of what Norma Alarcón critically calls 'the universal subject' (meaning the white, middle

class, heterosexual woman subject) and what Irigaray critically calls simply the 'subject,' (meaning the white straight cisgendered male), worker or not, functions to erase all others.

Concluding Remarks

I hope to have provided some elements to understand how the subaltern *fragment* comprised of lesbian of colour critical theories and practices in France puts into relief how multiplicities of relations of power—gender, sexuality, racism, capitalism, class, coloniality, war—are not separate phenomena but are co-constitutive of each other and of current conditions in France. From the *decoloniality* approach of the *Groupe du 6 novembre*, *LOCs* and *MAFED*, to the *intersectionality* approach of *MWASI*, and the total revolution stance of AssiégiéEs, and keeping in mind the anti-capitalist, pro-worker, and anti-war stances of all these groups, we can infer the effectiveness and the necessity of analyzing every condition, subjects, object, and event as produced through *co-formations* and *co-productions* of power.

In practical terms this suggests that any serious social movement for economic, social, cultural, and psychic transformation today can most productively configure strategies and tactics for resisting not just one or another relation of power at a time, but rather the ensemble of co-constitutive relations of power in question, inseparably. To learn to do so is to come closer to uprooting conditions that range from precarious to outright deadly, for all subjects, including the most vulnerable subjects. It is to draw near to opening up a space, and holding space, for the creative construction of other ways of life.

Notes

1   Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power,' in *Michel Foucault: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), 326–48.
2   Gyanendra Pandey, 'In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today,' *Representations* 37 (1992), 27–55.
3   Paola Bacchetta, 'Co-Formations: Sur les spatialités de résistance de lesbiennes 'of colour' en France,' *Sexualité, genre et société* 1/1 (2009), accessed 27 September 2016, https://gss.revues.org/810; Paola Bacchetta, *Co-Motion: Situated Planetarities, Co-Formations and Co-Productions in Feminist and Queer Alliances* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

4 Norma Alarcón, 'The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism,' in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldua (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), 356–69.

5 Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

6 Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, *vol. 1: La volonté de savoir* (Paris, Gallimard, 1976); Foucault, 'The Subject and Power,' 326–48.

7 Steve Pile, 'Introduction: Opposition, Political Identities and Spaces of Resistance,' in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1–32.

8 Jacques Derrida, 'La loi du genre,' in *Parages* (Paris: Galilé, 1986), 263.

9 Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Les Mots, la Mort, les Sorts: la sorcellerie dans le bocage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977).

10 Paola Bacchetta, Fatima El-Tayeb and Jin Haritaworn, 'Queer of Colour Formations and Translocal Spaces in Europe,' *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 33/5 (2015), 769–778; Bacchetta, 'Co-Formations'; Fatima El Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Jin Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

11 Bacchetta et al., 'Translocal Spaces.'

12 'notre parole' est 'consideré comme un immense brouhaha, cri du sauvage, hurlements incohérents et inconsistants'; Bétes Noires, 'Des lesbiennes blanches revent notre silence,' in *Warriors/ Guerrieres,* ed. Groupe du 6 Novembre (Paris: Nomades'Langues Editions, 2001), 25–30.

13 Michel Foucault, 'Nietzche, la généaloge, l'histoire,' in *Hommage a Jean Hyppolite* (Paris: PUF, 1971).

14 For detailed information on the history of immigrant women's struggles in France, see the exposition comprised of over 250 documents entitled 'Traces, mémoires, histoire des mouvements de femmes de l'immigration en France depuis 1970' ('Traces, Memories, History of Immigrant Women's Movements in France Since 1970'), *Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration*, accessed 27 September 2016, http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/repertoire-de-projets/traces-memoires-histoire-des-mouvements-de-femmes-de-l-immigration-en-france. Unfortunately, the history of QTPOC and especially lesbian, transgender, and bisexual women of colour is yet to be written.

15 Though *Beur* means Arab, in practice the beur movement organized among all people targeted by racism. Beur came to signify a vibrant generation that was creating its own politics and culture.

16 Nawo Crawford, who writes the prologue to this book, is a co-founding member.

17 LOCs authors of the chapter on 'Decolonial Activism in White French Feminist Land' herein are among the co-founding members.

18 MWASI means woman in Lingala, a language spoken in the Congo.

19 *MWASI*: *Collectif Afroféministe*, accessed 27 September 2016, https://mwasicollectif.com/.

20 See *Assiegées*, accessed 27 September 2016, http://www.assiégé-e-s.com/.

21 'Camp d'été décolonial: qui a peur de la non-mixité et de l'antiracisme politique?' *Contre-attaques*, 1 May 2016, accessed 27 September 2016, http://contre-attaques.org/magazine/article/camp-d-ete.

22 Luce Irigaray, *Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

23 Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism",' in *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), 84–98.

24 See Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Paul A. Silverstein and Chantal Tetrault, 'Postcolonial Urban Apartheid,' *SSRC*, 11 June 2006, accessed 27 September 2016, http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/Silverstein_Tetreault/.

25 Colette Guillaumin, *I'Idéologie raciste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

26 Jean Baubérot, *Les 7 laïcités françaises* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2015).

27 Bacchetta, 'Co-Formations.'

28 Paola Bacchetta, 'Poster-Posturing: Queer Racialized Disjunctures in the Hom(m)oRepublic,' talk at Center for Race and Gender, UC Berkeley, 23 February 2012. For online summaries, see *UC Berkley*, accessed 27 September 2016; http://crg.berkeley.edu/content/visual-constructions-race-and-stigma-europe and http://crg.berkeley.edu/content/visual-constructions.

29 Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco, 'Introduction: Murderous Inclusions,' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15/4 (2013), 445–52; Sima Shakhsari, 'Killing Me Softly with Your Rights: Queer Death and the Politics of Rightful Killing,' in *Queer Necropolitics*, eds. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco (London: Routledge, 2014).

30 Paola Bacchetta, 'Segregationality and the Politics of QTPOC Subalternative Spatialities in France,' Keynote talk for Annual Conference of Sexualities and Space Specialty Group, Association of American Geographers, San Francisco, 28 March 2016.

31 Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974).

32 Silverstein and Tetrault, 'Postcolonial Urban Apartheid.'

33 Sherene Razack, 'When place becomes race,' in *Space, Race and Law*, ed. Sherene Razack (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Bacchetta et al., 'Translocal Spaces.'

34 Didier Fassin, *Enforcing order: an ethnography of urban policing* (Boston: Polity, 2013); Trica Danielle Keaton, 'Racial profiling and the "French exception",' in *French Cultural Studies* 24/2 (2013), 231–42.

35 Louis Althusser, 'Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état,' in *Sur la Reproduction*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1995), 269–314.

36 Amal Bentounsi, 'Interview: Police Brutality, Racism and the March of Dignity and Against Racism in Paris. With Paola Bacchetta' *Women's*

Magazine, *KPFA Radio*, 26 October 2015, accessed 27 September 2016, https://kpfa.org/episode/womens-magazine-october-26-2015/.

37 Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Rámon Grosfoguel, 'Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality,' *Humandee: Human Management and Development*, 4 July 2008, accessed 14 January 2013, http://www.humandee.org/spip. php?article111; Maria Lugones, 'The Coloniality of Gender,' in *The Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise Project*, ed. Manuela Boatcă, Vol. 2, Dossier 2: On the De-Colonial (II): Gender and Decoloniality, 1 April 2008, accessed 27 September 2016, https://globalstudies.trinity.duke.edu/wko-v2d2.

38 Paola Bacchetta, 'Décoloniser le Féminisme: Intersectionnalités, Assemblages, Co-Formations, Co-Productions' (Decolonizing Feminism: Intersectionalities, Assemblages, Co-Formations, Co-Productions),' *Cahiers du CEDREF,* 2015, accessed 27 September 2016, https://cedref.revues. org/833.

39 Bacchetta, 'Décoloniser le Féminisme' and *Co-Motion*.

40 Of the several translations of *Nuit Debout* including Up All Night and Standing at Night, I prefer this rendition because of its more accurate political connotation.

41 Bacchetta et al., 'Translocal Spaces,' 774.

AFTERWORD

Interrogating QTPOC Critique,
Imagining North-South Solidarities

Aniruddha Dutta

Over the last few decades or so, collectives and political formations of queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) in the Euro-American region have enabled groundbreaking critiques that have explored and exposed the systemic connections between western liberalism, capitalism, racism, and neocolonialism. In particular, such critiques have revealed how the increasing visibility and mainstreaming of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities and politics in the 'west' or 'Global North' have been accompanied by reconfigured modalities of power and renewed forms of racial, gendered, and imperial violence. They have demonstrated how hegemonic LGBT political agendas enable racism and imperialism across domestic and transnational scales through the ideological and material logics of homonormativity, homonationalism, and pinkwashing, and prop up liberal models of social transformation that center whiteness and the west as the vanguards of gender-sexual progress. Even as dominant LGBT politics has increasingly moved from the social and political margins to claim and reinforce violent institutions like marriage, the military and the prison-industrial complex, QTPOC critique and praxis have sought to enable and foster decolonizing epistemologies and ways of being. This volume is a vibrant testament to this rich tapestry of thought and action, traversing academic and activist locations and undoing some of the hierarchies between institutionalized and non-institutional locations of knowledge production.[1]

At the same time, QTPOC epistemologies and politics in the west are located in a fraught, contradictory position latent with both possibilities and dangers. Apart from indigenous communities surviving and battling settler colonialism, populations that are racialized as 'of color' (black, brown, or yellow) are a legacy of both forced and voluntary migrations from the 'Global South' to the 'Global North' or the 'west.' Thus, apart from being cast as racialized minorities in the domestic frame, people of color (POC) also often serve as signifiers of transnational, transcultural

or even civilizational difference, as demonstrated by the multifarious forms of discrimination and violence against Muslims in the UK and Europe, or Sikhs and Latinx people in the US. In such a scenario, QTPOC formations have had to frame their critique not just in terms of domestic racism and white supremacy, but also address transnational formations of coloniality and empire. While this is necessitated by the fact that Euro-American nations are imbricated in transnational relations of power, those same hierarchical relations might place QTPOC analysis and praxis in positions of epistemic privilege relative to non-elite or subaltern resistances in the Global South.

The legacy of postcolonial feminist auto-critique might be germane here. Writing in the context of postcolonial studies, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-Me Park remind us that this field has been dominated by relatively privileged migrants and largely circulates within the Anglo-American academia, overdetermined by its agendas even while being connected to struggles in the postcolony.[2] One also recalls Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's caveat that the postcolonial academic-activist figure is often positioned as a 'native informant,' made to speak or stand in for 'third world' difference and thus complicit in neocolonial modes of knowledge production.[3] Such a positioning, of course, elides the manifold differences and hierarchies between people racialised as non-white, and might conceal the privilege of scholars and activists who get to represent ethnic, religious or regional groups, however self-reflexively or critically.

In this context, we perhaps need to remind ourselves that POC and QTPOC as political and analytical rubrics may inadvertently recenter whiteness and the west, even as they are meant to interrogate and challenge western and white supremacy. The very term 'people of color' as a collectivizing category makes sense only when contrasted to and defined against whiteness, and loses its epistemic salience in multiracial or multiethnic contexts outside white-majority nations. Even in the west itself, the ongoing conversations and debates around the rather different racialisation of Black people, Latinx people, and South or East Asians have raised questions about the usefulness and limitations of POC as an analytical rubric, though it continues to be used as a convenient shorthand in political organizing.[4] While engendering a politically productive solidarity among differently racialized groups in the west, it can also inadvertently erase differences of race and class among non-white and non-western groups by standing in for and homogenizing them. Further, it may erase other salient systemic hierarchies that are not based around the white vs non-white divide or binary, such as caste in South Asia and the South Asian diaspora.

Such erasure may also elide how coloniality as a particular modality

of power does not only stem from or center upon the 'west,' both historically and today. For example, in the case of South Asia, colonialism has had a much more deep-rooted presence in the subcontinent than being an entirely external imposition by the British, French or Portuguese powers. A variety of strands of critical thought in South Asia, including feminist, Dalit (oppressed caste), and leftist critique, has demonstrated how upper caste elites have been historically complicit with colonial rule, and have taken over the reigns of colonial administration after independence rather than constitute a fundamentally different regime.[5] Neither is the coloniality of caste confined only to South Asia in its effects - globally, upper caste elites from this region have established themselves as a powerful, transnationally mobile class often serving neocolonial agendas, as demonstrated by the large number of corporate elites of South Asian origin in the UK and US, and the active support for right-wing economic policies by a large section of the Indian diaspora ('Hindus for Trump').[6] Upper caste/class mobility serves to bridge POC communities in the Global North with the elite of the Global South, and to further entrench collusions between various upper class groups across North-South divides.

Moreover, the usurpation of Adivasi (tribal) lands in India for corporate 'development' and the Indian colonization of the Kashmir Valley serve as powerful examples of colonialism as undertaken by non-western states, often in collusion with transnational corporations and western nations. Indeed, Asian powers like India and China have expanded from more 'internal' forms of colonialism within their political borders to more transnational imperial undertakings, as evidenced by their interest in acquiring and controlling land in Africa.[7] Thus, when speaking in a transnational frame, POC formations would need to critically undo their epistemic rubrics (particularly 'people of colour' itself) in order to encompass collusions between elites across North-South divides as well as forms of neocolonialism within the Global South.

Needless to say, the consolidation of a multi-centered, multicultural (neo)coloniality has far-reaching ramifications for queer and trans politics across the Global North and South. With the increasingly visible emergence of LGBT communities in Asia, several Asian metropolises like Bangkok, Hong Kong, Seoul, Manila, or Mumbai have fashioned themselves as 'gay centers' or hubs of queer-trans communities and movements in their respective regions.[8] Not coincidentally, these are also urban centers or hubs that facilitate transnational flows of capital. The dominance of the metropolitan elite within Asian LGBT movements fosters urban-rural divides and metrocentrism, hierarchies of class and caste, and the subordination of queer-trans communities that are not

entirely integrated with metropolis-centric flows of capital, such as the *hijras*, *kothis*, or *metis* of South Asia (a spectrum of feminine-identified trans persons of mostly working class or poor backgrounds, spanning rural and urban areas).

Even when it comes to queer-trans resistance to gendered, racial and class hierarchies, metropolitan activists with transnational reach often become the default representatives or models of struggle and transformation. For example, QTPOC activists such as the US-based performance art duo DarkMatter are often highlighted both in the US and in South Asia as examples of resistance to racial and gender norms, as evidenced by their appeal to an audience of mostly elite, metropolitan, Anglophone queer and trans people in India. Indeed, a 2015 listicle by BuzzFeed of fourteen people who are 'revolutionizing India's fight for LGBT rights' features five people from the South Asian diaspora based in western metropolitan cities rather than in India itself (including the DarkMatter duo), with most of the rest being upper class-caste activists from Indian metropolises.[9] Only two entries are of people from more working class backgrounds located in non-metropolitan areas. Such hierarchies of visibility, media access and influence mean that QTPOC politics could overshadow the struggles of working class or Dalit (oppressed caste) trans or gender non-conforming communities in the Global South, such as the aforementioned *kothis*, *hijras*, *metis*, etc., whose forms of resistance are largely erased or at least not held up as emulative models in ostensibly progressive media.

Further, some queer-trans critique positions QTPOC communities as preeminent representatives of border-crossing and boundary-breaking in racial, cultural and/or gendered terms, emphasizing forms of hybridity and mobility located in the 'first world' and overdetermined by the movements of transnational capital. However, many queer-trans people in the Global South live in places that are mapped as being too provincial, and relegated as stagnant hinterlands unless they can be integrated into transnational capital flows (the quick homogenization of 'rural India' as a site of monolithic or unchanging 'tradition' is a case in point).[10] In this context, the emphasis on metropolitan or diasporic forms of QTPOC hybridity or mobility may inadvertently erase the struggles of queer-trans people in such spaces, and elide the processes of boundary-crossing and spatial networking that do happen across rural or semi-urban locations of the Global South (such as the phenomenon of 'rural cosmopolitanism' described by Vinay Gidwani and K. Sivaramakrishnan in the South Asian context).[11]

Given the aforementioned caveats, how do we imagine a future for the radical projects enabled by a book like this? What kind of critical solidarities could we imagine between POC and QTPOC communities

and politics located in the 'north' or 'west,' and the manifold struggles of subaltern, working class, oppressed caste people in the 'south' or 'non-west'? POC as a framework must be seen as contingent and strategic, germane in some social and political contexts but subject to critique and even abandonment where necessary. While POC and QTPOC solidarity across racial or ethnic lines may be crucial to build pressure on institutions in the Global North, simultaneously, we would need to work against the elisions of the term when addressing transnational collusions between elite groups across the North and the South, the varying levels of complicity in neocolonialism and empire among 'people of color,' and the consequent limitations of the term as a political or analytical category even in the context of the 'west' itself. Through such continual interrogation, we may hope to renew and recast our political solidarities in provisional and contingent ways without losing sight of the multifaceted systemic relations of power that connect us all.

Notes

1   Some examples from a large literature include: Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Jennifer Petzen, 'Sexualising the "War on Terror": Queerness, Islamophobia and globalised Orientalism' in *Thinking through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives,* eds. S Sayyid, and Vakil Abdoolkarim (London: Hurst/New York: Columbia Press, 2010); *Queer Necropolitics,* ed. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco (London: Routledge, 2014); The blog 'Black Girl Dangerous,' accessed 5 October 2016, http://www.blackgirldangerous. org; The digital archive 'Against Equality,' accessed 5 October 2016, http:// www.againstequality.org, etc.

2   Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-Me Park, 'Postcolonial Feminism/ Postcolonialism and Feminism' in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden: Blackwell, 2000).

3   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

4   For a recent problematization of the 'of color' terminology in the US context, see Vinay Harpalani, 'To Be White, Black, or Brown? South Asian Americans and the Race-Color Distinction,' *Washington University Global Studies Law Review*, 14/4 (2015), 609–36.

5   Some examples of these diverse strands of critique are included in the

following anthologies: *Subaltern Studies Reader: 1986–1995*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989). For the Dalit critique of both colonialism and upper-caste nationalism, see Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Sage, 1994).

6   'Hindus for Trump,' *Facebook*, accessed 5 October 2015, https://www. facebook.com/HindusForTrump/.

7   Mari Marcel Thekaekara, 'Re-colonizing Africa?,' *New Internationalist*, January 2012, Accessed 5 October 2016, https://newint.org/ blog/2012/01/31/india-colonizing-africa/.

8   For a theorization of gay centers, see Peter Jackson, 'Capitalism and Global Queering: National Markets, Parallels among Sexual Cultures, and Multiple Queer Modernities,' *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 15/3 (2009), 357–95; for a critique of the emphasis on gay centers, see Gavin Brown, 'Urban (Homo)Sexualities: Ordinary Cities and Ordinary Sexualities,' *Geography Compass* 2/4 (2008), 1215–31.

9   Imaan Sheikh, '14 People Revolutionising India's Fight for LGBT Rights,' *BuzzFeed*, 20 October 2015, Accessed 5 October 2016, https://www. buzzfeed.com/imaansheikh/rainbow-revolution.

10 This is a common trope in many media articles, see, for example: Ellen Barry, 'Young Rural Women in India Chase Big-City Dreams,' *The New York Times*, 25 September 2016, accessed 5 October 2016, http://www. nytimes.com/2016/09/25/world/asia/bangalore-india-women-factories. html?_r=0.

11 Vinay Gidwani and K. Sivaramakrishnan, 'Circular Migration and Rural Cosmopolitanism in India,' *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 37/1-2 (2003), 339–67.

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