

Queering Conceptual Boundaries: Assembling Indigenous, Marxist, Postcolonial and Queer Perspectives

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This article suggests the need for imagining assemblages and engagements between queer, Marxist, postcolonial and indigenous perspectives in order to critically confront the complex and ambivalent politics of queerness today. It grounds and deploys this reflection through a critical exploration of “Dawn of a New Gay,” a non-academic piece on ‘po-mo homo’ and the case of Queers Against the Israeli Apartheid, an activist group based in Toronto. Queerness, in our account, is constituted by dimensions which go far beyond a narrow conception of sexuality. Thus, ‘queering queerness’ implies talking about ‘classing’, ‘gendering’ and ‘racialising’ processes, avoiding an additive logic and acknowledging their interrelated messiness. By employing ‘queer’ as a self-reflective, methodological tool, we examine its integral role in the processes of capitalism, racialisation, heteropatriarchy and colonialism. The suggested theoretical perspective has implications in terms of how to think of politics ‘as such’: there is a need, this article argues, to overcome economic and culturalist reductionisms in the approach to radical politics. Both are liberal in their ‘ideological mechanics’ because they proceed with the logic of segmentation and obscure how power(s) operate(s). Assembling critical perspectives is an impossible and necessary exercise of de-reification of categories and theories but, more fundamentally, it is an attempt to imagine less oppressive political praxes and futures.

I. INTRODUCTION

We have our university degrees, homes and careers. In Toronto, we’ve abandoned the gay village [...] We vacation with our boyfriends in fabulously rustic country homes that belong to our parents, who don’t mind us coming to stay as a couple. Hell, we even marry

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our boyfriends, if we choose to [...] To be a twenty something gay man in Toronto in 2011 is to be free from persecution and social pressures to conform. It's also, in most ways, not about being gay at all [...] Is there even a gay struggle to be had anymore? [...] over the past decade, the process of assimilation has accelerated faster than anyone probably believed it could. In urban Canada, and in other lucky parts of the world, we embrace gay politicians, TV personalities and performers.¹

This is an excerpt from Aguirre-Livingston's piece "Dawn of a New Gay," a non-academic article published in the summer of 2011 in a Toronto magazine called *The Grid*. The piece celebrates the arrival of a new generation of twenty-something, urban, gay men, who have the freedom to live exactly the way they want. It highlights some of the concerns and questions we have regarding 'mainstream' (and sometimes not-so mainstream) renditions of queerness, queer theory and praxis. In this article, we seek to ask: what does it mean, or what may it mean, to do politics from a queer perspective? What are the implications of the different ways of defining and framing queerness as both theoretical perspective and political praxis?² Our basic premise here is that defining this notion and realm of experience is in itself a political act with political consequences.³ Through an exploration of some significant examples (texts, events and other artifacts) where 'the queer issue' is either defined, appropriated or negotiated, we will try to show its sharp and troubling political nuances.

The political polyvalence of 'queer' may be seen as obvious given that it is one of the hallmark terms of contemporary anti-essentialism. Yet as in Aguirre-Livingston's piece, LGBT issues, and even 'queerness', are frequently naturalised as being just about sexuality where 'sexuality' assumed to be a relatively autonomous (and sometimes 'personal') space.

1. Paul Aguirre-Livingston, *Dawn of a new gay: Why you won't find the younger generation partying in the Village or plastering rainbows on their bumpers*, THE GRID, JUN. 9, 2011, available at <http://www.thegridto.com/city/sexuality/dawn-of-a-new-gay>.

2. This divide between theory and praxis is itself problematic. We employ it for descriptive purposes only.

3. Many have critiqued the binary between theory and action. When it is reified, it prevents us from understanding the 'real' dimension of 'theory' and that action carries meaning. On this point we need to go back to Marx: "[...] when I am active *scientifically*, etc., – when I am engaged in activity which I can seldom perform in direct community with others – then I am *social*, because I am active as a *man*. Not only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product (as is even the language in which the thinker is active): my *own* existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being." See KARL MARX, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in THE MARX-ENGELS READER 86 (Robert C. Tucker ed., 1978).

This is ‘the’ operation we really want to de-stabilise and challenge. In our view, the very idea that there are different human spheres – even when ‘intersected’ or ‘socially constructed’ – follows the liberal logic of delineating and naturalising ‘fields’⁴. Liberalism is re-inscribed (and many times trafficked) in discourses of sexuality, gay and post-gayness. We maintain that liberalism as an ideology and as an epistemology tends to obscure power relations and that, from John Locke onwards,⁵ has in its core gender/class/race biases which we need to confront.

Given that today LGBT and, sometimes, queer mainstreaming is being ‘assembled’ to imperialist logics and neoliberal projects, ‘here’ and ‘there’, sometimes to nationalist (left or right) discourses and at times to racist and sexist views⁶ (and all of these in their multiple and uneven combinations), we suggest the need for imagining alternative assemblages and conversations between queer, Marxist, postcolonial and indigenous⁷ perspectives and politics. Not only do we need to expand the queer(ing) analytical engagement to novel terrains and topics such as neoliberalism, empire and the war on terror,⁸ what we also need is the encounter (and the inevitable friction – nobody is saying this is an easy task) with other paradigms and practices.⁹ In the academic realm, then, ‘queering queerness’ requires both the de-stabilising of ‘queer’ as a specific theoretical framework developed from the humanities and (in)formed by poststructuralist and postmodern

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4. Himani Bannerji, *Building from Marx: Reflections on Class and Race*, 32 *SOC. JUSTICE* 144 (2005). Of course, breaking the integrity of the socially concrete and conceptualising the resultant segmentation as a ‘natural’ property of the social is an operation that for Marx is ‘ideological’.
 5. But we also include John Rawls and liberals who, being very concerned about ‘justice’, do not radically challenge capitalist and colonialist power relations.
 6. Jasbir K. Puar, *Queer Times, Queer Assemblages*, 23 *SOC. TEXT* 3-4 (2005); JASBIR K. PUAR, *TERRORIST ASSEMBLAGES: HOMONATIONALISM IN QUEER TIMES* (2007).
 7. ‘Indigenous’ here is understood not as ‘native-informant’ or as a romanticised carrier of ancient, ‘non-Western’ wisdom but defined from the perspective of indigenous experiences and epistemologies within the settler states of North America and simultaneously reflecting on the struggles of indigenous communities across the globe. We argue that this encounter is not only important but also urgent and inevitable as these communities are still continuing to fight colonialism. Their struggles are often invisibilised and dismissed due to other ‘bigger’ struggles against not only imperialism and capitalism but also many times against sexism, racism and homophobia.
 8. Jin Haritaworn et al., *Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the ‘War on Terror’*, in *OUT OF PLACE: INTERROGATING SILENCES IN QUEERNESS/RACIALITY* (Adi Kuntsman & Esperanza Miyake eds., 2008); PUAR, *supra* note 6; Saadia Toor, *Gender, Sexuality, and Islam under the Shadow of Empire*, 9 (3) *THE SCHOLAR & FEM. ONLINE* (2011), http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/religion/toor_01.htm.
 9. It is interesting that there is a significant body of literature of queer perspectives on neoliberalism but not on capitalism as such. Is that the case because, given the post-structuralist framework in which queer theory is largely located, ‘capitalism’ is ungraspable for it?

perspectives and an engagement with other bodies of critical thought. The story is, once again, about building a different relationship with otherness, a ‘queering task’ which is theoretical and political. (Doing so, provides us with a space to learn and, perhaps, to decolonise.¹⁰ Such acknowledgement of the potential of a decolonising moment may lead to realising ‘one’s privilege as one’s loss’. Spivak argues that privileges prevent one from gaining certain kinds of Other knowledge(s): not knowledge that one has not received but knowledge that one is not equipped to understand by the reason of one’s social positions. By learning to speak to historically (and indeed structurally) ‘silent’ others, one can potentially systematically unlearn her own privileges. Part of the unlearning process is “to articulate the ideological formation – by *measuring* silences, if necessary – into the *object* of investigation.”¹¹

Our argument is connected to the notion of “queer liberalism,”¹² but seeks to go beyond it: given that in our view any engagement can operate following a liberal logic of (re)production, Marxism or cultural (de)constructivism when isolated from other critical perspectives may not be liberal ‘as such’ but may become part of a liberal academic mechanic of territorialisation of different fields/ perspectives/ canons which, critical or not, do not speak to each other. This lack of dialogue is very ‘productive’: it produces the radical obscurity of power relations (at times, ‘doing liberalism’ in the name of its opposite). The aim of this article is to open some conceptual and political questions about ‘queer within power(s)’ and we do so by imagining the assemblages we referred to above and ‘queering conceptual boundaries’. By looking at the frictions between ‘queerness’, ‘gender’, ‘race’ and ‘class’,¹³ we employ ‘queer’ as a self-reflexive methodological tool to examine its integral role in the processes of capitalism, racialisation, heteropatriarchy and colonialism. The article shows how these processes are interconnected by locating our analysis within the settler colonial context of Turtle Island (i.e. North America).¹⁴

10. We employ the category ‘decolonise’ without assuming the unproductive and impoverishing (and indeed ‘colonial’) framework of the Orient-West divide. Perhaps we (‘critical scholars’) need to think on the potentialities of such a category when emancipated from this reifying dichotomy.

11. G. C. Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, in *MARXISM AND THE INTERPRETATION OF CULTURE* 271-315 (L. Grossberg & C. Nelson eds., 1988).

12. David L. Eng et al., *Introduction*, 23 *SOC. TEXT* 3-4 (2005).

13. Jasbir K. Puar, *I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’: Intersectionality, Assemblage, and Affective Politics*, *INVENTIONS* (Jan. 2011), <http://www.eicpc.neAt/transversal/0811/puar/en>. These categories are events, things that ‘happen’ not only in the body of the text but in the realm of discourse (in the Foucauldian sense), thus, in the body of life.

14. ‘Turtle Island’ is a term used by many indigenous communities for the continent of North America. We invoke this term to challenge Canadian-American-European-centric colonial-

The article is divided into five sections. In the first two sections, we discuss the limitations of discourses of queerness using the example of “Dawn of a New Gay.” In the third section, we critically examine *Queers Against the Israeli Apartheid* (henceforth *QuAIA*) to show how ‘other’ social locations, narratives and positionalities help to ‘speak queerness’ in meaningful ways. In the following section, we provide a theoretical framework to deconstruct and de-stabilise (some contemporary) power relations by bringing Marxist, feminist, postcolonial, queer and indigenous perspectives to *queer* queer. Finally, we conclude by examining the limitations of liberal politics and arguing for critical assemblages to queer, decolonising spaces, praxes, and futures.

II. PO-MO HOMO VS. HOMO: IS HOMO ‘OLD’?

Toronto is often imagined as a multicultural and cosmopolitan paradise of acceptance and tolerance. It is also one of the main power locations for gay mainstreaming in the world (i.e. centre-left gayness and often-not-so ‘polite’ homonationalism). In this city, as elsewhere, different narratives and political projects compete within the LGBT/queer space. The costs of contesting mainstream discourse are very high though, as we demonstrate through the example of *QuAIA*. Liberal multiculturalism is ready to suppress ‘difference’ and otherness when it is too politically disruptive. In fact, critics of multiculturalism argue that it does not recognise power inequalities. Rather, under the discourse of diversity and pluralism, it seeks to mask and invisibilise power imbalances.¹⁵ The example of *QuAIA* explored below shows the limits of ‘tolerance’ within multiculturalism. A clarification should be made from the outset. In this article, *QuAIA* does not operate as an ‘object of study’ that we ‘use’ to exercise our ‘ethnographic desires’. It is a subject/space that helps us to engage with our questions in ways that we consider desirable from a critical perspective. *QuAIA* is a site of knowledge production which is grounded in political action. (The binary of theorist/ activist becomes in this way problematised, in other words: we do not pretend to talk in ‘their’ name). Their way of ‘doing

geopolitical bordering and naming of North America and highlight other (indigenous and decolonised) epistemological ways of seeing, knowing, experiencing and living.

15. HIMANI BANNERJI, *THE DARK SIDE OF THE NATION: ESSAYS ON MULTICULTURALISM, NATIONALISM AND GENDER* (2000); GHASSAN HAGE, *WHITE NATION: FANTASIES OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY* (2000); SUNERA THOBANI, *EXALTED SUBJECTS: STUDIES IN THE MAKING OF RACE AND NATION IN CANADA* (2007); Omme Salma-Rahemtullah, *Bollywood in da Club: Social Space in Toronto’s South Asian Community*, in *BOLLYWOOD SOFT POWER: AT HOME AND ABROAD* 247 (Anjali Roy ed., 2012) (“Tolerance as a multicultural practice is embedded in power inequities that themselves are hidden in these practises of tolerance.”).

queerness' and the debates around the group show the pertinence of the argument that power relations based on colonialism and capitalism affect queer experiences and realities.

Let us first explore the opposite side of queerness and return to the example of "Dawn of a New Gay" which is, arguably, the dominant discourse in Toronto as elsewhere. This piece, the magazine's cover story, supports its argument with nine interviews of 'po-mo homo' men (this new type of urban gay) – eight white, one person-of-colour. Both the article and the pictures included in it are extremely revealing of how queerness can be 'assimilated' in nationalist, sexist, racist, classist and even homophobic ways. Canada and the United Kingdom flags stand at the sides of the cover photograph (proud to be homonationalists!) and all the men are wearing shirts and ties or bow-ties (see below). Gender is neat and clear in every case and the body postures reflect a sort of individualist and apolitical middle class positionality. Women are absent and the article does not even bother to clarify that its focus is white (with a marginal addition) gay men's experiences.

In the article, the signifier 'gay' only denotes an (acquisitive) white male individual who lives in a 'homophobia-free' environment, has a university degree, owns property and/or belongs to a wealthy family, lives in downtown Toronto and, of course, is a Canadian citizen. It is interesting to note that in a later interview given by the author, Aguirre-Livingston clarifies that he comes from a poor bi-racial family, suggesting that his background is a clear demonstration that his discourse is not at all discriminatory (an essentialist move: I cannot be racist or classist because of who 'I am' or from where I come from).¹⁶ However, the lack of any engagement with the kind of experiences he claims to have gone through or, in other words, the invisibility of people 'like him' within the post-gay reality he describes shows in a crude way that the cultural intelligibility of queerness is, in the logic of the narrative of his piece, enabled by a mainstream positionality in a neoliberal and exclusive setting; the author has to erase his own experience in order to exist. (In addition and turning to theory, neoliberalism 'comes after' capitalism as such and we believe in the need of integrating Marxist insights on

16. The interview (on *Metro Morning CBC Radio*) <http://www.cbc.ca/metromorning/episodes/2011/06/16/post-mos/>. It is remarkable that on the one hand Aguirre-Livingston celebrates a post-identitarian (at least post-gay) era and, on the other hand, defends his article from the critiques by putting up-front his 'identity' (bi-racial and poor). This move of the author shows how dangerous are both to sentence to death powerful social constructs (as 'gay') too quickly and to justify a statement in terms of the ascription/belonging to an identity (gay, indigenous, 'poor' or any). Perhaps only a perspective or political stand of the porosity of identities can be truly critical.

subject(ivity) formation. If the subject is intelligible as gendered as we know since Butler's *Gender Trouble*,¹⁷ social relations of property also delineate what kind of (gendered and sexed) subjects are possible/desirable and what are not. It is not only the terrain of 'significations' that is at stake but the very material(ist) dynamics of capitalist reproduction). In any case, this 'one-dimensionalisation'¹⁸ of queerness implies the erasure of encounters of (among others) gender, race, class, caste, religion, ideology, ability, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship and sexuality. This erasure gets normalised within the liberal logic, as is shown by the editorial response to the critiques of the article, which calls them "clear signs of a generation gap."¹⁹ A sanitised notion of time and space is used as an ideological tool to erase politics and power: struggles – feminist, anti-racist, 'gay liberation', socialist – 'belong to the past'. The new subject – gay in this case – just enjoys the apolitical present.²⁰

III. 'BEYOND' GAY BUT ANTI-QUEER?: A REVEALING PICTURE



Picture 1: Cover Page for "Dawn of New Gay"²¹

17. JUDITH BUTLER, *GENDER TROUBLE: FEMINISM AND THE SUBVERSION OF IDENTITY* (1990).

18. HERBERT MARCUSE, *ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN* (1991).

19. *Why we published "Dawn of a new gay"*, Editorial, *THE GRID*, JUN. 10, 2011 available at <http://www.thegridto.com/city/sexuality/why-we-published-“dawn-of-a-new-gay”/>. The normalisation/invisibilisation of erasure, which is indeed violent, is what concerns us. This (liberal) violence, which seems obvious to us, had to be explained to many of our self-identified liberal counterparts, to whom there was nothing 'violent' in the editorial. The author (Nishant) had to literally break down violence from its 'physical-ness' in many such conversations.

20. Therefore, those who 'still' think that in fact there are persistent inequalities that should be confronted, 'live in the past', do not want to 'move forward', and 'are not good and productive citizens'. This conservative narrative that claims that society is ruled by angry feminists, people-of-colour, socialists and radical queers has the effect of de-legitimising ongoing struggles against oppression.

21. *The Grid*, *Why we published "Dawn of a New Gay,"* *THE GRID*, (JUN. 10, 2011), <http://www.thegridto.com/city/sexuality/why-we-published-“dawn-of-a-new-gay”/>.

The reactions that the article generated show that mainstream discourses do not go uncontested. Picture 2 below (the cover image of a radical and creative response) speaks for itself and contrasts with the po-mo homos: gender, colour, posture, bodily interaction and disposition, the location and the text of the sign (to the ‘Pomo High Class of 2011’, the reply is ‘QPOCs Still Strugglin’ 2011’). The front picture for the response has a group of self-identified queer people of colour (QPOC) who come from different backgrounds. Thus the QPOCs are not a homogenous and uniform group. They are vibrant, dynamic and queer (and angry, in some cases). It is also interesting to note that in the po-mo homo picture, the individuals are not communicating with each other (with the exception of one person). They do not seem to share any bond or relationship. Their poses are very individualist and private. The response from the QPOCs, on the other hand, is communal, public, and collective.



Picture 2: Cover Page for “Dawn of new gay: the response”²²

The response is welcomed and yet it is interesting that in Toronto ‘race’ and ‘colour’ tend to serve as *the* sites of resistance and contestation, a tendency that falls in multi-directional essentialisms.²³ The intervention is by self-identified ‘people-of-colour’: the discourse is articulated through the positionality of being ‘of colour’. What does the ‘expelling’ of ‘white’ mean here? Does this move not also reinforce the denial of complexity? How can we challenge the dichotomies and problematic reifications (re) produced by both ‘sides’? In the tense dynamic between the ‘new gay’ and

thegridto.com/city/sexuality/why-we-published-“dawn-of-a-new-gay”/.

22. The Grid, *Dawn of the new gay: the response*, THE GRID, JUN. 15, 2011, available at <http://www.thegridto.com/city/sexuality/dawn-of-a-new-gay-the-response/>.

23. This is not to deny the processes of racialisation that communities-of-colour continue to go through. It is to question ‘race’ when it becomes the sole/reified focus of political engagement.

its contestation, people identified as ‘white’ are expelled from the struggles and resistance against whiteness, sexism and classism (and homophobia), becoming reified subjects. Both sides also erase the (homo/queer/trans/phobic) pains that many ‘white’ queer individuals suffer from within and without their families and take for granted a ‘white privilege’ that should be interrogated in nuanced ways. For instance, assuming that ‘white’ queers do not face homophobia at home both reinforces the idea of ‘Western’ progressiveness and negates the concrete, painful lived experience of many ‘white’ people, making violence to them (whiteness hurts those located inside its space, too) invisible. There is an essentialist logic being deployed here that cancels politics and the complex and ironic dynamics of ‘colour’. As Nietzsche taught us in the nineteenth century, oppressive violence can come from unexpected places. Building identitarian fortresses from where to speak (‘gay’, yes, but also ‘people-of-colour’, ‘working class’, ‘women’, the ‘non-West’) cannot advance a de-reifying (queer) perspective. We need such a perspective in order to confront neopositivist empiricism, “the justifying foundation of advanced capitalist neocolonialism.”²⁴

QuAIA’s project is closer to the second ‘picture’. In a period of de-marginalisation of gayness or anti-intersectional queerness, ‘other’ social locations, narratives and positionalities may help to ‘speak queerness’ in meaningful ways.

IV. QUEER ENMITIES: QUAlA UNDER (HOMONATIONALIST) RAGE

QuAIA²⁵ is an activist group based out of Toronto which was formed to work in solidarity with queers in Palestine and Palestine solidarity movements around the world. As a queer group, they recognise that homophobia exists in Israel, Palestine, and across all borders. However, they argue: “the struggle for sexual rights cannot come at the price of other rights.”²⁶ They are very critical of what they call the Israeli apartheid and attempt at pinkwashing and creating an image of Israel as a ‘heaven’ of gay tolerance in the Middle East. For them queer politics needs to go beyond the liberal queer-positive image of Israel articulated in terms of the allowing of gays to serve in the military or the recognition of same-

24. Spivak, *supra* note 11 at 275.

25. For more information on QuAIA, see *Who We Are*, QUEERS AGAINST ISRAELI APARTHEID, <http://queersagainstapartheid.org/who/> (last visited Sep. 10, 2013).

26. QUEERS AGAINST ISRAELI APARTHEID, <http://queersagainstapartheid.org/> (last visited Sep. 10, 2013). The notion of ‘rights’ is of course highly problematic and we wonder if this way of framing their discourse is about strategy or a more substantive choice.

sex marriage and adoption for its citizens. QuAIA supports the 2005 call for BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) against Israel. This group works to fight homophobia, transphobia and gender oppression wherever they exist. They have a queer perspective which is intersectional and informed by an analysis of colonialism, and racism along with heteronormativity.

In 2008, queer activists in Toronto formed contingents in the Dyke March and Pride Parade, sending out the political message that queers do not support apartheid wherever it exists. In 2009, the group marched at Toronto Pride despite attempts by pro-Israel organisations to censor their participation. In 2010, QuAIA was at the centre of an intense and at times rough debate. Their political stance is very vulnerable in the North American context: while Israel supporters accuse them of being anti-Semites, many progressive queers do not consider anti-Israeli apartheid activism a queer issue. In fact, homophobia within 'Muslims' is of greater concern for many of them.²⁷ QuAIA has in fact been surrounded by controversies and debates since its inception in 2009.

These tensions reached a pinnacle when the group was banned from Gay Pride Toronto 2010. QuAIA was successful in building a strong coalition of support and got the ban revoked before the Pride Parade. This political move was based on a complex and interesting articulation of political meanings and forces that range from liberal advocacy for 'free speech' to more radical and intersectional conceptions of queerness. This episode is of theoretical interest: a set of *strategic* alliances among heteroclitic elements and a discursive reinforcement of the heroic(ist) narrative around the LGBT struggle ('traditionally' associated to the spectrum that goes from freedom to justice), efficiently construed the participation of QuAIA in Gay Pride as 'defensible' and legitimate (the Stonewall narrative, somehow part of the history of imperialism, paradoxically 'allowed' the Palestinian issue to be talked about, emerging from 'the shadows' of 'gay').²⁸

In spring 2011, Toronto's conservative (and homophobic)²⁹ mayor Rob Ford threatened QuAIA and Toronto Pride with the withdrawal

27. Regarding the theme of 'Occupation and Pride', see Nishant Upadhyay and Omme Salma-Rahemtullah, *No Pride in Occupation (3-part audio documentary)*, NCRA PROGRAM EXCHANGE, <http://previous.ncra.ca/exchange/dspProgramDetail.cfm?programID=98708> (last visited Sep. 10, 2013).

28. Regarding the Stonewall narrative and its colonial implications, see Martin F. Manalansan IV, *In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma*, 2 (4) GLQ: J. LESBIAN & GAY STUD. 425-438 (1995)

29. See Andrea Houston, *Ford skips Pride Week proclamation and Nunziata gets heckled*, XTRA! Jun. 27, 2011, available at http://www.xtra.ca/public/Toronto/Ford_skips_Pride_Week_proclamation_and_Nunziata_gets_heckled-10386.aspx.

of funds, again. This was despite the report by Toronto City Manager, which concluded that:

[T]he participation of QuAIA in the Pride Parade based solely on the phrase 'Israeli Apartheid' does not violate the City's Anti-Discrimination Policy. The City also cannot therefore conclude that the use of the term on signs or banners to identify QuAIA constitutes the promotion of hatred or seeks to incite discrimination contrary to the Code.³⁰

But QuAIA had other plans. In a surprising move in April 2011, it announced that it would not march in the 2011 Toronto Pride Parade. QuAIA spokesperson Elle Flanders elaborated by stating:

Rob Ford wants to use us as an excuse to cut Pride funding, even though he has always opposed funding the parade, long before we showed up. By holding our Pride events outside of the parade, we are forcing him to make a choice: fund Pride or have your real homophobic, right-wing agenda exposed.³¹

With this move, QuAIA has again re-defined queer politics, taking it beyond the realms of the body, identity and pride. Further in 2012, not only did they march in the Pride, but they were also central to the formation of the Queers for Social Justice contingent. We are thus especially interested in how QuAIA does 'queer politics'. They state that:

Queer rights are not safe until all people's rights are safe. There was a period of sexual liberation in early 20th century Europe that was destroyed by the rise of fascism. As queers we neglect other struggles and other equality rights at our peril. All our struggles are bound up together. QuAIA is an example of people of different backgrounds working together for the equality of all.³²

The first line of the quote is almost the inversion of the de-politicising po-mo homo perspective developed by Aguirre-Livingston. Their aim is then 'emancipation' as such and not to protect the rights of a 'minority' or exploring and challenging how identities are constituted by discourses (check points are a very material construct). The issue that they talk about is particular and yet the way in which they approach it problematises both the traditional ways of looking at the Palestine/Israel relationship

30. City Manager of Toronto, Report from the City Manager: Compliance with the City of Toronto's Anti-Discrimination Policy - Pride Toronto, (Apr. 2, 2011), <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-37384.pdf>.

31. *QuAIA to Mayor: Find another pretext for your anti-Pride agenda*, QUEERS AGAINST ISRAELI APARTHEID, (Apr. 15, 2011), <http://queersagainstapartheid.org/2011/04/15/quaia-to-mayor-find-another-pretext-for-your-anti-pride-agenda/>.

32. *FAQ*, QUEERS AGAINST ISRAELI APARTHEID, <http://queersagainstapartheid.org/faq/> (last visited Sep. 15, 2013).

and what doing politics from a queer perspective means. When we queer something that is not traditionally seen as a queer issue, an interesting space for critical praxis emerges. It expands queerness and it queers (de-essentialises) ‘non-queer’ issues showing the ‘arbitrary’ articulation(s) of the political realm and the meaningful links between experiences that look completely disconnected at the first sight.

In its political work QuAIA refers to a set of relations (economic, cultural, political, geopolitical) that reconfigure the spaces inhabited by the subjects implicated in the Palestine/Israel ‘conflict’ and which in fact reconfigure those very subjects. Sites such as epistemology (orientalist knowledge production, academic involvement in oppression and its contestations, university policies, mass media representations of Palestinians and Israelis), political economy (corporations involved in the Israeli occupation, the BDS campaign), ‘inter/transnationality’ (US support to Israel, transnational activism) and subjectivity are all at play and cannot be separated. In fact, we would add to this that the ways in which queerness is talked about is part of these relationships. ‘Porosity’³³ is also enacted by QuAIA: this movement complicates the sites and spaces of this struggle going beyond national/identity boundaries but at the same time acknowledging the relevance of state power today. (Transnationality is also very queer in the sense that it de-naturalises the site of struggle, the national ascription of political causes).

The case study shows the need for radical projects to count with alliances beyond their generally narrow political spaces (which implies a sophisticated relationship with the ‘ideological other’, something that ‘radicals’ sometimes do not practice), but also the necessity to problematise queerness in these ‘transnational’ times from a perspective that acknowledges both the multidimensionality of the exercise(s) of power and the paradoxical character of ‘gay rights’: governments ‘talk’ queerness when it is convenient for their purposes, markets appropriate queerness when it is profitable, nationalists recently discovered the gay hero or the anti-nation gay. In this complex landscape, an important question should be addressed: where is, theoretically and politically, the space for queer agency to resist instrumentalisation by capitalist, colonial, racist, heteronormative, and nationalistic projects? Is this idea (‘queer agency’) an essentialist agenda trafficked by ‘gay’ or ‘post-gay’ discourses that should be discarded? If we prefer to avoid the ‘substantivisation’ of the topic (queer as a subject), we still can argue the following: queer struggles and discourses are somehow ‘incomplete’

33. SUSAN BUCK-MORSS, *HEGEL, HAITI AND UNIVERSAL HISTORY* (2009).

(and liable to be appropriated by liberalism) without an anti-colonial, indigenous, feminist and Marxist analysis of capitalist reproduction. Once again, exploitation needs to be addressed as long as the macrologics of imperialism are in operation.³⁴

In the description of its aims, QuAIA not only mentions the challenge to Israeli policies but to colonialism as such. As mentioned above it is a whole set of social relations that are problematised. Thus QuAIA ‘universalises’ its political project. And yet it is strange that capitalism (a social relation that (in)forms both homophobia and colonialism, and vice versa) is not among its targets – or at least, anti-capitalist activism is not mentioned in the description of ‘Who We Are’. One of their aims is to “build dialogue and education within anti-apartheid movements through queer, anti-colonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches.”³⁵ What does the absence of anti-capitalist struggles mean here? Similarly, in most queer academic literature today, ‘neoliberalism’ (in a more ‘discursive’ fashion) is addressed but ‘concrete’ capitalist political economy is not. And can an over-textualised reading of reality fully deconstruct the wholeness of power relations? Is there a sort of correlation (‘assemblage’ perhaps?) between capitalist hegemony, certain renditions of post-structuralism, the academic marginalisation of Marxism and the multiple activisms that do *not* put class struggle as one of their main dimensions?

V. POLITICS, THEORIES, AFFECTS

This article is a reflection on the complex and ambivalent politics of queerness in these transnational times. Through the erasure of intersections (and assemblages), we want to talk about queer discourses and the tendency towards a lack of engagement with postcolonial theory and indigenous epistemologies (or, perhaps, absence of simple and concrete ‘anti-colonial’ awareness) and political economy, and vice versa. We argue that power relations based on colonialism and capitalism do affect queer experiences and realities. Queerness is then not confined to the body, the passion and practices of signification, but is constructed, mediated, contested and challenged through processes which include but transcend body, desires, sex, language and performance.³⁶

34. Spivak, *supra* note 12.

35. *Who We Are*, QUEERS AGAINST ISRAELI APARTHEID, <http://queersagainstapartheid.org/who/> (last visited Sep. 10, 2013).

36. Eng et al., *supra* note 12, at 12. Similarly, for Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz, Queer Studies should promise, but often fails, to go beyond “a history of gay men, a sociology of gay male sex clubs, an anthropology of gay male tourism, a survey of gay male aesthetics.”

Rey Chow has questioned the category of the ‘marginalised subject’ by arguing that difference always (re)produces multiple identities which escalate more exclusionary processes by seeking more inclusion.³⁷ For her, Subject X, as different as it maybe, is still the ‘same’ as other subjects; thus identity/ subjectivity is defined through difference. How different is ‘queer’ then? Does ‘queer queer’ or does it remain a reified subject? Is queer just another category in the intersectional analysis or may be ‘something else’? Building on Chow’s work, Puar argues that the notion of ‘assemblage’ may be a productive alternative to de-reify ‘queer’, being “the focus not on content but on *relations, relations of patterns*.”³⁸ In this sense, assemblages, Puar elaborates: (1) “de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing”; (2) “along with a de-exceptionalising of human bodies, multiple forms of matter can be bodies — bodies of water, cities, institutions, and so on”; this also means that (3) “signification is only one element of many that give a substance both meaning and capacity”; and that (4) “categories — race, gender, sexuality — are considered events, actions, and encounters, between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects.”³⁹ By assembling queer in this way we can study the relations and relations of patterns showing the uneven articulation(s) of the political. We suggest an assemblage of queer, feminist, postcolonial, Marxist and indigenous perspectives. This move is an intervention in the ‘politics of truth’ in the Foucauldian sense, in this case the ‘truth’ of what queer is about.

If we assume that social relations of power are interrelated or even mutually constituted, it simply becomes impossible to sharply separate different forms of oppression. This is, of course, a way of doing social analysis that tries to overcome all kinds of reductionism (which may be somehow impossible). Relationality⁴⁰ — and this is what matters here — can also be a political strategy and a conceptualisation of queer praxis as a part of the broader social justice movement. From this perspective, as Judith Butler avers that it is not ‘okay’ to isolate queer pains from other injustices because if we do so “queer activism becomes implicated in the

37. REY CHOW, *THE AGE OF THE WORLD TARGET* (2006).

38. Puar, *supra* note 13, at para 12.

39. *Id.* ¶ 13-14.

40. A work-in-progress-category deployed by Paulo Ravecca in his current research and reflection whose point of departure, is precisely the understanding of power relations as a *complex relationality* between knowledge production and dissemination, identity, subjectivity, political economy, conventional politics, and the transnational dimension of the political. All these aspects, Ravecca assumes, dynamically affect (or mutually constitute) each other. ‘Political science’ (the academic discipline) is in this context analysed through the notion of *the politics of political science*.

oppression of others.”⁴¹ Emancipation based on a blind particularism is as dangerous as a blind universalism. And without Marxism, it becomes impossible, we argue, to productively analyse/ contest the ‘encounter’ between neoliberal capitalism and ‘queer’.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, many and terrible ‘mistakes’, by so-called socialist states⁴², the discursive shift within the critical side of social sciences and humanities⁴³ and the hegemony of liberalism within the ‘serious’ social sciences (International Relations, Economics and Political Science) are all implicated in the othering of Marxism.⁴⁴ Marxism becomes associated with a ‘past’ that has been theoretically superseded. Marxism comes to be ‘old’, ‘reductionist’, ‘simplistic’, ‘colonial’ and so on. Post-structuralism (whether or not explicitly) sometimes reinforces what liberalism has done very well: it participates in the essentialisation of Marxism.⁴⁵ We need to be suspicious about a possible ‘encounter’ between some renditions of poststructuralism

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41. Judith Butler, Hannah Arendt Chair at the European Graduate School, Culture and the Academic Boycott, Talk at the 7th Annual Israeli Apartheid Week in Toronto (Mar. 9, 2011).
 42. GEOFF ELEY, *FORGING DEMOCRACY: THE HISTORY OF LEFT IN EUROPE, 1850-2000* (2002). Geoff Eley’s historical work has shown that both the mainstream or ‘institutional’ left has been indifferent and sometimes even hostile towards (for instance) feminist and anti-colonial struggles and what he interestingly called the rigidisation of Marxism after Marx in academia and beyond. However, he also argues that the ‘official history’ of ‘socialism’ does not recognise that those ‘other’ struggles were important in the very process of the formation of the left. The role of Polanyian ‘antimodern’ or ‘inorganic’ resistances against industrialisation in the formation of socialist forces is another example of this. Thus, the making of the working class involved cultural aspects (E P. Thompson) and also ‘social movements’ and their struggles; See Claus Offe, *Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics: Social Movements since the 1960s*, in *CHALLENGING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE POLITICAL* (Charles S. Maier ed., 1985). In other words, we do not need to wait until ‘new social movements’ (in Offe’s formulation) to see ‘other social justice struggles’ emerge or for ‘identity’ to be addressed. We would also suggest that New Social Movements Theory has an orientalist dimension that should be questioned.
 43. See DAVID McNALLY, *BODIES OF MEANING: STUDIES ON LANGUAGE, LABOR AND LIBERATION* (2002). Following McNally, those theories that forget the genitals, the labouring body, the pain of real people, have undesirable political implications. If the textual world has no exteriority, there is no exteriority of the commodity form and capitalism cannot have an end (a factual exteriority, a concrete limit): the linguistic turn in political philosophy can be seen, as McNally does, as the revival of the original idealism, but with even worse ideological effects. Thus, we basically agree with McNally on his ideological critique of (some forms of) ‘post-structuralism’: reality is not a bunch of texts..
 44. Paulo Ravecca, *Marxismo, estudios poscoloniales y teoría queer hoy: economías de la violencia conceptual y horizontes más allá del apartheid. Una reflexión epistemológico-política*, PUBLICACIONES DE LA FUNDACIÓN DE INVESTIGACIONES SOCIALES Y POLÍTICAS (2010), <http://www.fisyp.org.ar/modules/news/article.php?storyid=577>; Paulo Ravecca, *Critical Review of Applying Political Theory of Katherine Smits*, 1 *CRÍTICA CONTEMPORÁNEA: J. POL.THEORY* (2011); AJAZ AHMAD, *IN THEORY: CLASSES, NATIONS, LITERATURES* (1992). Ahmad inscribes Said’s most famous book and the emergence of postcolonial studies in general in a moment of crisis of the Left and in an intellectual environment hostile to Marxism. The same, of course, can be said about queer theory and poststructuralist tendencies in general. See also EDWARD SAID, *ORIENTALISM* (1979).
 45. See, e.g., Saul Newman, *Anarchism, Poststructuralism and the Future of Radical Politics*, 36 *SUBSTANCE* 2 (2007).

and liberal discourses in the attack on, indifference to and incomplete engagement with Marxism. There is no theory identical to itself⁴⁶ and Anderson shows that if Marxism has indeed marginalised important subjects and struggles, it is also the case that *Marxism has its own margins*.⁴⁷

Marxism is a complex discursive formation and it should be acknowledged as such with its contradictions and tensions.⁴⁸ In fact, for Judith Butler: “to expose the contingent acts that create the appearance of a naturalistic necessity” is a move that “has been part of cultural critique at least since Marx.”⁴⁹ We would say then that Marx is queer if the reference is ‘capitalism’. Marxism de-naturalises capitalist discourses and dynamics. In order to reach a full critique of the naturalised/ing subject formation(s) that is/are imposed on us we need to problematise both gender and capitalist social relations of (identity) production. Marxist-feminism has provided rich critiques of social reproduction which tie together paid and unpaid labour, state and civil society, home and workplace, in a single process defined by fundamental relations of inequality. Writing from a queer Marxist feminist perspective, Allan Sears argues: “In [this] context of commodification, a person becomes visible as “queer” only through the deployment of particular market goods and services.”⁵⁰ Others – old, fat, skinny, trans, racialised, disabled, poor – are rendered invisible, “either because they cannot afford the cover or because they cannot look “gay” or “lesbian”.”⁵¹

However, Marxist theorising has not provided substantial critiques of the uneven but productive connections and relations between capitalism and heteronormativity. McClintock, Menon, Peterson and Yuval-Davis have shown interrelations between heteronormativity, gender, family, nationalism and citizenship.⁵² Menon has elaborated f

46. Ravecca, *supra* note 44.

47. See KEVIN S. ANDERSON, *MARX AT THE MARGINS: ON NATIONALISM, ETHNICITY, AND NON-WESTERN SOCIETIES* (2010). Anderson’s contribution is problematic: his ‘bookish’ way of dealing with Marxist theory makes him on the one hand suggest that Marx had an anti-colonial sensibility which is expressed in a multilinear conception of social development and on the other to conclude his book in the most orientalist fashion.

48. Michel Foucault, *What is an author*, in *THE FOUCAULT READER* 114 (Paul Rabinow ed., 1984).

49. BUTLER, *supra* note 17, at 46.

50. Alan Sears, *Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?*, 69 *Sci. & Soc’y* 108 (2005).

51. *Id.*

52. Anne McClintock, *Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family*, 44 *FEM. REV.* 61-80 (1993); Nivedita Menon, *How Natural is Normal? Feminism and Compulsory Heterosexuality*, in *BECAUSE I HAVE A VOICE: QUEER POLITICS IN INDIA* (Arvind Narrain & Gautam Bhan eds., 2005); Spike V. Peterson, *Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism*, 1 *INT’L FEM. J. POL.* 1 (1999); Nira Yuval-Davis, *Nationalist Projects and Gender Relations*, 40 (1) *NARODNA UMJETNOST: CROATIAN J. ETHNOLOGY & FOLKLORE* 10 (2003).

urther on these relations by connecting them to property rights. In her words:

Caste, race and community identity are produced through birth. So too is the quintessentially modern identity of citizenship. The purity of these identities and social formations and of the existing regime of property relations is protected by the strict policing and controlling of women's sexuality. Thus, the family as it exists, the only form in which it is allowed to exist — the heterosexual patriarchal family — is key to maintaining both nation and community.⁵³

From this perspective, challenging patriarchy, capitalism and anti-democratic forms of identity politics is inescapably linked to challenging the naturalisation of the heterosexual family.⁵⁴ Puar has enriched and problematised the analysis of this relationship by critiquing the appropriation of queerness within the structures of the neoliberalised nation-state.⁵⁵ Her work on homonationalism shows that queer subjects are not merely excluded from the heteronormative, white U.S. nation but sometimes become complicit with these very heterosexual configurations of the nation-state that work to marginalise them.

In the patriotic fervour of the war on terror, homonationalism works by constructing the homosexual other as white and the racial other as straight and homophobic. She argues that in the U.S. liberal framework, queer subjects are disaggregated from the racial other due to the invocation of the terrorist as the (dangerous) other. As long as few perverse queer bodies (i.e. white gay men) reiterate mainstream heterosexuality ('straight acting', respectable ways of life) as the norm, the (re)roduction of queer bodies becomes another tactic for the deployment of U.S. nationalism and patriotism. Collectively, homonationalism and heteronationalism, Puar writes: "continue or extend the project of U.S. nationalism and imperial expansion endemic to the war on terror. The terms of degeneracy have shifted as such that homosexuality is no longer a priori excluded from nationalist formations."⁵⁶ Islamophobia has become central to homonormativity, a struggle that organisations like QuAIA have to engage with at every step, and is integral to the pinkwashing of Israel's occupation of Palestine.

53. Menon, *supra* note 52, at 35; Nivedita Menon, *Outing Heteronormativity: Nation, Citizen, Feminist Disruptions*, in *SEXUALITIES 20* (Nivedita Menon ed., 2007). She further adds on being queer: "If we recognize that "normal" heterosexuality is painfully constructed and kept in place by a range of cultural, biomedical and economic controls, and that these help sustain existing hierarchies of class and caste and gender [and race], then we would have to accept that we are all, or have the potential to be queer."

54. Menon, *supra* note 52.

55. PUAR, *supra* note 6.

56. *Id.* at 2-3.

Sadia Toor similarly shows how neo-orientalist discourses construct ‘the Muslim’ enemy as both misogynist and homophobic and Islam as inherently illiberal.⁵⁷ She argues:

[T]his illiberalism is then presented as both the mark and the evidence of Islam’s radical alterity from Western civilization, an alterity that cannot be tolerated and must, in fact, be destroyed [...] [T]he new imperial project thus uses the imperative to ‘rescue’ Muslim queers (as well as women, of course) as an ideological cover for racist wars abroad and xenophobia at home.⁵⁸

Home (the so-called ‘Western World’) gets (re)imagined as a place free from discrimination and equal in opportunities while supposed progressive gender and sexual relations becomes a cover for ‘regressive’ race and class relations. Besides being empirically inaccurate (conservative U. S. Christians and Orthodox Jews are no different from conservative Muslims regarding sexual politics) this legitimises racism “as the vehicle that transports white gays and feminists into the political mainstream,”⁵⁹ making queer voices central to the ‘war on terror’ and (gay) imperialist projects. These assemblages allocate ‘queer’ in new patterns of relationships that make the proto-fascist dimension of homophile discourses (which are not new, of course) dominant, affecting the ‘political identity’ of queer. Queer as a space of contestation becomes colonised by right-wing discourses.

Thus, Puar and Toor show how queer subjectivities in the way they are ‘assembled’ today have become integral to projects of occupation, imperialism, and colonialism. Further Indigenous feminist, queer and Two-Spirit critiques have challenged the very notion of the ‘nation-state’ grounded in ongoing processes of settler colonialism in white settler nation-states. Writing about the ongoing colonialism of Turtle Island, Andrea Smith provides a gendered analysis of settler colonialism.⁶⁰ She argues that colonialism throughout the Americas imposed ‘traditional Western’ gender roles and patriarchal structures on

57. Toor, *supra* note 8.

58. *Id.* at 1.

59. Haritaworn *et al.*, *supra* note 8, at 72; For more on this, see *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality*, RAW NERVE BOOKS, <http://www.rawnervebooks.co.uk/outofplace.html> (last visited Sep. 1, 2013). The essay is a part of the book *Out of Place: Integrating Silences in Queerness/Raciality*. The book is out of publication now, because of the threats it got from gay imperialists/homonationalists in England; Mikki Stelder, *Start With Amsterdam! An Alternative Statement on the Sexual Nationalisms Conference*, SEDENTARY MEANDERINGS (2011), <http://ardhra.tumblr.com/post/3535943330/start-with-amsterdam-an-alternative-statement-on-the>. This piece shows the troubled (and sometimes repressive) politics of gayness today.

60. ANDREA SMITH, CONQUEST: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND AMERICAN INDIAN GENOCIDE (2005).

indigenous communities.⁶¹ Sexual violence, she claims, cannot be limited to individual acts of rape but need to be conceptualised as a wide range of strategies not only to displace and destroy peoples but to destroy their sense of being a people. Smith makes conceptual links between white supremacy, settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. She argues:

[...] in order to colonize a people whose society was not hierarchical, colonizers must first naturalise hierarchy through instituting patriarchy. Patriarchal gender violence is the process by which colonisers inscribe hierarchy and domination on the bodies of the colonised. Ironically, while enslaving women's bodies, colonisers inscribe hierarchy and domination on the bodies of the colonised.⁶²

The notions of 'traditional Western' gender roles and of a non-hierarchical indigenous society are debatable and perhaps one can see in them the temptation of reification.⁶³ However, Smith's argument highlights something more relevant in this context: the advent of specific forms of gendered violence with colonialism. In many cases, it was not only about genocide and dispossession but also about reinforcing or producing 'regressive' gender understandings and relations. Building on Smith's analysis, Scott Morgensen seeks to theorise queerness within

61. Similar parallels can be drawn across various (post)colonial contexts. For example, in British colonies across South Asia, the Caribbean and Africa, anti-sodomy laws were introduced to impose 'civilised' norms of sex and sexualities. Such homophobic laws are still present in most of these ex-colonies, sometimes reinforced by regressive anti-colonial forces, for which homosexuality is a 'Western' creation. This situation shows the complexity and ironic structure of politics. Carrying the trajectory of colonialism further, Andil Gosine has shown how from colonialism to contemporary processes of international development, forms of regulations have reproduced unequal power relations. See Andil Gosine, *Monster, Womb, MSM: The work of sex in international development*, 52 DEVELOPMENT 27 (2009). He argues, "[...] recent calls to 'queer development' through the recognition and fuller participation of gays, lesbians and other people who do not name themselves 'heterosexual' may do little to shift this terrain of power as they too require adoption of Euro-American forms of sexual regulation in post-colonisation state construction." Recent examples of the calls by British Prime Minister David Cameron and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to slash aid to African countries with poor records on homosexual rights shows how sexual/human rights are a space for imperialist interventions. In the meantime, homophobic discourses and actions by conservative African governments and violent groups are supported by conservative Americans. It is among all of these powerful forces and discourses (nationalist, imperialist, liberal, socialist and so on) that *many* concrete 'queer lives' get *trapped*. For nuanced analyses of the 'interactions' between political economy, globalisation, subjectivity and sexuality, see JACQUI M. ALEXANDER, *PEDAGOGIES OF CROSSING: MEDIATIONS ON FEMINISM, SEXUAL POLITICS, MEMORY AND THE SACRED* (2005); GLORIA WEKKER, *THE POLITICS OF PASSION: WOMEN'S SEXUAL CULTURE IN THE AFRO-SURINAMESE DIASPORA* (2006); Paulo Ravecca, *Progressive Government And The LGTBQ Agenda: On The (Recent) Queering of Uruguay And Its Limits*, CERLAC (Working Paper, July, 2010) (Ravecca reflects on these issues, 'applying' them to the case of Uruguay).

62. SMITH, *supra* note 60, at 23.

63. In fact, at some point we need to discard the notion of the West as a unified entity.

the context of settler-colonial states.⁶⁴ Morgensen employs Puar's concept of homonationalism to talk about settler colonialism and queer subjectivities. He argues that settler colonialism conditions the formation of modern sexuality in the U. S. which also includes modern queer subjects and politics. He raises the following question: how to theorise modern queer subjectivities within the framework of settler colonialism? He elaborates:

I interpret homonationalism as an effect of U.S. queer modernities forming amid the conquest of Native peoples and the settling of Native land. The terrorising sexual colonisation of Native people was a historical root of the biopolitics of modern sexuality in the United States.⁶⁵

Thus settler homonationalism is the effect of the biopolitical relationship between sexual colonisation of indigenous peoples and the normative formation of modern settler queer projects in the U.S. Morgensen outlines how the colonisation project has always been sexualised and how it has reinforced heterosexuality and binary gender systems on the Native communities. It has marked "native people by their sexual perversity as queer to colonial regimes."⁶⁶ Colonial discourses of race and sexuality came to categorise "transgressive individuals and entire communities" as inherently violable in the name of moral order of colonisation.⁶⁷ Bethany Schneider elaborates on this further:

Native people, forced upon from their traditional genders and sexualities, were required as children, eternally stunted, the sexualised wards of the state. Forced into future-driven, property oriented genders and sexualities, Indians were also consigned to a terrible 'no future' predicated precisely on the state's definition of 'straightened' Indians as nevertheless queerly childish, or childishly queer.⁶⁸

Thus settler colonialism conditioned every aspect of the history of sexuality in the U.S. but, as Morgensen points out, has only rarely been made a focus of study. Similarly, Smith points out how queer theory rests on the presumption of the U.S. settler state.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Morgensen argues that non-native queer movements can naturalise settlement and colonialism and claim normative and national queer

64. Scott L. Morgensen, *Settler Homonationalism: Theorising Settler Colonialism and Queer Modernities*, in 16 (1-2) GLQ: J. LESBIAN & GAY STUD. 105-132 (2010).

65. *Id.* at 105-106

66. *Id.* at 108.

67. *Id.* at 112.

68. Daniel H. Justice et al., *Introduction*, 16(1-2) GLQ: J. LESBIAN & GAY STUD. 20 (2010).

69. Andrea Smith, *Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism*, 16 J. OF LESBIAN & GAY STUD. 45 (2010).

citizenship. By defending ‘primitive’ sexual nature and by appropriating Native American culture as the past of their history, non-native queers render their “queer marginality into a normative assertion of settler citizenship.”⁷⁰ Queers naturalise settler colonialism whenever conquest and the displacement of Native peoples are ignored or appear inevitable. Morgensen urges us to read discourses of ‘the terrorist’ produced through the war on terror together with the discursive production of the savage. By challenging the production of U.S. homonationalism, Morgensen argues that “the global aspirations of U.S. Queers can be situated and challenged by marking where they derive from or project queer forms of settler sexuality.”⁷¹ Advocating for decolonisation of the Native lands, he argues that all settlements, of all forms, should be denaturalised, including within U.S. (and Canadian) queer projects.

VI. CONCLUSION

There is a need, we have argued in this article, to overcome economic and culturalist reductionisms in the approach to radical politics. They are both liberal in their ‘ideological mechanics’ because they proceed with the logic of segmentation and therefore obscure how power(s) operate(s). The ways of defining concepts have political implications: an over-textualised notion of queerness, race as *the* space for resistance, and a class-centered conception of the struggle for ‘justice’ are all highly problematic (and somehow reinforce each other). It is also not enough to talk about queerness as a set of ‘alliances’ in a similar fashion to what Laclau and Mouffe have done regarding the ‘socialist strategy’ before – same liberal ‘mechanics’: if we think about queerness as an identity separated from other social relations we actually think about white, male and middle-class bodies and subjects.⁷² It is precisely this liberal logic in which queers should ‘collaborate’ with other identities that we need to challenge. We would say even more: there is no ‘queer subject’ (in fact such an idea is completely oxymoronic). The essentialist agenda, by extirpating ‘queer’ from the social relations in which it is embedded, erases material (gendered, classed, racialised) positionalities ‘within queerness’ (liberalism, again). Discrete identities are dangerous political constructs.

‘Queer’ operates in polyvalent ideological forms, as any fragment of discourse.⁷³ Queerness, in our account, is constituted by dimensions which

70. Morgenson, *supra* note 64, at 119.

71. *Id.* at 125.

72. See ERNESTO LACLAU & CHANTAL MOUFFE, *HEGEMONÍA Y ESTRATEGIA SOCIALISTA* (2004).

73. MICHEL FOUCAULT, *HISTORIA DE LA SEXUALIDAD 1-LA VOLUNTAD DE SABER* (1991).

go beyond a narrow conception of sexuality. Queering queerness implies talking about gendering, racialising and classing processes, avoiding an additive logic, and acknowledging their inter-related messiness (and to go beyond the liberal logic of segmentation that is always penetrating critical thinking). If, originally, queer “was a term that challenged the normalising mechanisms of state power to name its sexual subjects: male or female, married or single, heterosexual or homosexual, natural or perverse,”⁷⁴ now we need to radicalise the critique in order to address social relations of power obscured by the state/ civil society divide. In fact, the state is neither an enemy nor an ally *per se*: this will depend on the ‘assemblages’ that penetrate it and operate through its structures. Similarly, ‘civil society’ is not a monolithic object ‘outside’ the state but a permeable space of contestation. It seems that technologies of domination ‘travel’ faster and are more flexible than the categories we use to understand them or, in other words, perhaps our categories can never completely avoid ‘betraying’ our emancipatory impulses (as is the case with ourselves). At any rate, we need to insist on addressing the capitalist logics of social reproduction, attacking not only ‘normalisation’ but also ‘inequality’ (in order to prevent inequality becoming normalised through the discourses of ‘difference’).

Theoretical voluntarism and good intentions do not exorcise the potential limits that we may face when trying to assemble indigenous, Marxist, postcolonial and queer perspectives and theories. All these constructs are internally heterogeneous and may be oppressive *and* liberating at the same time. There are no unpolluted ‘winners’ out there and the engagement with complexity expels any romantic version of these ‘identities’. All of them have been proved to be dangerous and politically ambivalent. However, we do think that there is potential for assembling some of the insights that these experiences and perspectives bring about in order to challenge mainstream accounts of power relations which simply reproduce domination in the realm of thinking. Through queer assemblages and engagements, we can critically deconstruct power(s) by bringing Marxist, feminist, postcolonial, queer and indigenous perspectives to at least try to queer and decolonise spaces, praxes and futures.



74. Eng et al., *supra* note 12, at 1.