

Queer Geographies

A photograph of a person with curly hair, seen from behind, standing on a concrete pier. They are looking out at a body of water where another person is swimming. The water is covered in bright, shimmering reflections of sunlight. The title 'Queer Geographies' is overlaid in a large, purple, serif font in the upper right.

BEIRUT TIJUANA COPENHAGEN

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Lasse Lau
Mirene Arsanios
Felipe Zúñiga-González
Mathias Kryger
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Museet for Samtidskunst, Roskilde, Denmark

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Before the Beginnings...

Lasse Lau

The inflexible rule that the proof of the pudding is in the eating...¹

— Bertolt Brecht

He is turning his head to see if I am still there. It's just before midnight and the sun has set. We are in the park not far from the metal gate that leads us away from the city, it bangs every time someone enters. His face is lit up from one of the lampposts that cast shadows on our faces; they are our only witness. I see him take a left turn down the sloped path that leads onto a small bridge crossing the lake. He starts to accelerate, and I step up my tempo to keep the same distance from him. He checks me out again, and stops in the middle of the bridge, looking out into the dark of the lake, now ignoring my incisive gaze as I pass him. I look back while continuing walking; he's still ignoring me. I keep turning to see if he will follow me, and briefly mourn the loss of him, still looking into the dark of the lake, until I find the next body to continue the dance with, and hopefully someone after that.

My first sexual experiences were in H. C. Ørsted Park in Copenhagen, named after the Danish physicist and chemist who discovered that electric currents create magnetic fields. The dance of bodies in the park, mirroring each other's body language, learning the codes of desire, felt liberating deep down in my then divided sixteen-year-old closeted soul. I was part of a silent community without words and sentences. I didn't mind it—I was not a big talker anyway. The danger of AIDS was lurking throughout my intimate explorations (it was the early '90s, after all) and there was no "cure" if the condom broke and an accident occurred. I had earlier called a LGBT hotline, (the abbreviation was shorter then) but hung up at the sound of an overbearing voice. Later that summer I met an American, who suddenly to my surprise started talking to me, as we pulled up our pants inside one of the bushes. He invited me to his place, and I did visit him later, sneaking out of my dad's house in the evening under other pretenses. The American was about eight years older, and became my first lover.

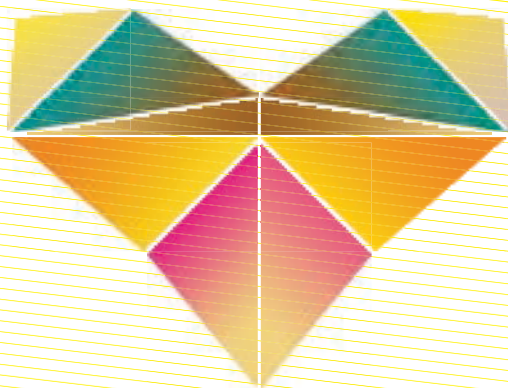
Today, the park is still one of the few popular spots where all kinds of shapes and ages can meet, although most of the souls would probably blatantly deny their frequency there, and hide their lust for each other's warm bodies in the shadow of the trees. In the winter of 2001, the shrubs and bushes were just as discreetly



View of a damaged cigarette machine inside the Stonewall Inn (53 Christopher Street) after riots over the weekend of June 27, 1969. The bar and surrounding area were the site of a series of demonstrations and riots that led to the formation of the modern gay rights movement in the United States. (Photo by Fred W. McDarragh/Getty Images)

removed by the city, as in so many other cities. I feel limited and censored by this action, but mostly violated by the missing reaction of the LGBT community and their overwhelming collective silence at this attack. An intervention that was initiated by a single conservative politician² on behalf of his own daughter, who lived in the bordering gentrified neighborhood, and because of their personal disgust with gay sex. I decided to act against this crackdown myself by creating an artificial bush room in an old cold-war shelter that existed beneath the grass of the park. I had rented the shelter from the city telling them I'd be making an "art" exhibition later that summer. This was a release for the unspoken frustration using art—in a symbolic way where cruising could continue—in a post-Duchamp era when art can be everything. *Sous les pavés, la plage*.³ (You can read about this in the Botanical Backslash article by Mathias Kryger on page 160).

The streets, parks, piers, and bathrooms of cruising represent spaces in the establishment of our counterculture in history. A secret language and social codes were our weapon, and they were the basis for the formation of our collective identities, which later would become verbalized. But one thing is clear: these *Powerless Spaces*⁴ are disappearing, being privatized or becoming hyper-controlled. Today even bars have for the most part been succeeded by online communities—or should I say million-dollar businesses—like the phone app Grindr. A change in social circulation, from what George Chauncey describes in the history of *Gay New York* where intimacy “could only have been in public,”⁵ to today’s online rendezvous—staying within the private sphere, out of the streets and bars, behind closed curtains, under the covers, diminished and hidden from any public visibility. Sure apps are corporations, and corporations don’t have inherent values. However, I am not sure for whom and by whom, and how much community these apps want to give us, that is something we should question more. The reality of these spaces—cyber or In Real Life—will always be contingent their social use, and our ability to appropriate them, and build them ourselves for our own purposes and, to use Larry Kramer’s term, our “population”⁶ needs. Just as the paths in the park were cut and the “rooms” in the bushes were created over time, just as the straight architecture was inhabited and appropriated to our needs—we have to learn to ask for more.



one+love

One+Love is a new social media app targeting Queers of Color with an emphasis on community building and connecting users to local safe spaces and resources. The app, which was developed by Sean Apparicio, is set to launch in 2014 in New York; www.onepluslove.com.

Mind the Gap

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.⁷

— Edward Said

In the movie *Times Square*⁸ from 1980 the two characters—lesbian lovers—Nicky and Pamela are portrayed through the scenery of the streets. The opening scene in the film has Nicky arriving with her boombox at the heart of the Big Apple; she observes and meets characters including street kids, hustlers, queers, and others, as an architect’s model is carefully being carried inside a redevelopment office. Nicky and Pamela meet after been separately hospitalized for their unspoken “deviant” symptoms. After running away from the institution they start making music together in the punk band the Slez Sisters, and make their own spectacle by throwing television sets off city rooftops in revolt against the order of representation. It’s hard to imagine people throwing out any flat-screens, iPads, smartphones or laptops in revolt against representation today. In the film the girls rebel together against the “cleaning up” of their city, represented by Pamela’s dad, who is the head of the redevelopment office; in their view he symbolizes the nuclear family, occupation through gentrification, and the violent imposition of certain values onto the space of the other. AIDS became in the fall of ‘95 the final closing argument for the city to shut the remaining porn theaters around Times Square.⁹ The girls know very well what is happening to them through the oppression of their sexuality into invisibility. The girls sing “*You want to make Times Square as cold as your icy eye? Why do you want to punish people who aren’t like you? You know, at home, I’ve heard you use the following words: spic, faggot, nigger, psycho. Well, I just want you to know, your daughter is one.*”¹⁰

The conflict between identity politics, capitalism, and public space are all combined in the film. Certainly processes of exclusion and destruction continue inside and outside our community, dumped on us and our collective sphere. It always returns to what we can consume: our identities, bodies, and social bonds, and the idea that we in democracy actively can create, participate and modify our own images, and to some extent our bodies, and the reproduction of those images. And the most vulnerable is always the body that cannot pass in front of the gaze of the oppressor: the *image*. But is this image of us real? Ironically, the

most explicit sexual scenes in the film were cut in an (unsuccessful) attempt to get the film into the mainstream market.

What I want to uncover is the problematic structure that is the opposite of what the film represents, how the media mechanically reproduces how we should see reality, like a wheel of our own identities again and again being reproduced. I am exhausted by clichés that have occupied our minds, and don't want to repeat them here, but simply ask if it is possible that these images are produced with other interests our behalf?

Myths are put into our brains and out to our communities, by corporations, in order to support their homogeneous goals and interests. Zipcar endorsed gay marriage at New York Pride 2006; L'Oréal Studioline models infiltrated the pride in Brussels in 2009. The sick twist here is when the gaze of the oppressor



L'Oréal Studioline models infiltrated the pride in Brussels 2009. Photo by Lasse Lau.



Video still from *Corporate Pride* by Lasse Lau, 6 min, 2006, depicting how the agency of Stonewall Riots was stolen by global companies in New York.

becomes our own. When we become self-repressed—just as an American marriage song is performed on our behalf by the straight rapper Macklemore¹¹—it starts off looking like propaganda, and then feels suffocating in a way that's hard to explain.

Some of the discourses can be observed in the *white gay male* figure and the representation of his conservative values, desires, and urges—to reuse a Lisa Duggan term, his homonormative¹² behavior—in which he assimilates into heteronormative lifestyles: getting married, having children, and consuming an endless supply of goods. Even if he is against the institution of marriage as a gay white male he doesn't have the option to say no, since it would be damaging to the cause. All infused with false pink-money myths about his relatively high income, a transparent strategy to gain access to his wealth. We see the results in TV series like *The New Normal*, *The A-list*, *Modern Family*, *Million Dollar Listing*, *Brothers and Sisters*, and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, to name a few. It is laid out to us in vigorous contrast to the nonnormative, nonconsuming, sexual deviant, subordinate queer body who remains outside the family pattern, not to mention the bodies of color, or the transgendered. I would go so far as to say there is no doubt that today the real litmus test is: Who cannot pass for the images produced by the heteronormative view of the “queer” body?

There is a straight lineage from the film *Times Square* as an artistic document from a time when diversity and sexuality were still articulated in the streets, our freedom having been claimed along with the other civil rights movements of the '60s and '70s, to the breakdown in the '80s and '90s, when global economics and neoliberal politics fused with an AIDS crisis and sex scare and suppressed the “sexual” and visible “deviant” body—taking us from the street into cyberspace.

In cyberspace we have been made to believe that we have become equal producers, and participants; our “bodies” are allowed to fit in and play out our own narrative through Facebook pages, apps, blogs, Twitter feeds and Second Life accounts. At the same time the class differences within our LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual) community have never been more daunting, creating a body of participants and a body of the excluded. The individuality and fragmentation of our communities is clear, while the world order of commerce and capitalism becomes more and more homogenized, destroying both local economies and in case of Time Square local communities in order to make space for global entities and commerce.

It might seem a somewhat schizophrenic struggle, with a community that is partly dysfunctional, created

through representative images with different mirrored realities and identities; but when thirty-six men are arrested in a cinema in Beirut while more affluent gays consume drinks and have fun in upper-class gay bars (on pages 24 and 70) or when a transwoman is raped in a heteronormative asylum just outside Copenhagen, while the national LGBTQIA organization (on page 188) is more concerned with bishops agreeing to marry them in the church, then you must ask yourself: Is there a community, and if there is one, whom does it include?

The Pantomime of the Struggle

The oppressed is nothing, he has only one language, that of his emancipation; the oppressor is everything, his language is rich, multiform, supple, with all the possible degrees of dignity at its disposal.¹³

— Roland Barthes

Every year rainbow flags are held high to the sky in the streets during the summer months throughout the Western world celebrating the 1969 riot at the Stonewall Inn. The Christopher Street bar that was a popular hangout among working-class gays, drag queens, butch femmes, transsexuals, effeminate young men, street youth, and hustlers, and raided by the police one warm Friday night in June 1969. When the patrons were taken out one by one a crowd started gathering on the street, and a riot ensued when an unknown butch woman incited the crowd to action. Allen Ginsberg when visiting the Stonewall Inn just after the riot noted, “You know, the guys there were so beautiful—they’ve lost that wounded look that fags all had ten years ago.”¹⁴

I, born after the event, was recently looking into images from the Stonewall Riots when I realized that I was actually looking at two different events. The riot that took place at Stonewall Inn from 1969 and images from the 1970 Christopher Street Gay Liberation march that was organized in commemoration of the riots (CSGL¹⁵).

The subsequent march organized by the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was staged as a kind of reenactment of the struggle that happened the year before, and therefore you could say it was a less dangerous situation than the Stonewall riots. But it should come as no surprise that the year after the riot the fear of confrontation was immense: when the march started, participants walked so quickly because of the fear of violence that later the event was jokingly referred to by some as the “first run” rather than the “first march.”¹⁶ The musician and activist Ronnie Di Brienza had already noticed a shift the day after the riot. He writes:

“Too many people showed up looking for a carnival rather than a sincere protest. Queens were posing for pictures, slogans were being spouted out, but nothing really sincere happened in the way of protest.”¹⁷

Today’s “Pride,” as a marketplace, calls to mind Marx’s famous amendment to Hegel: history repeats itself “the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.”¹⁸ He was referring to the original 1789 revolution and the later “theater” of the 1848 French revolution. According to Karl Marx there is some historical repetition with the purpose of “glorifying” new struggles; the Christopher Street Gay Liberation March organized by the Gay Liberation Front brought this agenda to life, and differed greatly from the original outburst against police brutality. I think it explains how today’s prides become “talking about pudding,” and why certain representations of the Stonewall event shifted course and created a path to what the Pride event is today.

You see, the Gay Liberation Front’s agenda was partly a leftist one, and it had an aim that was broader than reacting to and surviving the violent situation of a single incident on the street. It was deeply linked to the civil rights movement’s more global visions, including solidarity with the struggle against the occupation in Vietnam and for black liberation. The GLF needed Stonewall to elevate their agenda. The more inward purpose for GLF was to celebrate gay bodies out in the open, to bring civil rights to the table, and to claim equal rights. I don’t want to say that this commemoration of Stonewall during the days and weeks following, or even the ones organized by the GLF the years after, was a bad thing at the time, or even that it had lost all its political significance, but simply to single out a historical shift between the original event and the recurrent ones as representations through which its significance, historical perspective, and framework were lost.

So if you wonder why the queer riots previous to Stonewall—like Cooper’s Donuts (’59, Los Angeles) or Compton Cafeteria (’66, San Francisco)—are now forgotten, and why the transwoman who threw the first hot cup of coffee in the face of a policeman in the Tenderloin is forgotten, there is your clue. What is remembered is the GLF first march that was organized mostly by white gay men with fewer transgender women and street kids to be found. Where are the youth in recent documentaries about the Stonewall riots, using all their fabulous creativity and queer fearlessness to fight and to make chains by linking arms, kicking Rockettes style and yelling slogans like “We are the Stonewall girls/ We wear our hair in curls/ We don’t wear underwear/ We show our pubic hair,” teasing the riot police in ways the police probably never experienced before or since.

Here in the transformation of goals between riot and pride, I believe certain bodies are forgotten. As Ronnie Di Brienza writes, “I have never seen anything worse than an infuriated queen with a bottle, or long nails. Believe me, get their ire up, and you face the wrath of all the Gods that ever lived.”¹⁹ James A. Baldwin seems to continue the thought with his remark, “The most dangerous creation of any society is the man who has nothing to lose.”²⁰ The street kids, transgendered bodies, the hustlers, and working-class drag queens are always in front of the barricade, and are also the first to be left out of the narrative of Stonewall. Why are we not celebrating them, the brave ones, and instead celebrating the people who had their “act together” enough to organize themselves and claim political agency a year later on behalf of a community at large?

Over the years the depoliticization of the Stonewall riot in most countries, with parades and festivities, has become more apparent.²¹ I made a short video in 2006 called *Corporate Pride* as an attempt to portray how corporate signs in New York City had substituted and infiltrated the political slogans of the community. The signs from headache pills to soft drinks provide market opportunities for corporate entities to not only capitalize on our community at big social events—under the pretense that the events represented and embodied their employees—but also claim their agency. It has become a primary operation for the marketplace today to commodify the social, and sometimes it even makes the object seem clumsy and ineffective.

This is not to say queers don’t subjugate objects and images for their own communal needs, or that consumption is always bad thing. Instead I question the entitlement of history and the distribution of the social through these gatherings. Jacques Rancière writes in his analysis of the art world as an aesthetic regime that the social as something *sensible* has become the essential marker to the distribution of signification. “A distribution of the sensible ... establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution.”²² The equation to what this means today in a hegemonic capitalist society without any of the serious counter poles of class difference that motivated the GLF not to mention the original rioters, is now absent. The right question is: Do our celebrations distract us from the real struggles?

Queer Geographies

Roland Barthes writes that the woodcutter who “speaks the tree”²³ is operational when he engages directly with his object, and *is* in sync with the object, as I was in my first sexual experiences in the park, but when we talk about trees, the distance in our language is created, and myths appear. Writing about the bushes being removed from a Copenhagen Park, the “cleaning” of Times Square seen through film, and how Pride events got hijacked by capitalist agencies, shows us how the struggle continues to happen in different geographic spaces. How much is determined through spaces of representation and distribution of the social? It is striking how little imagination we have to change social structures in society especially in a direction that is less conventional and more queering and open for all. David Harvey talks about the necessity for a post-capitalist imagination and that “we need to become the architects of a different living and working environment and to learn to bridge the microscale of the body and the personal and the macroscale of global political economy.”²⁴ I understand when theorists like Jack Halberstam are occupied with queer and non-binary gender subcultures; where there is inspiration for a framework and imagination for organizing culture quite differently than in the mainstream: “We want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls.”²⁵

By choosing and comparing three very different cities all gathered along the seashore and outside the Anglo-Saxon Queer narrative, we have an opportunity to see how struggles are dealt with locally in unique and surprisingly effective ways. How the population lives and breathes with their identities, and how identity intersects new frontiers with aspirations for change. I hope this book will provide insight into spatial day-to-day struggles that take place in our cities, and that it gives you ideas of how to continue your own renegotiation and reimagination of space. ✱

- 1- John Willett, *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964), p. 1.
- 2- Copenhagen council member Ole Hentzen from the Conservative Party. VP of the Parks Department, 2001.
- 3- "Under the paving stones, the beach," is a Parisian 1968 revolutionary graffiti slogan.
- 4- "There is no Queer Space; there are only spaces used by queers or put to queer use. Space has no natural character, no inherent meaning, no intrinsic status as public or private." George Chauncey, "Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public: Gay Use of the Streets," in Joel Sanders, ed., *Stud—Architecture of Masculinity* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p. 224.
- 5- George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 224.
- 6- Larry Kramer at his talk June 27, 2013, at the New-York Historical Society stressed that he didn't appreciate the word "community" but preferred "population" to describe the LGBTQIA commonality.
- 7- Edward W. Said, *Culture & Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 6.
- 8- *Times Square* (1980), directed by Allan Moyle.
- 9- Samuel R. Delany, *Time Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York & London: New York University Press, 1999), p. 91.
- 10- Robin Johnson and Trina Alavarado, "Your Daughter Is One" (lyrics)
- 11- "Same Love" is the single released from the 2012 album *Heist* by the Seattle-based rapper Macklemore and producer Ryan Lewis.
- 12- Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003)
- 13- Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), p. 149.
- 14- David Carter, *Stonewall: That Riot That Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: Second St. Martin's Griffin Edition, 2004), p. 199.
- 15- Today often called Christopher Street Day (CSD)
- 16- David Carter, *Stonewall*, p. 253.
- 17- Ronnie Di Brienza, "Stonewall Incident," *The East Village Other* 4, no. 32, p. 2.
- 18- Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.
- 19- Ronnie Di Brienza, "Stonewall Incident," p. 2.
- 20- James Baldwin, "Letter from a Region in My Mind," 1962, and later republished in book form *The Fire Next Time*.
- 21- An exception is Prides in certain countries of the former Eastern bloc, which has become a frontier against various xenophobic and religious elements.
- 22- Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), p. 7.
- 23- Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), p. 145.
- 24- David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- 25- Jack Halberstam, essay "The Wild Beyond: With and for the Undercommons," in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study, Minor Compositions 2013* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013), p. 6.

A Queer Geographer's Life as an Introduction to Queer Theory, Space, and Time

Jen Jack Giesekeing

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I used to be afraid to get in bed with theory, and queer theory was no different. What the hell were these theory people talking about? Who could ever capture queer life in theory? As an urban, queer, feminist geographer and psychologist, as well as a lesbian-queer-dyke-feminist-trans non-op, non-hormone dyke, I have had to come to grips with theory, queer and otherwise. The liberatory practices of what I call *queering space* and *spatializing the queer* eventually helped me to make sense of the world and even to make sense of my life and my place(s) in the world. Now that theory has equally and happily gripped me, it is worth spreading the answers to these questions. In this essay, I explain how I came to love theory through geographic theories, LGBTQ geographies, and queer theory. I write of my experience of queering geography and geographizing the queer so that you can begin to see how these different elements can be put in conversation with one another. I share my story and these theories to help you expand the way you read the art and essays in this book, and even illuminate and extend the ways you experience everyday life. I conclude by ruminating on what queer geography is and could be, and I do so in the hope that you might happily find yourself in bed with theory too.

(First) Came Space: On Meeting and Getting to Know Geography

Geography was and continues to be a field that allows me to run where and how I want to with my ideas, for all I need to do is examine the world through the lens of space—and I do that already. Unlike studies of culture (anthropology), society (sociology), or the psyche (psychology), geography is foregrounded in its literal and physical grounding in space. Our lives are riddled with geographic experience—nothing takes place outside of space, from neighborhood gentrification to riverbed development under global warming, from telecommunications in global cities to the hybridization of the space of human and animal bodies. Geographic metaphors are ways of explaining the everydayness of life that often has no other way of being clarified: where your head is at, standing your ground, know your place, I am here, and so on. But, in my college studies I wondered: where did the gay fit in?

Upon admitting my question to a faculty member during my undergraduate studies in the late 1990s, her eyes wide and holding her breath, she proffered a copy

of *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (Bell and Valentine, 1995). The way that she slowly and softly handed me the volume was as if she were turning over the material apparition of a queer secret. What lay inside charmed me and stuck with me. LGBTQ geographies and geographies of sexuality were not only existent, they were exciting and important stuff. It would be another decade before I took up LGBTQ geographies again, exploring other passions and occupations before returning to the academy.

My calling as a geographer is fueled by an attempt to make sense of the complicated yet essential experiences of spacetime in our everyday lives in order to make further steps toward both social and spatial justice. Sociospatial justice involves confronting inequalities through social and spatial means such as demanding equal distribution of resources, combating environmental racism, and fighting gender inequalities in the workplace, as well as the production of queer art projects, performances, and installations like those in this book that call for a more just world. I elaborate my research questions through participatory methods in which I work *with* participants instead of learning *about* subjects; and from there, I build theory to make sense of trends and ideas. I eventually focused my studies of women and geography by turning the course of my dissertation research to lesbian and queer spaces.

Human geographers today, spanning the social and cultural, begin from the idea put forth by social theorist Henri Lefebvre (1992): “(Social) space is (socially) produced.” In other words, each person is agentic and responsible in creating, occupying, and enacting space. Space is not absolute or fixed in the Kantian sense but is constantly produced in how it is all at once created, conceived, and lived. This *production of space* perspective is echoed both by the artist-activists in this book, and in the work of those who came before them. We can see the claim to sociospatial justice and other forms of justice by the 99 percent in the Occupy and Arab Spring movements; in the in-your-face organizing tactics of international LGBTQ organizing groups like ACT-UP, Lesbian Avengers, and Queer Nation in decades previous; and in the U.S. civil rights movement, Indian independence movement, and in other movements and efforts toward liberation before that. For LGBTQ people, our own revolutionary activism still prove how important it is to produce our own space as there is often no other recourse

but to uproariously alter the everyday spatialities of heterosexuality. Just imagine or remember what it was like to throw blood on the head of the U.S. Center for Disease Control; eat fire and bear your breasts in public; and dump thousands of condoms from the top rows of a nationally televised baseball game in NYC to encourage safe sex for all. As a field, geography is heavily influenced by ideas of Marxist and feminist thought, which seek, in their own ways, to enact equal redistribution, recognition, and representation in the work toward social and spatial justice. As a geographer, I ask people about their experience of spaces and places that have helped shape not only their identities but the meaning and experiences of justice and oppression in their lives. The findings from my work help re-present the way liberation can and does operate in everyday life. Building from these ideas and actions, there is no limit to the world we can create.

(Second) Came a Queer Interjection: The Rise of Queer Identity and Queer Theory

When I say queer, I mean all the multiple ways of being and doing queer. Going way back, queer has been a derogatory term for homosexuals in the Western context since the nineteenth century. By the 1980s, a reclaiming began of the term, taking this language back just as feminists took the streets back. By the 1990s, the term queer had taken on a radical identity that refused traditional binaries of man-woman, gay-lesbian, or even even—gasp!—bisexual. As Michael Warner and the Social Text Collective write of the reclaiming of queer from its negative uses, “The insistence on ‘queer’—a term initially generated in the context of [invoking] terror—has the effect of pointing out a wide field of normalization, rather than simple intolerance, as the site of violence” (1993, xxvi). Queer theory hatched as a broader theory that destabilizes the assumptions and privileges of secure heteronormative models of study and everyday life, and that politicizes and acknowledges the fluidity and instability of identities, spaces, and societies. Proponents of queer theory argue for the acceptance and understanding of the more complex reality in which we live. As such this way of theorizing provides scholars, activists, and others with ways of thinking and talking about life beyond fixed assumptions. While queer theory is especially helpful in fighting homophobia and transphobia, it is also used beyond the realm of gender or sexuality. For example, when studying the politics of racial, ethnic, or class identities, scholars may wish to “queer the subject” by writing about these identities as fluid rather than as rigid or binary subjects.

It is my own understanding that queer theory always seeks to make room for the opposite and opposing

as well as the fleeting and the fragmented through critiquing and problematizing from the situatedness of everyday life. As such, the practice of queering is often used to herald difference, question powers behind normativities, and situate pleasure and politics side by side. But, as I began my advanced studies of people, space, and place, I still wondered: what do these identities, politics, and theoretical calls for celebrating the topsy-turviness of life have to do with space?

(Third) Came Space + Queer: Living and Studying LGBTQ Space and Place

I hate to break this to you, but there is no such thing named “queer geography” in the academic world as of yet. To date, the academic subdisciplines include LGBTQ geographies (studying LGBTQ spaces and experiences of space), and geographies of sexuality (studying sexual spaces, or the sexualized experience of space). What I call *queering space* (using queer theory to read geography) and *spatializing the queer* (using geographical theory to read the queer) is a bridge and conversation between queer theory and geography that is not a subdiscipline but a practice among queer theorists and geographers. While that which is gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans can equally be spatialized, I am not as much interested in identities but rather the action of queering: refusing the normative and upsetting privilege for more radical, just worlds, even those not yet imagined. To get you in bed comfortably with the practices of queering space and spatializing the queer, I need to share how LGBTQ geographies grew from actual LGBTQ experience, or what is now known as LGBTQ studies. It is that LGBTQ experience that, in turn, informs the ways we queer space and place in geography today.

The geographical imagination—homo, hetero, and/or otherwise—often associates LGBTQ people with cities. However, imaginaries are just this and must be unpacked. For example, the city retains an equally strong narrative about being a place for men, but women purportedly find themselves locked in their urban homes for safety and, as such, generally invisible (E. Wilson 1992; Pain 2001; Pain and Smith 2008). Furthermore, while LGBTQ studies has begun to extend itself to prioritize rural and other nonurban environments (see Binnie and Valentine 1999; Knopp and Brown 2003, 2003; Halberstam 2005; Gray 2009), studies of the urban are still both important and needed.

Cities are historically theorized as a site for the depraved and the delinquent, i.e., home to the homosexual (Burgess, Park, and McKenzie 1925; Wirth 1938), and such ideas still permeate everyday life (Abraham 2009). These hateful ideas formed from the large population of LGBTQ people who left

rural and suburban environs for the anonymity and independence of city life (Weston 1995; see also Chauncey 1995; Luibhéid 2008). The myth of urban promise has a social and economic basis. Cities afforded LGBTQ people a place to find privacy in public, as historian George Chauncey (1995) puts it, and for lesbians and queer women to seek work away from standard gender roles (D'Emilio 1983a; 1983b; see also Bérubé 1983; Faderman 1992; Kennedy & Davis 1994; Chauncey 1995; Aldrich 2004).

In geographic work, work on lesbian and gay spaces in the 1980s began by counting lesbian and gay people in order to prove their existence and make them visible in the heterosexual public eye (see Binnie 1996). This research was both revolutionary and foundational as even writing about these most common stories and spaces was an entirely new and radical act throughout the 1990s. In fact it was only in the late 2000s that academic ethics review boards removed the label of “at risk” (for unfair treatment) from LGBTQ study populations, other at risk populations being prisoners, children, and the mentally ill.

When I was coming out, I took refuge in the ideas of these places as much as the experience of them. While these models—namely the “gay” city, as well as the neighborhood and bar—were and continue to be exciting spatial models for producing LGBTQ community, it was how these models often focus on certain groups of gay and queer men that inspired my work on lesbian-queer spaces. For example, much of the early research subsumes the spaces of lesbians and queer women under a study of generic homosexual spaces privileging men’s abilities to claim public space that inspired my own interest in queering what *is* queer. Practices of gay male cruising are often praised as radical claims to queer public space (Berlant and Warner 1998; Delany 2001). Yet the privilege of mostly white male bodies in recent years to make use of these spaces with considerably less harassment than men of color, the poor, or homeless is invisibilized (see Manalansan 2005), and lesbians’, bisexual women’s, and queer women’s comparative lack of cruising has only recently been discussed (Giesecking 2013). As such, those who define and enact queer in the heterosexual public eye and mainstream media becomes white, male, able-bodied, urban, and middle- and upper class. It was these trends that drove me to record the narratives of 47 multigenerational lesbians and queer women for my dissertation—across classes, races, and ages—who are so often erased from mainstream and sometimes even LGBTQ society. What then could queering our geographical imaginations do? Whatever could queer theory offer my participants and me, yet another invisibilized dyke?

(Fourth) Came Queering Space and Spatializing the Queer

Over the last two decades, queer theory has grown into a core theoretical approach across academic disciplines and is equally used in activism, artwork, and even the spectacular and mundane elements of everyday life. In fact, queer theory, along with feminist theory, may be the most applied theory at work today outside academic discourse. LGBTQ people are perhaps the only group that derives many of the ideas about themselves from theory. LGBTQ people are just as likely to cite the work of Queer Nation to claim and find their purpose and shared meaning as they are to discuss philosophers Judith Butler or Michel Foucault. Where else could and did a positive history of LGBTQ lives come from but the academy? In this section I reread through the lens of geography some queer concepts and ideas that excite me and that, usually, dominate queer theory, in order to shed light on what queer geography is or could be through the acts of queering space and spatializing the queer.

Historian Michel Foucault had proved years earlier that the word “homosexual”—and therefore the concept of the deviant body and being attached to it—was not used until 1870. It was Gayle Rubin, then an anthropology PhD student, who stood up at the now renowned Barnard Conference on Sexuality in 1982 and finally cleaved gender from sex and sexuality. In other words, biological determinism was officially dead and gender was clearly socially constructed. It was less than eight years later that philosopher and feminist Judith Butler powerfully argued that sex and sexuality are socially constructed too. Produced spatially? OK. But temporally and even my identity too? It hit me hard that all the world was staged. And I was invigorated. These agentic chances for production speak to what David Harvey (1973; 2005) theorized as the *geographical imagination*, which spatialized and politicized C. Wright Mills’s (1961) “sociological imagination,” a concept that examined personal biographies in dynamic relation to the social history in which they are situated. The concept of the geographical imagination has broadened into a tool to describe and analyze both the literal and metaphorical ways people imagine and render space (see also Gregory 1994; Said 2000). I use the geographical imagination in my own work as both a concept and tool to register how participants negotiate the slide between spaces material or imagined. If gender, sex, sexuality, and space are all produced, then the only limits are those we allot ourselves, that we agree to, that we give in to. While there are always materialities in our lives to be faced, the social opened up before me and for many other LGBTQ people as well.

The realizations and invigorations did not end there. Literary theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick took queer theory to a new level for me when she made the very notion of *anything or anyone* as normal a blissful impossibility. In her book *Epistemology of the Closet* (1991), Sedgwick puts forth a series of axioms, the first of which is “People are different from each other.” At first, I remember being bored and shocked that this counted as theory, but as she went on to describe distinctions and differences I had never realized or seen, my mind and life were revolutionized. For example, she states that everyone has sex differently and everyone is attracted to and turned on by something or someone completely individual. In the same vein, the poet and literary scholar Adrienne Rich (1980) had already described the concept of *compulsory heterosexuality* a decade before literary critic Michael Warner (1993) gave us the word *heteronormativity*. While compulsory heterosexuality showed how lesbians and gays were forced into heterosexual roles and behaviors, heteronormativity took these enforcements to the level of a constant permeating oppression for only the hetero to be normal.

Historian Lisa Duggan (2002) took the normal in a different direction. After decades of LGBTQ people being sold out and selling out through processes of commodification and commercialism, some members of the community felt they had it good “enough.” Duggan describes this faux liberation through capital as a phenomenon of *homonormativity*. Homonormativity is the “normalization and hierarchization of particular forms of homosexuality within particular sexualized, classed, gender, and ethnic norms” (Browne 2006). Recognition of this level of distinction inspired me. If we use this thinking around space, it makes sense that each place works differently for each person. Environmental psychologists and geographers have posited ideas of *place identity* (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983) and *place attachment* (Altman and Low 1992) that show how individuals and groups work from different models and meanings of space and place. As much as globalization seeks to ubiquitize people and their places, they still retain their own qualities, sensibilities, and experiences. Why is Stonewall so revered, really? Why is Paris gay and Berlin queer? Why are Tijuana, Copenhagen, and Beirut unusual places for work on queer space? Or why are they not? Simple yet revolutionary once you really take it in: just as people are different from one another, spaces are different from one another.

Over time, geographers saw that the production of space Lefebvre described extended not only to territories and places and the nation-state, but to our bodies, intimacies, and identities. Queer theory extends that even further. I work from multiple theories

of the body in my own research to make sense not only of difference but the various layers of components of material and social worlds. Most well-known is Judith Butler’s (1989) *performativity* theory, which argues for a process-oriented, nonfoundational, ceaseless performing of identities. Identities are inscribed by the person in *and* on the body as much as the cultures, economies, and societies surrounding them (see also Bell et al. 1994). While bodies contain qualities that are not easily erased, bodies are also produced and therefore malleable in some ways, through the fissures that open up and point to possibilities of difference within the regulatory structures and discourses of our daily lives (Butler 1993). The geographer Lise Nelson (1999) criticizes Butler for fixing and exhausting identities in specific spacetimes. In my work, I found that the “fissures” Butler discusses that arise in the course of performing one’s identity give rise to other possibilities that allow for more nuanced conceptualizations of identity and space. Lesbians and queer women I interviewed always found a way to resist and move forward by breaking through the crack between binaries. Instead, I find performativity’s weakness to be its failure to account for the visceral, corporeal body, which my participants referenced often. It is the work of philosopher Elizabeth Grosz that helps me to fill this hole, as she sees bodies as “concrete, material, animate organization of flesh, organs, nerves, muscles, and skeletal structure which are given a unity...through their psychical and social inscription as the surface and raw materials of an integrated and cohesive totality” (1996, 243).

Together, performativity theory and theories of the visceral body account for the social-biological body, for a body is never distinct as either. In other words, “it is not as if the outside or the exterior must remain eternally counterposed to an interiority that it contains: rather, the outside is the transmutability of the inside” (Grosz 2001, 66). Space can be similarly recognized in the material and the imagined, the social and the emotional—i.e. space, like bodies, contains difference through the messy, fleshy indeterminate stuff of everyday life (see Katz 2001a).

Such performed and visceral bodies are never one identity or another, but rather the intersection of multiple standpoints that are always being produced. Legal and critical race theorist Kimberle Williams Crenshaw (1996) suggests using *intersectionality*, whereby you draw upon all your identities (gender, sexual, race, class, ability, age, etc.) to produce knowledge. Feminist geography similarly encourages *situated* experience and knowledge in producing knowledge (see Katz 2001b). Similarly, feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway’s (1990) notion of the *cyborg* describes the technological prosthetics

that blur the line between human and technology. Geographer Matthew Wilson (2009) suggests that the cyborg can be used as a model for human life and spaces that is constantly being and becoming, an ontology that fits strongly within the fragmented and fleeting aspects of queer theory. These models of being-doing-in-difference come together most closely for me in the science-fiction writer and queer theorist Samuel Delany's (2001) masterpiece *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. The book details the cruising and hustling of New York City's Times Square neighborhood filled with porn theaters, peep booths, and sex toy and video stores before its purported rehabilitation into the Disneyesque new version of Broadway and a mega-shopping hub for tourists (see also Kunstler 1994). Delany uses his own cruising experiences to theorize the distinction between contact and networking. For him these spaces afford the production of actual community and connection in the form of cross-class and cross-race *contact*, versus the distanced practice of *networking*. Queer geography then becomes the ability to make what one can of life, where one can, and incorporating all aspects of oneself.

The body in space spans many scales, from the global to the intimate (see Pratt and Rosner 2012). Recent and important debates to consider as you pore through the experiences of the artists in the very different places of this book relate to the scale of the family and the nation-state. Michel Foucault's work on the disciplining of the body also helped to break from previous limitations. In his studies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Foucault found that the nation-state regulates human bodies through *biopower*, "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations" (1990, 140). In other words, citizenship is defined by one's role in being complicit to a heteronormative state; geographers David Bell and Jon Binnie refer to *sexual citizenship*, which seeks to unpack who has rights and where one can refute the state's use of biopower. The literary critic Judith Jack Halberstam's (2005) notion of *queer time* helps to break apart the heteronormative understanding of time in our everyday lives. Halberstam describes how LGBTQ lives do not run in the patterns and paces of heterolives but have distinct social and economic conditions, including patterns of mating, childbearing, home buying, and retiring. With women making seventy-seven cents on the dollar in the U.S. alone, with similar numbers or less across the world, the ability for two women or two men to secure such patterns is radically different, and specific to place as well.

The atrocities in Israel-Palestine illuminate how queer bodies are not refused but rather are used

to meet the needs of the nation-state, i.e. through what activists termed *pinkwashing*. It was often the mark of a "civilized" country to demonstrate how good it was to women—part of the U.S. justification for invading Afghanistan and Iraq was the way both countries treated their women. The current claim to cosmopolitanism is pinkwashing, which entails claiming the beneficial treatment of LGBTQ people while ignoring atrocities against other groups. Queer theorist Jasbir Puar (2005) discusses pinkwashing as an instance of *homonationalism* whereby LGBTQ people are welcomed at the expense of the exoticized "other." I am using my own research to show that pinkwashing is a process of modern globalization. My example is how New York City aims to pinkwash through its internationally advertised "gay pilgrimage." Urging wealthy lesbians and gays to shop and see the famous Stonewall bar where the LGBTQ movement is identified as beginning, the NYC government pinkwashes the fact that the Stonewall riot entailed LGBTQ people responding to police violence with more violence. The forgetting of our history and our oppressions can be as violent as the invisibilization and violence done to other groups, and much healing can be done by interceding not only in the fight for social justice but spatial justice as well in the ways places and people are represented and recognized.

The last and perhaps most exciting use of queer theory and space is the way queer theory makes the seeming oppositions of space into mutually constructed places. An ever popular topic is the concern over *public and private*. However, LGBTQ experience shows how the public is often off-limits—when is it not to women?—and we must construct our publics and forms of attention and pageantry for self-expression. Michael Warner (2002) proposed the notion of *counterpublics*, which spans those othered, queered publics that refuse heteronormativities. For lesbians and queer women in my research, claiming the streets and being visibly queer is part of their history of radical activism and radical being-doing to resist homophobia. Feminist geographer of sexualities Kath Browne (2004) has proposed the notion of *genderism* to describe how not only transphobia (fear of genders that queer or shift the binary male-female) but the regulation of bodies into binary genders takes place within public and private spaces in varying ways. In interviewing nontraditional-gender-presenting women, they described how the private space of the bathroom becomes a space for public regulation in their regulation or judgment.

A dimension of geography not yet queered but that I want to introduce here is the mutually influential concepts of time-space compression and time-space expansion. *Time-space compression* is geographer

David Harvey's (1991) concept to describe the collapsing effect of globalization and technology as we are able to communicate and produce faster and closer. However, in her work in the southern Sudan and NYC's Harlem, the feminist geographer Cindi Katz (2001b) found a pattern of *time-space expansion* whereby the poor were driven to go farther from their homes to gain basic resources. In my work these two ideas are not merely opposing or mutually constructing but offer up other possible readings of shifts in spacetime. Queer space, identity, and life is inherently unstable, fragmented, and fleeting—how then can spacetime only compress and/or expand? There are varying forms of movement in, by, and through space. How can we encompass these multiplicities and refuse being used by the commodifying and fetishizing processes of capitalism? One such process is the way gentrification uses and is used by LGBTQ people in order to create territories and spaces of their own for safety and refuge, all the while displacing poorer neighborhoods of, most often, people of color, and, over time, being displaced by later waves of wealthier heterosexuals and LGBTQ people (see Knopp 1997; Doan 2010). One recent inspiring response to more multiple forms of understanding space and time is the work on autonomous or anticapitalist spaces. For example, the geographers Gavin Brown and Jenny Pickerill (2009) propose accounting for how the affective and emotional aspects of space shape protest and resistance. It is all these ideas, concepts, and experiences that inform and incite my work and everyday life.

(Fifth) Come and Gone and Going On

In these four moments of coming to grips with queering space and spatializing geography, I have shared my story: a gendered perspective of and life in queer space. The worry that we do not get the queer or understand what letters to use in our alphabet soup of a community must be overcome—at times, lgbtqitsaa is too much to say let alone but we must try. Queering space and spatializing the queer are mutual practices that are ongoing, exciting, and can and must be embraced from multiple standpoints to effect the change they hope to create. While my own work sits with urban environments, these ideas and concepts cross scales, borders, and boundaries and can go wherever you wish to take them—or at least farther than the world may let us imagine for now. I hope this essay leaves you in the midst of these possibilities with the tools to join me and so many others in this work. To that end I provide a works cited to the materials I mentioned in this essay, as well as a series of recommended readings at the end of this book that fuel me and can maybe serve to light your fire as well.

I am still thinking and working with the stories of my participants. The work in this book from such different places, Copenhagen, Beirut, and Tijuana, helps me to open up those stories further, and to make change, in ourselves and the world. What does it mean for Camilla Tved to map a personal history of violence against lesbians in Copenhagen? What are the ramifications of writing but not picturing sex in Beirut as Akram Zaatari counters? And what are the problems in Tijuana translating “queer” into Spanish that Bradley Epps makes us critically aware of? Globally, more work remains to be done to account for queer difference, especially around race and class within the context of different places. *Queer Geographies* as a selection of experiences is one of those large steps forward to offer us ways to imagine and enact social and spatial justice, whether on the streets in protest, in the gallery and library with artworks, or in bed with theory or something even more exciting. I very much invite you to join in these questions and places, and often. ✨

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Her prayer found gods to hear; both bodies merge
And one form covered both.
As when a gardener sets a graft and sees
Growth seal the join, and develop as one.
Thus, when in fast embrace their limbs were knit,
They two were two no more, nor man, nor woman—
One body then that neither seemed and both.

Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*



Rajwa and Rajwa
Photography
Randa Mirza, 2011

Beirut Can Be Fun

Mirene Arsanios

The official end of the Lebanese civil war (1990) opened an era of private investment and real-estate development and general institutional *laissez-faire* as a way to remedy (or to sustain) the country's scant public services and postwar urban reconstruction vacuum. In Lebanon, as elsewhere, but particularly in Lebanon, a zero-public-infrastructure policy reigns, crushing at every street corner any fleeting feelings of citizenship. If you're not corrupt or damningly rich, chances are you're utterly powerless in terms of civic and social rights.

But you can do other things—almost every other thing. Smoke in an elevator, steal money, kill, and roam hysterically from party to after-party. Beirut's air is as exhilarating as it is polluted. In this city, there is a sense that everything is possible, which is the equivalent of nothing being possible. In a loop, the city swings that *pas de deux*.

Bobo was hosting a Sari brunch in a subterranean rooftop that connected the parking lot to the thirty-first floor of a war-ravaged building where industrial diamond-shaped pools were filled with chlorinated pink champagne. A friend, F., insisted on going. He just wanted to get his mind off what had happened the day before, after he got arrested while photographing a flickering neon sign flanking the Beirut highway. He wanted to capture the sign for its makeshift aesthetic and because it said "VIVRE" ("to live") and kept shutting off.

F. and his boyfriend were blindfolded, stripped, interrogated, and detained in a police station for five hours. F. doesn't think the police suspected he was gay; it was just a routine check, they said. In a room with gray walls covered with illegible doodles, F. stood powerless. The smoke clouding the narrow walls came from red Marlboros or Lucky Strikes. With throbbing hands, a young police officer gave F. a cigarette. F. smiled, and the young officer smiled back with his eyes. They ended up spending the rest of the day and night together, knowing that Article 534 of the Lebanese penal code condemns sexual acts that "contradict the laws of nature."

Most of the time, non-heteronormative sexual practices exist in parallel to the law. Gay-friendly locales and cruising paths are well known in Beirut but are not structurally protected. Such spaces are tolerated until, for whatever reason, things change. In August 2012, thirty-six men were arrested at the Plaza cinema, a

venue known within certain urban communities for showing porn films. The Plaza and a few other cinemas (Cinema Al Khayyam, Cinema Morocco, Cinema Royal) built in the '70s and '80s, exist in parallel with the blockbuster mall culture proliferating away from the streets. The Plaza cinema exists within the city, as a striated space where encounters that are not yet subject to neoliberal lifestyles or dumb bourgeois sociality can still exist.

Beirut isn't always fun. The thirty-six men arrested at the Plaza for suspected homosexuality were subjected to anal probes performed with an egg, which, inserted in the anus, is meant to prove anal intercourse. This medieval-like practice has been publicly condemned by Human Rights Watch and by the medical profession in Lebanon. Protests organized by activist groups and NGOs (HELEM) made sure to voice their indignation publicly. This unfortunate episode was quickly picked up by international media, as well as numerous gay sites, most of which paralleled such practices with the presence of the Hezbollah Party in Lebanon.¹ In her article, Rasha Moumneh astutely analyzes different processes of "pinkwashing" in the rhetoric used by Israel accusing Palestinians and Arabs of homophobia.² Such logic unethically co-opts sexual orientation in a political fight that has nothing to do with it.

How can one think of ways, in a context such as Lebanon, to structurally shift discrimination and to rethink the relationship between lifestyles and structural powers? This is one of the country's most striking paradoxes: everything is possible (parties after after-parties) as long as it doesn't interfere with other realms (the law, the confessional system, the ingrained corruption). Politics is precisely where realms meet and intersect, generating new perceptions (literally, what Arendt called the space of appearance where citizens physically appear to one another). How do these junctures manifest in the city? How can different realms meet, albeit momentarily?

The queer geography workshop in Beirut gathered artists, activists, geographers, designers, and dancers. The workshop's purpose was to read and map nonhetero-normative sexualities in places in the city where people who resist rigid identifications, political and sexual, meet and part. The versatility of the group was its strength. During the workshop, for example, a march for women's rights was organized. Under the pouring rain, the group marched toward Beirut's Corniche, claiming equal rights for women.³

During the workshop other walks took place. Cruising itineraries were performed but not documented (Richard Kahwagi), along with a performance on the economy of the female body in the public space.⁴ Again, these different ways of walking, standing and existing in the public space all triggered different relations and interactions. The passage from the private to the public to the semipublic was explored through the structure of the workshop itself. We all gathered every day at the Sanayeh House to discuss issues of public space and sexuality, watch films, and share massage skills.

During one screening, Akram Zaatari joined the group with Ali Cherri. We wanted Zaatari to discuss his curation of the gay pornographic video program *Let It Be*, screened during Home Works IV (2008).⁵ Because of its graphic content, the program was screened semiprivate in an architecture studio. The debate following the video projection is published in this book.

We invited Akram Zaatari to share his experience retroactively, three years after the screening and the panel. The conversation between the workshop participants and Zaatari hasn't been published, but it addressed the extent to which a contemporary art institution such as Ashkal Alwan was able to publicly endorse such explicitly gay content. In a way, *Let It Be* overtly flirted with structural constraints and limitations. Although the film program didn't engage public space directly, the different discussions that it triggered (the panel discussion during Home Works IV and the Queer Geography workshop conversation) staged a theater for ideas, opinions, and positions. These cross-temporal and spatially shifting encounters make for a public realm that doesn't necessarily take place in the city but through the theater of a discussion.

The workshop ended with a group meeting at the Sanayeh garden (which was followed by an impromptu Sweet and Sour party organized in an abandoned cinema, which I didn't attend). Although it was February I recall that we were all wearing summer clothes. The point of the meeting was to share our concluding thoughts or experiences; the public sphere and the public realms, activism and art, parties and after-parties, the private and the semiprivate, cruising paths and industrial swimming pools were mentioned too. But mostly, we were just sitting there. The garden, a traditional public space, reflected a more acute image of the group. The fact that we appeared to one another that day, physically, shifted the stage of the public sphere back to the city. ✱



Video still from *What I spot becomes a portal of entering a train of thought*, produced after the workshop in Beirut by Chinook, 2012



"I love him," graffiti in Hamra, Beirut. Photo by Lasse Lau.



Beirut workshop. Photo by Mathias Kryger.

- 1- <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=279758>
- 2- See Rayya Wehbe's text in this publication.
- 3- In Lebanon, women do not have the right to pass on the Lebanese nationality to their children, for instance.
- 4- Mirna Haidar stood by the highway, waiting for cars to pull over and offer different sorts of compensation in exchange for a sexual favor.
- 5- Home Works, organized by Ashkal Alwan, is similar to a contemporary art biennial. It takes place every year and a half in Beirut.

He is driving and I am sitting next to him, sometimes I reach to his side and put my hand in his, other times he reaches to my side and puts his hand in mine. We roam, we talk, and we look. Holding hands becomes a risk, a secret act, fun for being dangerous. We hold and un-hold, depending on where we are and on who and what is next to us. The holding is interrupted, always. By a traffic light, a higher adjacent car, a rose seller, a beggar, a delivery boy, a walker by, a heated conversation, a jealous gaze... Sometimes it becomes intimate, lasting for a sweaty time, to be interrupted again.

The car as a gay space is constantly vulnerable and exposed. It is a temporary clandestine and paranoiac space for as long as the hands are together. The city and its people become a "threat," forcing us to choose: un-hold and be like any two straight guys in a car, or stay holding and come out to the whole city. We choose to un-hold. Revolt does happen every once in a while when we keep the hands together. It feels like resisting, like making a point and taking a risk.

The Thought of Sex

The problematic presentation of *Let It Be* in Beirut

Akram Zaatari

The representation of sex in mainstream cinema has been mostly restricted to suggestive imagery, ellipses, and symbols. For reasons of rating and marketing, the film industry's constant aim to reach the widest possible audience, and the nature of collective viewing in movie theatres, mainstream cinema has always shied away from portraying sexual acts. Restrictions are particularly severe in conservative societies where the laws forbid the production and circulation of sexually explicit material.

Let It Be presented films and videos produced outside the film industry, made by artists and filmmakers who imagine, describe, or comment on different aspects of sex, in more or less explicit ways. These works function as personal reflections that reveal the critical concerns,



Video still from *You* by Ali Cherri

desires, and fantasies of their makers. Short films and videos from the 1990s and the early 2000s were presented in a two-session presentation. Additionally, the program paid tribute to William E. Jones and dedicated one evening to his work, which is centred on studying the porn industry and reediting pornographic films into critical, poetic, and narrative constructions. The program also commissioned the Lebanese artist Ali Cherri to produce a video work entitled *You*.

The choice of developing such a program on sex evolved from a longtime personal interest in the topic. As a filmmaker, I created two video documentaries about sex practices among men in Lebanon. In 1997, I made *Majnounak* (*Crazy for You*), in which I recorded the narratives of young men describing their sexual encounters with women in full detail. I was interested in how those men imagined themselves as the heroes in stories of sexual conquest. Four years later, in 2001,

I made *Shou bhebbak* (*How I Love You*), in which I interviewed gay men about their sexual practices and their fantasies, keeping in mind Lebanon's penal code that punishes homosexual behaviour. None of these works showed any explicit sex; rather, they evoked sexual experiences through detailed description.

My research and presentation of the works in the *Let It Be* program was stimulated by a proposal by an activist friend, Mazen Khaled, who wanted to involve me in initiating a gay and lesbian film festival in Beirut. Khaled was pursuing a collaboration between Helem (a Beirut-based organization acting for the rights of gay men and women) and Ashkal Alwan. Implicit in his suggestion was a desire to see a gay event incorporated into an art platform, a proposition that interested Ashkal Alwan. My first reaction was that Beirut indeed needed to address public and legal issues related to homosexuality. However, I questioned whether a packaged event such as a gay and lesbian film festival would be a good way to open up this dialogue.

Lebanon's problem with homosexuality is bound to a large degree to Article 534 of the penal code, which punishes the practice of sex "against nature." Many people interpret this article as explicitly condemning homosexuality as abnormal, suggesting that it should be prosecuted by the law. For a long time, this law has been used to convict homosexual behaviour, but there has not been a clear record of the article's application. Today, many activists, thinkers, and individuals consider Article 534 an offense to modern society and to human nature. Yet the offense isn't restricted to homosexual practice, since Lebanon's regulations restrict extramarital sex, as well. Furthermore, the law still denies Lebanese citizens the right to have a civil marriage.¹

Considering this oppressive context, I wondered if Beirut needed a gay and lesbian film festival. In such a social and political climate, I believed any program on homosexuality had to address a larger picture. And so, what started out as a plan for a gay and lesbian film festival ended up being a program on sex—without the "gay" label—presented during the cultural forum Home Works.

I was eager to share the videos I watched while working on this program with close friends and fellow Lebanese artists. I have always found it strange how

much we talk about sex, and how infrequently we address it in our work. I thought of Beirut's general public, and I hoped that we could watch these videos outside the moral codes that govern the practice of sex and our lives in Lebanon. I conceived this program as an encounter with an audience, almost in the form of a site-specific work, or an interruption in an event that comes more and more to look like an art biennial. Home Works has gained exceptional international recognition in the past ten years and has provided my generation of Lebanese artists with an important platform in which to think, to meet, and to present artworks. Most importantly, Home Works provides an opportunity to sincerely question forms of presentation in relation to where we live, what we have been through, and what we have learned about art and our forms of production. Given its spirit of openness and experimentation, it was inevitable that a discussion about highly debated subjects, such as homosexuality, would reach that platform, in that form.

Having been, for a long time, part of political turmoil, militancy and art have always had a productive conflicting tension. What was known in the sixties and seventies as "committed" art (*al-fann al-multazem*) was no longer convincing for my generation. We were interested in critical distance, and our work was more interested in questions. The United States' invasion of Iraq coincided with the second of the Home Works editions. At the time, many of us questioned where we stood as artists facing an unjust invasion. The organizers of Home Works asked themselves many times whether or not that edition of the forum should take place. Had we been activists, things could have been much easier, as we would have just cancelled the event, and gone on the streets—but we were not. We believed that it was our duty to continue doing what we had to do. While witnessing the daily hysterical activist demonstrations on the streets of Beirut, many of us felt we were—and still are—very removed from what was happening. Many of us also felt that the critical margin in which we operated and expressed ourselves was fragile. The invasion was the first in a series of political events where the same feeling of unease, and uncertainty, kept reasserting itself: the brutal assassination of former prime minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006, and most recently during the pseudocoup led by Hezbollah on May 7, 2008. A feeling of disbelief and helplessness dominates whenever a major event alters one's life, leaving behind the huge weight of injustice. The aftertaste of helplessness and disbelief is a desire to belong, neither to a Nation, nor a Cause, nor a People, nor an Art School, but rather to the pressing questions affecting one's daily life and home. This is at least

my perspective, and, to a large extent, that of the organizers of Home Works.

My second concern centred on the ability of an international art platform to transcend the limits imposed on it by its location. In the case of Home Works, that is its political situation in Lebanon. There are laws that impose many restrictions on the presentation of artworks, particularly theatre and film works. These legal practices sometimes restrict the circulation of artworks and the mobility of artists by setting impossible conditions. The restrictions are even more severe if artists are coming from "unprivileged" countries such as Palestine, Bosnia, Iran, and Iraq. Furthermore, any attempt to even contact an Israeli artist, let alone to show his/her work, risks raising suspicion and legal action. Yet the powerful institutions of the political elite often break the law: thousands of people watched documentaries by Avi Mograbi on Lebanon's Future TV in 2008, 2009, and 2010. Such works, however, remain impossible to present at an art platform or cinema. Even though his films have been screened at least four times on private national television, no art institution has received permission to invite Avi Mograbi to come to Lebanon or even screen his work. I recall many other events, works, art historians, and artists that Ashkal Alwan would have loved to screen, debate, and invite but couldn't because of legal restrictions. Obviously, the laws are way behind lived reality. Lebanon's actual social and political structure is way more complex than the practice of its laws would suggest.

In this context, I worked towards the presentation of the *Let It Be* program, albeit discreetly. The program was not intended to offend, nor confront, nor provoke anyone. The program did not intend to hijack the platform on which it was offered; though I concede that maybe it sought to measure or expose the limits of that platform in terms of the issues in question. Despite the full support of Ashkal Alwan, the responsibility of organizing such an expansive public event and the fear of possible conflicts with the censors and local authorities proved to be more powerful than the desire to raise the issues in question. This is why the event that I had imagined was shaped by the institutional, legal, and social constraints of showing work in Lebanon.

Ashkal Alwan and I were aware that we were breaking a law by organizing the (public) representation of sexual acts on-screen, including nudity and the exhibition of genitalia. We were also aware that many of the films included explicit sex, and therefore would never be granted a screening license if presented to the censorship office. Throughout the research phase, we had to rely on friends traveling in and out

of the country in order to avoid the censors. They helped send screening copies back and forth to their distributors during the selection process. I was lucky to participate in a three-month residency in France in 2008, which allowed us to speed up this process, and also allowed me to bring screening copies of the films to Lebanon. We were aware that we were breaking a law, but we were also sure that we were doing it for the right reasons. We agreed that many of the censorship laws regarding film production and diffusion were becoming obsolete and needed to be changed.

The presentation of *Let It Be* came out of an unspoken urge and a later discourse that developed in Beirut. I see it very much as a product of all those laws and constraints that we are calling to change. I was aware that I was taking a risk with this presentation, but never saw it as a provocation. This is why I had to be very flexible throughout the planning process, first letting the proposal settle in, then adjusting to the constraints outlined above. By doing that, I was no longer playing the role of the individual artist, but that of a mediator trying to find a place for the program within the auspices of an institution. It was extremely important to me that an art institution host this show and defend it.

From the moment we decided to conceive the program as part of an institution, it became clear that it could only happen within certain limits. Since we knew we were breaking the law, we also knew that we could not announce the details of the program unless we were prepared for a confrontation—and we were not.

Yet I admit I also felt the program was being strangled by the political situation. First, all details about the films were removed from the publicity materials, which ambiguously announced the program without listing any of the titles. Next came the problem of finding a screening location. Despite Ashkal Alwan's support, we could not imagine showing the sexually explicit films in the main theatre where Home Works was taking place.¹ One complaint would be enough to mobilise

the censorship office against us. We were faced with two options: either to hold the entire program in a less visible place outside the main theatre, or to divide the program into two parts according to the films' sexual content. The less graphic works would be presented in the main theatre, and the rest would be screened in a more discreet location. I opted for the second alternative in an effort to preserve maximum visibility. The initial order in which I organized the works had to be changed. The thematic grouping had to be substituted with another classification, based not on a curatorial agenda, but instead on the films' sexual content.

A few months after presenting *Let It Be* in Home Works, I realized that such a presentation in Beirut could never have pretended to be liberated from the general constraints of presenting artworks in Lebanon—particularly because Home Works is such an expansive public event. In the absence of laws that allow cultural events a large margin of freedom, the psychology of fear will always play a role in shaping culture and the arts.

The less graphic works in *Let It Be* were shown in the Madina Theater, in Hamra, where the events of Home Works took place. This presentation included works by William E. Jones, Tom de Pekin, Tom Kalin, Sterling Ruby, and Mounir Fatmi. Works by Jean-Gabriel Périot and Pierre Yves Clouin were divided between the two locations. All the works that were labelled potentially “problematic” were screened in the office of the architect Bernard Khoury in Karantina, where the space was transformed into a theatre with two hundred seats for one evening. Those works included Naufus Figueroa's *Masturbation in the Fatherland*, Pierre Yves Clouin's *My Hands Are Shaking*, Jean-Gabriel Périot's *Lovers*, and Laetitia Bourget's *7121 Images du sexe d'un autre*. Transportation was arranged to take people from the Madina Theater in Hamra to the industrial suburb of Karantina, where buses waited until the screening was over to drive visitors back to Hamra. This sounded awkward, but things could have been worse.

The same fear that motivated moving part of the program to Khoury's office could have altogether prevented the program from taking place. Happily, this was not the case.

I still think of this program as one made specifically for Beirut, and yet at the same time, it did not fit Beirut at all. This disjuncture made me feel uncomfortable. I can't speak on behalf of the public, since I did not have any way to assess their reception. And I can't speak on behalf of Ashkal Alwan, who experienced the program from an institutional angle. But in the chaos of reactions—all claiming gay-friendliness—I could tell that some were uncomfortable viewing gay content presented under the general label of “sex,” while



Video still from *7121 Images du Sexe d'un Autre* by Laetitia Bourget

others were uncomfortable watching explicit sex in the context of a public screening. Added to this was the discomfort of being shuttled to a remote location to watch works labelled “potentially problematic.” For those who could endure all this, they were met with a program that abandoned its original curatorial intention given that it was structured around what was X-rated and what wasn’t. In the end, I was left with even more questions than when I started about where we come from, how we think of sex in Lebanon, our education and how we can activate an art platform such as Home Works.

Beirut, November 2009

Panel with William E. Jones, Hannah Feldman, Stuart Comer, and Akram Zaatari

Akram Zaatari: It’s the first time that I’ve presented this program. It may never be presented again, or it may develop into something else. I would love to hear comments, particularly regarding this presentation in Beirut. Does Beirut need something like this? Can we do anything with it? Can we expand it? Are there possible contradictions maybe in the program, perhaps contradictions between my thoughts and what you saw; because we do interpret things differently, so please give me your feedback.

Today I will read excerpts from Mohamed Soueid’s *Cabaret Souad*. Mohamed Soueid is a video artist and a writer. He wrote three books. This is his latest, which was published two or three years ago by *Dar Al-Adab* in Beirut. I’m going to read it in Arabic. Simultaneous translation to English is available.

Very often we find explicit descriptions of sex acts in text-forms in the Arab world (such as in Mohamed Soueid’s book, *Cabaret Souad*). Yet they are sometimes extremely poetic, very powerful. Why is this restricted to text and not images? There are laws that regulate the circulation of sexually explicit images, but not texts. Laws were primarily made to control pornography, and do not differentiate how images are consumed, therefore do not differentiate between art and pornography, and do not apply to text forms. Is it a contradiction? Are there lapses in the code of censors? I’ve never seen highly sexual material coming from Arab countries in film or video forms. This is why I wanted to read these recent texts for you. Even if you know it, it’s really important to read these texts in public, and I guess you feel the difference.

Wow! she shouted. Suddenly inspiration came to her and she found the idea for her film. All she needed was my help. She explained that during our location hunting we had wasted time looking at apartments that didn’t correspond with her research on the reality and bitterness of the war in the city. She was right. In our previous trips we had limited our search to houses that were abandoned voluntarily by their owners for fear of getting hurt, and had neglected the buildings that had housed refugees and those that had been occupied and controlled by armed militias.

She said that the desired location was within reach. Where? I asked. «Right where you’re standing,» she answered, and bit her lip. She used her tongue again as if a mounting euphoria were taking hold of her to the joyful beat of her trapping her film. Throughout my service in the ranks of the Forces of Salah Eddin, I neglected to investigate what my military

post had been before the war broke out. It was a five-story building the windows of which we had barricaded with fortified concrete and sandbags. I hadn't bothered to find out who lived there, where they came from and what they did. Cecile asked many questions about the identity of the building's dwellers, how they were displaced, whether they were forced to leave or were threatened or killed. She put me in a difficult position, embarrassing and unexpected. I went mute, and when I tried to answer, I stuttered and tripped on the stairs I was climbing with her looking for suitable apartments to film. I took advantage of my stuttering and tripping to change the conversation. I asked her to hand me the bag and asked what was in it. She said it was some books and videos made by combatants during the war and that she intended to use them in her forthcoming film, as well as a number of voluminous historically traditional cultural books that included Arabic dictionaries and Abbasid poetry collections.

I hung the camera around my neck and accompanied her search for an appropriate location to shoot. She asked me about the location of my military post. I took her to the last floor. The name of the occupant written by hand on the doorbell attracted her attention. George Hamra. She said it was probable that he was somehow related to the Hamra family. She told me that Hamra Street took its name from his family. It seemed she had found the first suitable location for her film. She asked me to hand her the camera and the lens pack. She placed my Kalashnikov between my legs. I opened the bag, gave her the camera and equipment. Again, she went into a photographing fit, taking shots from different angles; shots of various frame sizes of the bell, George Hamra's name, the door, its lock, and the icon of the Virgin hanging over it. She tried to open the door. It opened. She crouched and swayed, enamored with taking pictures. She photographed the spacious living room through the crack of the door. The snapshots kept coming and my head turned in a moving whirl of still images. Everything spoke of the stillness of life. The emptiness of the house terrified me. I was puzzled by her interest in a place that the sun was forbidden to enter other than through the holes bitten into its walls by bomb shrapnel and the slits of its windows stacked with sandbags. I asked her how she could shoot a film in an empty place, without furniture, people, or life besides ants and crawlers moving among the holes of the sand walls and the cracks of the wooden shades of windows. She overawed me with the theory of the emptiness of space, convinced me that space creates itself from emptiness and that cinema is the art of filling emptiness. No, George Hamra's house wasn't completely empty. I know it

well. After the looting, it still retained some of its furniture and decoration. In its reception room, a torn sofa, a bronze chandelier and a Philips TV set, its screen having had its fair share of bullets. May God rest your soul, old man. In the sitting room open on the reception room, where I had my shift, was a yellowing poster of a concert given by Charles Aznavour in 1971 in the citadel of Byblos. No trace of Dalida. Upon entering the room, it seemed to me I had vowed to offer my life on the altar of Aznavour and not the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese National Movement and the strongholds of unfaltering Arabism in Beirut. My Swiss director was delighted with Aznavour. She had the idea of ending her film with a scene showing me shooting from my barricade under the poster of Aznavour, with a soundtrack of bullets and explosions and the song «Les plaisirs démodés.» She decided then and there that the title of her film will be «Les plaisirs démodés.» that the French producer would get excited about supporting a film that would transport the French spectator from Beirut to Aznavour with the bullets of a sexy combatant nicknamed the Pole. I laughed to myself imagining the anger of Hassan Al Siriani upon seeing my ammunition go to waste for the pleasure of a moody director.

Cecile was drunk with the love of Aznavour. She took many pictures of him and kept holding her tongue between her teeth and licking her lips. She kept sighing with the enjoyment of taking pictures until she got tired. She stopped moving around. I saw moisture on her neck and forehead telling of sweat. Behind the thin cover of her striped white shirt, her little brown nipples stood out. Her gaze traveled along the ceiling of the apartment and its walls as if lost as to her next move. I watched her guardedly. The humidity reached my body and ran through my extremities to the ends of my machine gun. The temperature of my friend the Pole rose. Like Toufic al Hakim, I wondered: Should I stay or should I go? Cecile emerged from her uncertainty; her wandering found focus in my eyes. She moved towards me. Nothing stood between us but her bag hanging from my neck. She handed me the camera and the lens pack. She turned her back to me and walked toward my barricade. I put down the camera and pack. On the sandbags she threw her pants and shirt. She looked almost sculpted, without a bra or underwear, no slip, no violets, fava beans, or anything of the sort, and none of Dunya's suggestiveness and Egyptian movies. Cecile is a film director and directors can in no way relinquish their imaginativeness to the screen. In her nakedness, Dunya was like a dream. Cecile was naked like the truth.

She turned towards me and the blue of her eyes lit the room. I contemplated her. Her pussy was shaven. I approached her, continuing to arrange her bag and out of nowhere began to read out the titles I glimpsed of the videos and books that were in the bag, until I reached Ibn Al Manthur, and stopped. Who's Ibn Al Manthur? I asked her. She took my Kalashnikov and threw it next to her clothes. She grabbed the bag, threw it down, grabbed me hard, thrust her tongue into my mouth and pulled it out, «*The Tongue of the Arabs*,» she replied, «Ibn Al Manthur is the author of *The Tongue of the Arabs*,» I salivated. She pulled me down from the back of the neck onto her clavicle. My tongue traveled the vale of her breasts and navel; I went down holding her back and her hips until I was kneeling and my lips touched the fluff on her shaven pussy, moistened with drops of hot sweat. She lay back on top of the sandbags and pulled me towards her from my face, she went mad with arousal and expressed it in French, «Plus fort,» she screamed and her screams became thunderous echoes in the empty room, her throaty voice growing louder with every deep thrust of my tongue into her vagina until it resembled the hissing of djinns. She went mad, she twisted and turned, I came to her from behind, I inserted my penis, and she screamed louder, «Encore!»

We were at the climax of our passion when the demarcation lines caught fire. Gunshots and bombs resounded, but remained far from our perimeter. We weren't affected. Yours truly, Iyad, seemed in full ecstasy and control. I indulged in making up for whatever I had lost of my masculine dignity with Dunya until a B7 exploded in the reception area. Cecile tightened her grip on me and went on moaning. I jumped and was terrified. I lost my erection. It let me down, betrayed me. She asked me to go on. I couldn't. She cursed me «Merde! Putain!» and in the fury of her arousal she grabbed my Kalashnikov. I thought she had decided to kill me or to commit suicide on the altar of her raging lust. I tried to stop her. She hit me. She inserted the muzzle of the Kalashnikov in her vagina and the sounds of the explosions mingled with those of her loud moans. After she exhausted her climax, she threw it. Head case. She despised me. Under a hail of bullets she got dressed quickly and left, snarling, berating me in English and French, coward, connard, motherfucker.

I'm a coward

I'm a connard (wanker)

I'm a merde (shit)

I'm a putain (whore)

I'm a motherfucker

And I, The unrecognized thirteenth disciple, Iyad, am the Job of disgrace and its stain. Cecile left me in my barracks a prey to fear and terror. My friend the Pole performed what I had failed to. I hated it. I hated the war. The next day Maytham visited me to say goodbye. He carried no message from Cecile. He told me she had gone to spend some time in one of bases of the Popular Front down south, that she had told him she had forgotten her bag with me and to please ask me to keep her things until her return. And the film? I asked him. He replied that she had blown the idea of the documentary to smithereens and was going for a narrative scenario tying the causes of the civil war to sex.

Hannah Feldman: I would like to preface my remarks by pointing out a very simple fact, which is that I am not an expert on sexuality or sex or representations thereof, and much of the material we've seen exceeds the parameters of my expertise as both an historian and a critic. I understand my participation on this panel, and assume Akram did as well, as that of someone who hopes to ask more questions than she does provide answers. For the most part, my questions hinge on the particulars of having seen all of this filmic material together as something of a public (or many publics), and to what this experience might tell us about not only sex and its relationship to culture but also its relationship to place, this place in particular. When Akram first discussed this program with me many months ago, he emphasized, as he has done over the last week, that he wanted to screen sex in a way that would let sex just be sex, that is, in a film and video program that would "let it be"—to refer explicitly to the program's title—let it be something other than connected to identity and identity politics, and let it be as something beyond metaphor, indeed as something entirely other than discursively constructed. From this stripped-down position, Akram proposed we might explore what we could learn. This strikes me as not an uninteresting proposition, especially in a place such as this where the careful deconstruction of representational practice as representational practice has been such an integral and celebrated component of recent art making. It also strikes me as equally interesting to think of *Let It Be*, in dialogue with the image of that which it also does not evoke, but which is evoked so pervasively by so much else of what we have seen and heard throughout Home Works, which is to say war, in general, as well as in terms of the specifics of Lebanon's many experiences of the same. In this sense, we might also understand Akram's program as wanting to leave this past alone, to *let it be* by moving on, by moving on, in fact, to something at the core of everyday life, both public and private: sex.

That said, I still remain unsure what sex would be or could be if it were disconnected from the discursive practices that frame it as a question of identity and as a question of politics. My first question then, which I pose to Akram as well as to the audience, is a very basic one. Rather, it is a series of basic ones: What is sex; what is it that we see when we think we see sex; and, how do we know? Of course, in some ways this seems to be a stupid question since we all think we know what it is. However, based on the reactions—some angry, some bored, some intrigued, some put off—of the audience over the past few days, and to acknowledge the challenges raised by the careful archival restitution and montage in Bill's [William E. Jones's] work, we know that not everyone is in consensus on what might constitute sex, even, if not especially as *just* an act. For me, this raises interesting questions about documentation and representation, but also about narrative and the ways the sex act is quintessentially scripted as a narrative and so as a tellable event, emplotted with a beginning, a middle, and, of course, a climax or end. I don't mean to elide problems here about the gendered bias of this narrative, but I will not dwell on them because they have been well addressed elsewhere. What motivates my comments in this regard, however, is the ways that the entirety of the program we have seen over the last few days resists this kind of narrative surety, as if to undercut even its most basic presumptions that there

could be a sex act to show as there might elsewhere be a sex act to tell. Last night, for example, in the component of the program that comprised the most explicit sexual acts, the overall picture we were shown of sex in fact organized itself in a way that inverted, if not foreclosed entirely the possibility of a climactic narrative progression. We started out, after all, with a very private meditation—or at least the suggestion of a very private meditation, and on a painting, a painting no less—which then moved into a celebration of sex, but explicitly within the private sphere, in the space of a home. We ended, however, with the frustration of sex and sexual achievement in two works wherein the relationship between sex and the fulfilment of desire was murkier, more unsure, and less resolved. This may have been unintentional, but it struck me as revealing all the same.

Building from this observation, my second set of questions concern context and experience, especially as these shaped the narrative course of our viewing. Even if we were clear on what sex looks like (as opposed to what it is told as), what does it mean, after all, to present it as *such* in *this* context: in *Home Works* for one, which presents itself very carefully as a "forum on cultural practices" (having dropped "in the region" after 2002) and; two, to do so in 2008, in Beirut? What are the implications of projecting the kind of universal implied by something like "sex, as it is" within this kind of forum that hopes to address something as specific and particular as "cultural practice"? What, it makes me wonder, are "cultural practices" and how do we access them? Just now, as Akram read the passages from Soueid's text aloud to the audience, we found ourselves split into at least two groups, as many of us could appreciate the words being read only through the headphone-transmitted, simultaneous translation into English. For this group, the experience was certainly particular as not only did we hear different words and so in fact different "acts," we also heard them communicated through the editorial giggles of the female voice of the translator, whose discomfort in the face of the explicit acts she was asked to narrate led her, as it did many in the audience last night, to nervous laughter. I bring this up not to cast aspersions on the translator or the process, but rather to foreground the ways in which the construction of what sex is and how it can be re-presented or re-transmitted is always already a question of public experience and the cultural form that the telling assumes. I think the case of nervous laughter and the discomfort that it reveals are very suggestive of the way in which sexual practices translate from a private sphere to a public sphere, and so from the written page, which is a space one usually engages—at least in my cultural context—in privacy, to the kind of public viewing that has been joined by film and cultural forms like this. What strikes me as



Courtesy of U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Thomas Edison National Historical Park



Night at the Adonis and other vintage, classic gay porn available at bjouworld.com

potentially most interesting about Akram's program then, in this context, is the way it puts pressure on the cultural forum to account for the vectors of sociability that pervade it and are, in a multitude of forms, made by it. Last night, as we travelled en masse to watch the second part of Akram's program, we all traversed Beirut in a special, designated bus that had been appropriated for the purpose of bringing us to see sex in a place where it would be more safe to do so, of moving us from the public realm of this urban theatre to the more private, more protected, but still communal space of the studio where we watched private acts publicly, together. At the same time, the very dislocation of our own bodies made me wonder a little bit about the *other* equally cultural practices that shape us as audiences, and shape us all as audiences differently: religion, law, custom. And so what does it mean to dislocate sex, especially gay male sex, as something that could *just be* not only from one sphere to another, private to public and then back again, but also from one set of cultural contexts (where most of the work we've seen was made) to this one? Certainly, this involves degrees of discomfort as well that we might productively engage.

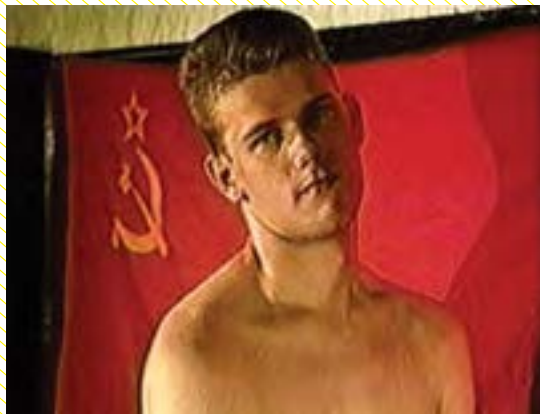
Stuart Comer: I'm not a scholar of pornography, but it is something that is featured in a considerable amount of work I've been engaging with recently. I suppose it became particularly of interest to me when I was working in New York City in the late eighties at the New Museum of Contemporary Art. One morning I woke up to discover that Senator Jesse Helms had effectively brought down a major exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's work. This controversy has been the subject of much debate so I won't go into it now, but it became a defining moment for me in terms of understanding the potential of a sexual image to radically change government and public policy. Since I've worked at Tate and have been programming films, there have been occasions when I have presented material that was of a sexual or erotic—but not necessarily pornographic—nature. Generally I have not encountered any legal troubles, but nor do I assume that I'm in a utopia where somehow these things are exempt from the usual legal processes.

I think that the first film I showed along these lines was Robert Frank's *Cocksucker Blues*, which is a documentary about the Rolling Stones. It shows what was considered at the time to be shocking footage of the Stones and their groupies doing cocaine and having sex on an airplane. There were a number of other scenes that were considered scandalous, and the Stones basically shut the film down. It's never been released theatrically, and there are all kinds of mythologies that surround the film, about when it can be presented publicly and legally. One of the most prevalent myths is that Robert Frank must be present at screenings, which is no longer true. Really the primary reason for the Stones' resistance to letting the film be screened is the lawsuits they could face from people that appear on camera in the film, whether they were engaging in "controversial" behavior or not. Guilt by association still seems to be a powerful problem. After lengthy negotiations the Stones decided to lend us their print at the time, which is only one of two "legal" prints that exist; Robert holds the other one. They permitted us to do eight screenings, which is the first time they have allowed it to be seen so many times. There were only a handful of legal public screenings since the film was finished. Of course, all of the screenings sold out, almost instantly, and the police did come, in fact, and insisted on seeing the film before we presented it. Luckily there were no further problems.

Subsequently, last year, I premiered a series called *Destriated*, which is a group of films made by artists that engaged with sex, eroticism, or pornography. I did not commission the films, but there was one in particular, by Larry Clark, that I think was a really, incredibly important film, perhaps his strongest film. It raises interesting questions about the nature of

pornography's relationship to documentary practice, and how desire and the different subjectivities of the participants are constructed, controlled, and displayed. Getting back to what Hannah mentioned about narrative, obviously in a lot of the clips that Bill uses in his work there are explicit narratives involved, but when it comes to presenting the sexual act, we're essentially watching what could constitute a documentary; it's treated as evidence that hints at social constructs beyond the original story line or plot.

The boundaries between public and private are, I think, essentially what's at the heart of this series. It questions what it means to watch this kind of explicit work publicly. I will show you a few images to quickly follow the trajectory of how people have engaged with pornographic and erotic images, publicly, since the beginning of cinema as we know it. This first image obviously represents a soldier in Times Square, presumably during wartime, and perhaps contemplating spending some time at one of the "adult theaters" in the area, where he would watch erotic films in the company of other men. If we go back earlier to the beginning of Kinetoscopes and a number of other devices that were used generally for viewing erotic material, we notice that they provided a more private, one-on-one engagement with what, by today's standards would be very tame images but to which there was a degree of shame attached. This is a device in which, again, you could watch images of women, mostly dancing, partially clothed, but at the time they were considered very shocking. The moment you would insert your nose into the box to watch the film, these two little pads would come out and "rouge" your cheeks so that you would walk away and be seen to be embarrassed and ashamed. Immediately, of course, there was legislation surrounding the presentation of "prurient" material. I'm especially interested in the act of watching people watching pornography, and what this tells us about social space, human interaction—erotic or otherwise—and how these interactions become legislated and controlled. Like Hannah I'm interested in what just happened during the translation; I'm very curious about what it means to have a female voice, in the Arab world, publicly translating a male voice reading an explicit text by a male author, and having this kind of discomfort, which is very palpable in her translation. We're all in a very precarious network at the moment. Last night, during the screening, I felt a palpable discomfort amongst a lot of people in the audience. I told Akram that I wonder what percentage of the audience had seen a man rimming which is, basically, engaging in mouth-to-anal contact. I have no idea, but I'm very curious to know. Footage of rimming is now easily available online, but what happens when you convene a diverse group of people to watch together the act of rimming in the context of an artist's practice?



Video still from *The Fall of Communism as Seen in Gay Pornography*, 1998, by William E. Jones. Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

As these images indicate, one of the first concerns that arises when "indecent" material is presented in public, as was the case during the rise of the popularity of peep shows, is that children will be exposed to "inappropriate" imagery. Needless to say there are still massive debates around the accessibility of these kinds of images to children, which probably speaks volumes about how shame is constructed around the public dissemination of erotic images. As this slide indicates the same could be said about concerns that historically have accompanied the exposure of women to pornography. This probably is another issue and debate we should probably address since most of the work in Akram's program, and obviously in Bill's program, depicts gay male sex.

Even though peep shows provided one-on-one, individual-to-image relationships, they were presented, often, in a public situation with numerous kinetoscopes lined up in entertainment arcades. Men would have a "private" experience by looking through the peephole rather than collectively at one screen. But together these men constituted an interesting spectacle of spectatorship in public space. Gradually though, even with early film devices, one of the ultimate goals was to make equipment portable, so one could take it into the home and engage with it privately. Obviously, cinema has ultimately been a public experience for most of the twentieth century until, as Bill mentioned, the rise of the VCR and videotape. Cinemas devoted to showing gay pornography, such as The Tomkat Cinema on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles, are particularly interesting. The Adonis was a well-known cinema in New York City and was also the subject of a porn film called *A Night at the Adonis*, which documents the kind of public space the cinema space

becomes, in a gay sexual context. These cinemas functioned as sex clubs as well, so not only are people watching images of sex, they are also engaging in sex themselves within the same space. In gay sex clubs there often are a number of monitors in the room, so that again people engage in sex acts in parallel to the act of watching sex on a screen. To re-relate those points, the rise of VHS and the VCR was so crucial on so many levels. There has been a lot written about histories of video art and its dependence on military technology. Unfortunately, there's much less written, at least in the art context, on video's dependence on the pornography industry. In fact, entire formats have largely been determined by the massive consumption of pornography. The statistics vary, but the last time I checked, well over 87 percent of all hits on the Internet were for pornography websites, so this clearly is a major cultural syndrome we need to address. Given the fact that artists are engaging with these issues more and more, it's absolutely essential that pornography (and images of sexuality and the sex act) find a place for critical discussion within the art context.

Back to the issue of public and private, since the VCR came into prominence during the 1980s, and more and more cinemas have shut down. It has become increasingly challenging for the porno industry, as they were always creating work on film, to actually get high attendance, especially when men risked having their homosexuality discovered, amongst the other unsavoury aspects of having to view porn in the company of others. Obviously this situation has now given way to the Internet. I am especially fascinated by the way porn and chat rooms are coalescing, so that people who traditionally have had no access to images of gay sex not only discover them online but are immediately put online with the community that perhaps they don't have access to if they're not living in a major city. Obviously we've become massively a network society. We watch images "together" and interact in a much broader public space. That is a traditional cinema. This is reflected in people's sexual lives and their ability to connect the experience of viewing porn with webcams and engaging in a more participatory relationship to moving images. I'm very interested in the implications of this shift. To what extent porn and cruising websites are readily available in Beirut I'm not sure, but what does it mean for somebody in a private home to convene with an international community of people watching porn versus all of us convening in this particular room to watch and discuss erotic images by artists together?

William E. Jones: My interest in gay porn as a subject for my work began in the mid-1990s, and since that time, a number of major transformations have occurred in the industry. In the late 1960s, the first

sexually explicit gay movies for public consumption were made by people who considered themselves filmmakers, and who, for various economic, legal, and aesthetic reasons, chose to make porno. Some were directors with aspirations to make narrative films in an industrial system that was completely closed to them as gay men; others were experimental filmmakers who saw a liberating potential in showing gay sex. Their films were presented in theatres where an audience may or may not have been paying attention, but nonetheless, directors used the forms of theatrical cinema, conventional or avant-garde. In the context of pornography, these forms and the modes of spectatorship that accompanied them have become obsolete, or at least they no longer function as they once did. Most recently, pornography as a movie, as a discrete object to be consumed, has almost ceased to exist. It has been replaced by the internet system of "video on demand," which allows a spectator to pay for a certain interval of time to watch any number of scenes or brief segments in any order. This latest transformation was as rapid as it was decisive, and it had an impact upon me personally.

I started working in the porn industry in 2005 as a producer of bargain DVD compilations—four hours for \$10—of archival material. I was hired by what was once the largest distributor of porn in the United States, Video Company of America (VCA) in the San Fernando Valley. This company owned the HIS Video library, produced a large number of videos under the HIS imprint, and licensed an even larger number of titles from a consortium of independent producers called the Planet Group. VCA distributed approximately 800 gay porn movies produced between 1972 and 1999, and this material served as the source not only for the company's Tool Factory series of DVD compilations, but also for a whole body of my work as an artist. In 2006, Larry Flynt bought VCA and acquired the library of titles I worked with. Though most of my co-workers got laid off in the takeover, I continued to produce compilations just as before. Within a year, it became clear to Flynt that DVDs in general, and compilations recycling old material in particular, were becoming much less profitable, and eventually, I too lost my job. Now all of the material I edited is available on the Internet, where there is less need for the sort of aesthetic decisions I was paid to make. For me, and for the industry in general, a whole era has passed.

Stuart Comer: I guess the other key question I have based on Akram's program and the positioning of it in Home Works is what is the role of artists' films in this context? We are in a moment, not unlike at the beginning of cinema, where there are numerous formats and new ways of presenting moving images, and real battles for how to standardize and

industrialize this technical diversity for profit. How can artists use sexual images and the technical apparatus through which they are constructed and distributed to resist or open up this standardization?

William E. Jones: When a form is enmeshed in a viable, contemporary economic activity, it is somehow less attractive to artists. In its obsolescence, it becomes a locus of historical discourse and a locus of nostalgia as well. One thing I should mention is that my compilations of old gay porno, which I happen to find interesting, have never been big sellers. Most porn consumers prefer current titles featuring new talent and as much novelty as possible. One of my colleagues at VCA said to me, "All these compilations you produce, they're just for academics."

Stuart Comer: We were talking earlier today about Jonas Mekas, who famously screened a film by Jack Smith called *Flaming Creatures*, which contained what at the time were considered fairly graphic sexual acts. At a film festival in Belgium, the police raided the cinema and attempted to remove the film, at which point Mekas picked up the projector and projected the film onto the face of one of the policemen in question. Warhol did not have an easy time either at various moments, and in fact I was thinking that until tonight, I have never connected Warhol's *Blow Job* to your work, Bill. But the fact that it does not actually show the sexual act itself but only names it in the title relates strongly to your films. There are numerous shots throughout *The Fall of Communism as Seen in Gay Pornography* in particular that reminded me of Warhol's films.

William E. Jones: The chief defining characteristic of the Eastern European videos I used for *The Fall of Communism as Seen in Gay Pornography* (1998) was an atmosphere of coercion. What I found really disturbing about the material was actually the main attraction for its fans: the interviews that the Western director conducted with these Russian boys, and how they were slowly but surely seduced into situations that were quite humiliating. The interviews I appropriated were not outtakes, but were as important to the videos as the more explicit sex that took place afterward. I chose to present only the action leading up to the sex, since the interviews and the preliminary examinations the boys endured were already clear examples of the power dynamic at work. The connection to Warhol is a provocative one. Warhol certainly exerted considerable power over anyone who wanted attention from him, and his hold on people was most intense when he made movies. Warhol's subjects were brought up under capitalism, and the notion that money, sex and power were interchangeable or negotiable (as commodities are) came as no surprise to them. This

state of affairs did come as a surprise to the boys in *The Fall of Communism*.... I have the impression that some of them were learning this fundamental lesson of capitalism for the first time at the moment they were being filmed.

Stuart Comer: A lot of the work that Akram showed came from certain distributors, such as Video Data Bank in Chicago, so it is much more rooted in the history of video art rather than cinema. Organizations like Video Data Bank or Electronic Arts Intermix in New York were premised on this idea of video as a kind of free distribution utopia, which, of course, didn't last long. We're at a point where artists' films and videos are being shown on websites such as YouTube and UbuWeb. Simultaneously there are websites like XTube which allow people to shoot themselves in amateur pornography and immediately upload the outcome. That is potentially a massive revolution. The radical immediacy of making such intensely private acts public, and even interactive, is likely to have profound consequences.

William E. Jones: Amateur websites—amateur in the sense of charging nothing for access and paying nothing to contributors—have thrown the commercial porn industry into a crisis. If individual exhibitionists and collectors make their images available to consumers for free, why should anyone pay a corporation for sexually explicit content? The industry is losing its distinction and its competitive edge, to say nothing of its former monopoly. It remains to be seen what aesthetic claims can be made for the videos on Xtube or DudeTube.

I suspect that thus far, there really isn't anyone who's making what one could call an artistic statement in the field of Internet porn, although it's hard to tell. One of the most intimidating aspects of porn is its unknowability. Because of its vastness, none of us will get to know the entire genre. I can say that I've seen virtually every film distributed by the company I worked for, but this is just a tiny segment of what is out there. It is important to keep in mind that when I make a definite statement, I'm speaking from the point of view of someone who has dealt with one library of porn produced and distributed during a specific historical period. There's plenty out there that I will never see and can't make any judgment about. Indeed, it is likely that no one will ever analyze or discuss the majority of what gets consumed as pornography. This unknowability is, I think, from a philosophical point of view, extremely interesting.

Akram Zaatari: Maybe I'll take a few questions and try to answer everything. Actually, I have no answer for many of the questions.

Q&A

Question 1: I didn't understand... Are you trying to say that porn is a genre that should be integrated in the art scene or the art practice in general?

William E. Jones: I don't know if I'm advocating that artists become more interested in porn, but I have noticed that as it is transformed into something else, it becomes an area of curiosity. It's almost as though artists can't quite touch the genre until it's about to pass away. In the United States, important vested interests draw a strict distinction between "sex cinema" and the rest of cinema. There are enormous profits to be made, there are political points to be scored, but it's a distinction that I often wonder about. Why does it exist? Why is it not possible to integrate explicit sexuality into the narrative fabric of movies that we see in theatres? Why is it that sexually explicit situations can exist only in a cast-off region held in contempt?

Same speaker: It's not about contempt, but what's the interest in just seeing a close-up on a hole and a penis sticking. I mean, what difference does it make anyway to see it on-screen? What does it change anyway to see it on the Internet or the theatre or anywhere? I mean ... to put in art...

Stuart Comer: The question is: Do you have the right to? In so many places you don't have the right to, and I think that that is the fundamental question: Why would you want to allow someone to tell you whether Robert Mapplethorpe is art or pornography, whether it is obscene or somehow "enlightening"? The point is you should be free to make these decisions yourself, and yet they're constantly legislated.

Hannah Feldman: I would add that there is still a very important aspect to the screening experience, to the different kinds of viewings we engage in in private and in public and suggest that these experiences, the discomfort or the pleasure, for example, are extremely productive for thinking about how communities are made and, equally, unmade.

William E. Jones: The porn industry must deal with a massive corpus of legislation and law enforcement policy that changes on a regular basis. The lawyers for the Free Speech Coalition, an industry advocacy group, endeavour to determine what the latest standards are, and challenge their legality on a regular basis. In the U.S., much of this legal discourse hinges on a doctrine devised by the Supreme Court: community standards. It is a very peculiar and slippery notion. What is obscene, and what is not obscene, and to whom? It's constantly shifting. To me, this is of great political and historical interest. To discover where this boundary lies, to debate it...

Same speaker: I think that we have surpassed the boundary a long time ago. You know, the sexual liberation was done a long time ago. This discourse could be very interesting in the fifties maybe but sexual relations are done, everything is done, sex is everywhere...

William Jones: In many different contexts, my work comes with warning labels. I bear the stigma of being this sort of marginal character, since I do this "gay stuff," and I do work that's not for children, for families. I deal with the consequences of this on a daily basis, and I can tell you that the liberation of which you speak is not total and not uniform. It has not been granted to everyone.

Akram Zaatari: This debate about what is accepted and what is not on-screen varies from one place to another and the same argument as the one you're saying can be said in Iran. Why would you really need to show hair on-screen whether on the TV or in film? I mean why do we need to do a close-up on an eye, cinematographically. It really depends on the filmmaker to be able to do that or not. Now, if a sexual relationship has happened, it means that we don't need to talk about it? I don't think that's convincing.

Same speaker: The discourse of: Wow, we're showing sex... We've seen sex on the Internet. It's not a taboo anymore. You're treating it as if it were a taboo.

Akram Zaatari: I am not presenting this program for provocation, nor to break taboos, but to ask a simple question: Can we, by watching the act of having sex, engage in a reflection about something else? Can the representation of the act of sex lead us elsewhere? Cinema is quickly changing and we cannot keep on substituting sex with symbols.

Stuart Comer: I think that especially in Bill's work, in the various representations you see of Los Angeles... That city does not exist anymore. The fact that you can actually study an urban context or situation via these images is crucial, I think. It is not about being taboo; it's just that these images are often prevented from being seen beyond their role as "sexual content."

Question 2: I have a question in relation to the quote in your film, Bill. It is from Rosa Von Prauhheim. Maybe you can restate it, because I find it amazing somehow because it activates this question for me about precisely the relation between gay struggle and the social and political, and what kind of vision one poses, and how can one relate to the other struggles, whether in Lebanon or in the U.S. In a certain way, it's interesting how in Lebanon or Palestine, or in other places, where there are huge political questions and problems and then you have the gay "question" or struggle. How could one work with that? Gay people

conformed, and they became worse than bourgeois and wanted to be more conservative so that they'll let us live. They say that "they" will see us as moral, leading good lives; or a gay man dreams of a boy who is also faithful, "clean" or something like that...

William Jones: The dialogue is from *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, but the Situation in Which He Lives* (1971): "Faggots don't want to be faggots. They don't want to be different. They want nothing more than to live as insipidly as the average citizen. They long for a snug home in which to live unobtrusively with an honest true friend in a marriage-like union. The ideal partner must be clean, honest, and natural, as loving and playful as a lapdog. Because the bourgeoisie sees gays as sick and inferior, gays try to be even more bourgeois, try to bury their guilt feelings in a mass of middle-class values. They are politically passive and behave conservatively as thanks for not being beaten to death."

Speaker 2: Exactly.

William Jones: My recent body of work addresses a certain amnesia. Consumer capitalism has been very effective in satisfying some desires, but also in foreclosing political debates and in blinding us to historical continuities. Among gay men in the U.S., there is currently very little sense of affiliation with the subcultures of previous generations whose expressions were oppositional by necessity. One of the things I want to do in my work is to remind people, particularly those of a younger generation, that there's a tradition to be aware of, and to reinvent as well. It can't be static. It can't be an object of distant or ironic nostalgia. We must continue to engage with it as cultural practice. For instance, there is a lot to be said for people claiming and enjoying public space. One of the stunning things about this old porno footage is that it was often shot in urban environments where now people couldn't even conceive of filming. The New York subway system is under intense surveillance. Could one shoot a feature-length porno there in the present day? The film *Subway* (1980) by Ian McGraw is of great aesthetic interest chiefly because it documents (perhaps unintentionally) a public space that was claimed by gay men in an atmosphere of law enforcement's indifference. Of course, during this period, New York City was really dangerous. People got mugged and murdered all the time. This no longer happens as much as it did, but what is the price of security? I wish to remind people that it may be possible to reclaim a sociability that has been lost, because for one thing, it was a hell of a lot of fun.

Akram Zaatari: Let me add a word to answer the question that mentioned Beirut. I moved a few times

from different neighbourhoods and very often in Beirut we have pirated cable television, so you pay \$10 per month to someone in the neighbourhood; normally it's the same person who provides alternative electricity. In some areas, you get access to at least three or four pornographic channels, some of which broadcast as well gay and lesbian material, twice or three times a month, probably not more. When I lived in Ashrafieh, I used to take the elevator down every day, encounter an old man or an old lady who has probably access to the same cable network because everyone in our building had cable, and I always looked at them and thought: Have they watched that stuff?

People do have sex in Beirut; people have sex against the laws that criminalise gay sex as well. I would never dare to ask an old lady in the elevator after saying good morning: "Oh have you seen that gay porn *After Midnight*?" That would have been provocation. What I have done is I programmed these author films that included highly gay sexual material in a program on sex, in a forum on cultural—not sexual—practices. I would be interested in causing "discomfort," not "provocation." This is the same discomfort that happens to you when you look at a mirror and [you see] a red pimple somewhere on your face, so you become less comfortable to go out on the street. There are so many things that make us feel uncomfortable when they are made public.

Speaker 3: I have a problem with what you just said, and this is aimed more at you. I don't think we should mix things. I mean, the work we saw tonight is an artistic practice and I have nothing against or for the use of pornography in art practice. I find the work of William Jones very interesting because, first, it comes from a personal experience, and second, it presents a way of looking at history in a way, and questioning it and bringing a critical approach to it. I have a problem, though, with the idea of doing a program with so many diverse things that are here just for the sake of sex, and it's not a matter of being provocative like you said. We're all used to seeing pornographic films when we come back home. Yesterday, for example, at 3 a.m., there was gay porn when I came back home; I thought to myself: I missed Akram's program but here it is. The problem is not about going across borders that the law imposes or allows. It is not sufficient to justify anything. For me, in Iran, if you could show your hair it would be great but this is not what makes art. I was a little bit disappointed by the first program, which I find quite poor; I only liked *Couch*; I would like you to tell me what the discourse that you are proposing is. For me it's not sufficient to say that there is sex and...

Akram Zaatari: No, of course, I presented films that I like very much as well.

Speaker 3: You put the films together; there's almost like a montage that you made as a curator. There's a decision, so I would like to know about your critical approach, about what you tried to say in the first screening.

Akram Zaatar: There was an order indeed, but the order was broken—with my consent—I think that what you saw was due to the place where you saw the programs, because, apart from William Jones's work, which was from the beginning a separate program like a body by itself, the two other programs were supposed to be orchestrated differently but due to the fact that we can not show sexual material in this theatre, we had to split the films not thematically; not according to what they are; but according to the level or degree of sexual material in them. That is why, because you are in Beirut, you ended up watching yesterday's program the way it was. Originally, you would have seen half of it mixed with half of the other program. This is regarding the dispersion of works. I'm not a curator and I often try to say it. What I do is interventions in programming exactly like what I did a few years ago in Oberhausen, and I like that not only because it relieves me from the pitfalls of curators. I'm personally an artist and all of what I do, be it in teaching or research or programming, is part of my artist's interests. From that perspective, I would not go into discussing every film, but I indeed like all the films that I presented. I have, of course, my favourite ones, and, of course, my less favourite ones. One of the problems that I faced is that I really did not find works made by women; maybe it is a lack of research tools; but as I said, this is an ongoing program and these will probably complement it with interesting works that I will see in the future. I can't reply to your comment about the program being weak because this is highly subjective. One of the works that I like very much is *Smoke Rings* for example. Another work I really like is *Climax Modelling*, even if it is the only work that was metaphorical, even though I was trying to avoid metaphors because one of the starting points of why I was interested in sex is because sex in Arabic cinema was this dark spot that is substituted by a metaphor, like: a man and a woman [enter], sit on a bed, and then all of a sudden they wake up in bed the next day, as if telling us: you know what happened, we don't need to show it. Another example is a close-up on the sink and water coming down and that substitutes a sex scene. My generation of people who watch Egyptian films are very cynical about this. We laugh about it. I mean, how creative can you be by substituting sex by these mechanisms? Sometimes the mechanisms are horrible, like a pump pumping something; really, it's funny; or sometimes they're very symbolic like a pigeon flying or water coming out of something.

Speaker 3: So that brings us to the question...

Akram Zaatar: Yes, this is why I decided to explore that dark spot; I'm interested in this as well; and to start to research and see how people did it. Here I'm not talking about pornography, because the research that I did is among artists and filmmakers. I did not research pornography. When I said I look at people in my building that probably saw the same porno films that I saw late at night, I was talking about the discomfort of crossing from the private space to the public space.

Speaker 3: It's not a public space because we had "porn public spaces" in Lebanon like cinemas that showed porn, it's more the artistic public space that is at question here. This is why I raised the question of artistic practice and not of pornography.

Akram Zaatar: Yes, but this is why films are tagged. We said it in the beginning of every program. We said that the films contain highly sexual material that is almost pornographic. I can't say more. I simply can't say more.

Speaker 3: You mentioned at the beginning of this panel that you wanted to speak about sex removed from any other notions. Is there [such a thing] as just sex?

Akram Zaatar: No, I agree with you completely. I think that you cannot dissociate sex from politics first. You can't dissociate sex from economy. I think this is one of the challenges for me to explore in other programs, especially in the works of William E. Jones where there is no sex yet sex and pornography are present. The idea of historical documents, the idea of exchanging context in which documents are used and exploited makes them poetic, while initially they were not. For instance, the film excerpts that Bill used in the film *The Fall of Communism* are now almost documentary rushes. It's like, after ten or twenty years, our interest in these porno films from the Eastern bloc shifted to become a documentary one.

Speaker 4: Akram, I was wondering from the start of the program about why you haven't shown *Red Chewing Gum* (a video made by Akram Zaatar in 2000) as part of the program and this question became more poignant when you said that you are an artist and not a curator, and of course it also deals with the question: What is sex?

Akram Zaatar: It's because I don't show my work when I do my studies, and this for me is a study. On the other hand, I don't think *Red Chewing Gum* is what I'm looking for. Maybe I would have shown *Majnounak* for example, about how men talk explicitly about sex and where the idea of narrative comes into their testimonies.

Did I answer you?

Speaker 4: No, I mean I'm really intrigued by your statement about you being an artist and that what you've just done with this program is not curating.

Akram Zaatar: It is a curatorial gesture but done by an artist, exactly like when I teach. I'm not a professor so I don't take teaching as a career but I would like to do, sometimes, interventions in educational context.

Stuart Comer: One of the things I was very curious about, not knowing the situation here very well ... but Bill occupies an exceptional network in Los Angeles of gay male intellectuals who are not necessarily working around pornography or sexual identity, but a broad range of ideas and agendas... They constitute an important intellectual community, and I'm very curious about Beirut. Ali Cherri's film last night was a notable exception. There were very few Lebanese artists in your programs. I often speak with an artist I know in Warsaw who is doing a lot of research trying to find gay male artists working in Eastern Europe willing to present works with graphic images and there are almost none. When he does find them, they're very scared to show their work still, which is why I take exception to the comment earlier about everyone being liberated, because in many parts of the world, we definitely are not. Hannah asked: Does Beirut really need this? I think it's a really important question. Who is your audience here?

Speaker 5: Can I do a small observation going totally with what you said? I want to say to Ali, who is not here today: Perfect, we needed this from a Lebanese artist, thank you, Akram, for this program. On the other hand, I don't know if we needed only gay male sex? Where are the lesbians, the hermaphrodites and the transgendered? The queer community is big; maybe we need to know who they are, and to introduce them. That was first. Second; I'm really shocked at the absence of the gay community; but where is the gay community so that we can ask you questions and you can answer us and have a debate that will do us some good. Where is the gay community in the public? There are a lot of curators, a big international gathering, but the people that are concerned directly with the situation of gays and sex in this country are not present so that we can have a constructive debate. This is my observation, and please, next time, not only gay sex.

Akram Zaatar: There won't be a next time [*laughing*]. I think that is why it's not a gay or queer film festival, because these are very subjective choices. Believe me, I've seen a lot of work, for example V Tape has great work, documentary work about hermaphrodites or transgender, but first, they are too long, it would eat most of one session. Second, they were very didactic and presented very direct ways of looking at the

politics of sexual identities, which is for me really great but not for this program, maybe for other programs.

Speaker 6: I just wanted to jump on Alex's question and say that I totally appreciate the challenge to look at sex as narrative, but I do at the same time feel that I could have seen the program we saw last night at MIX, which is the experimental gay and lesbian film festival in New York City. I would see that program, exactly that program, on a Saturday night, late, and I would be told that it would be a "boy program," that I'd be seeing lots and lots and lots of dick and I would know that that's what I'd be in for. I'd be with my friends, there would be lots of folks there and we would have a good time, and it would be pleasurable, which is something to talk about in terms of audience, like the question of why it is not a queer film festival but this is an intervention that you're making. Another thing I would say about a festival like MIX is that one of the things about your programming is that it made me realise why I do appreciate queer film festivals. When a festival like MIX started, it was for artists working with sexually explicit material. No one else would show their work and we were determined to keep making it. So we had to be faggots and queers and show the work there at MIX and this was the only place where we would show it. Sometimes it sucked and sometimes it was great but that was a venue and there was no other venue and no other place for artists working with sexually explicit material. This discussion for me is deadening in some way, because it's trying to make it normalized or something. I do think that there should be a real discussion on what is sexual material. When is it in a piece of art? When is it not? When does it get labelled as queer or in MIX? When does it get to be in Home Works?

William Jones: I can speak about these things from personal experience, since *v. o.* (2006) was shown in the last edition of MIX. I very much appreciate MIX, because there are very few venues that can make a claim on being underground or subversive or doing something alternative in New York these days, and MIX, I think, really does that. The MIX audience is fairly diverse, something I welcome, because, unfortunately, in most queer film festivals, my work addresses an audience that is about 99 percent gay men, and I find this stultifying.

Speaker 6: This is why I'm sort of pushing Akram on this because I do feel that by making this kind of lengthened statement that he is doing with this program instead of doing a gay and lesbian film festival, there is something that is like erasing some of what is productive about these spaces, and I do agree with Alex. I mean, where is everybody? Just because the material is sexually explicit and is, in fact, predominately gay male, doesn't mean that it has to be an only gay audience, but why isn't it a diverse

audience? People need to know to come so we can all have this experience in common.

Akram Zaatari: I think Bill said something to me this afternoon: The moment you show sex on-screen, nobody's satisfied, because sex is all about expectations.

Hannah Feldman: Why is this absence the result of Akram's erasure of other spaces? It seems to me actually a very visible absence and so makes a picture about this space that we would otherwise not see.

William Jones: In films there are very heavy generic expectations. The work of mine that enrages the most people is *Finished* (1997), which is a feature-length film about the suicide of a gay porn star, yet it doesn't show anything sexually explicit. This film is about other things, not just the sex acts performed by the film's subject, and audiences at times can be frustrated by this, especially after they have seen publicity that emphasizes the gay porn angle. In an artistic context, there are few things more volatile than an audience whose expectations have been confounded. All sorts of crazy stuff can happen, and I sometimes proceed at my own risk. I've always been interested in work that doesn't demand a particular predetermined audience. I don't want to address only one kind of spectator with my work, though I do think there is a curious absence in this audience. I don't understand it, because I don't live here, but I find it a little strange that more gay guys didn't come out for this screening.

Stuart Comer: Very quickly to follow on ... because I thought that your point was very well taken (addressing Kara Lynch). I did a program as well for MIX last year which included one of Bill's films, but it is still curious to me that museums generally don't show this work—even though they are “artist's films”—and that cinema is still considered a secondary citizen in most museums; well, at least this kind of cinema. I did present that program at *Tate*, but generally these kinds of films and programs are not shown in the art museum context.

William Jones: Maybe it's a peculiarly American problem. The program Stuart curated was shown at Tate Modern and at the Stedelijk Museum in Europe, while in the United States, it was shown at Outfest Los Angeles and at the Seattle Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. Something has happened in the realm of culture in the U.S., a kind of segregation. This segregation is something I have to deal with constantly in the pursuit of an audience for my films and videos. Often, I'm pushed to one side, simply because I wish to make work about what really interests me.

Speaker 7: From my experience, it seems like the program that you selected comes from all these

different, very specific, subcultural contexts. My experience seeing it here in this selection; mostly gay men but also some other stuff; it seems that when it's taken out of a gay film festival context and placed within this one, it takes on an anthropological kind of scenario. For me, there's not a desire, it's not my sex. Everyone can't say that, and maybe it is that that takes on a potentially deadening or stultifying effect. I don't know what's to gain for that. I don't want to miss it; maybe there is something to gain!

Akram Zaatari: I don't know what's to gain, but, to me, this shift is really important. Of course, I would like a gay community to be here, but if I wanted to reach out particularly to a gay community I would have done it in a bar or somewhere else.

William Jones: Then you wouldn't have included me because I don't allow my work to be shown in bars.

Akram Zaatari: That shift or interruption that I wanted to do here is for an audience that is not normally interested in going there, but because it is in Home Works, they trust in a way... or they find Home Works an incredible podium that presents issues and then they would probably see it, even if they are bothered by it.

Speaker 7: I think there's something important in seeing or experiencing sex that isn't yours. This can be quite challenging and transgressive and maybe that's where there's some kind of challenge to identities to be found, which may have been what you were originally looking for in doing this program.

William Jones: When you say “sex that isn't yours,” is this a reaction to the second program of *Let It Be*, or is it also a reaction to my work?

Speaker 7: It is a reaction to the first and third because I missed the second program. Here, I'm speaking very personally.

Akram Zaatari: Laetitia Bourget made a very beautiful work that's called *7121 images du sexe d'un autre*. where she films testicles, and penis over a long shot.... ✨

1- In 1998 an optional civil marriage bill was opposed by all religious leaders unanimously, and consequently rejected by the parliament after the cabinet had approved it.

2- In 2006, the office of censorship intervened to stop Rabih Mroue and Lina Saneh's play *Who's Afraid of Representation?* after the office received an audio recording of play excerpts that contained explicit sexual terms, recorded by one of the viewers with a portable phone during the opening performance.

Wonderland Uncovered

Intervention by Mirs
Text by Mirene Arsanios

"I found myself standing in the heart of a cruising area. A space that is so empty and mechanical, a highway, a wonderland uncovered."

Through a simple gesture, Mirs's intervention during the Queer Geography workshop in Beirut raised pressing questions about the relationship between a woman's body and public space. Mirs stood by the highway, simply doing that, standing. Her mere physical presence provoked a series of reactions; cars pulled over soliciting her sexual services. Although Mirs's dress code, a "normal" everyday outfit, did not visibly indicate she was a sex worker, and the place she was standing in is not a cruising area, cars pulling over didn't hesitate a single instant. They all approached her with a specific intention. By exposing her body to the streets, in that particular location, Mirs revealed that her body couldn't exist otherwise, or freely, so to speak, when placed in the conditions she was in.

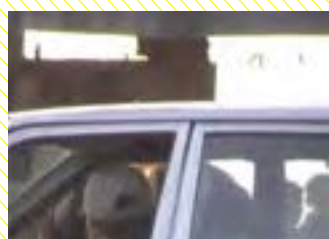
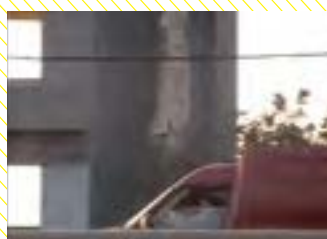
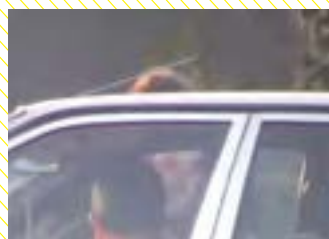
And she played the game. Leaning over the car's window, she engaged in conversations with the drivers. Again, her conversations didn't take on the rhetoric of negotiation, a price for a service. Rather she faced the drivers genuinely, asking them what they wanted, as if it wasn't obvious, or as if it shouldn't be. By blatantly ignoring the driver's sexual intentions, Mirs reversed the power relation between a woman and a man meeting in a public space, or rather on the streets. She stood, knowing and disregarding the driver's demands, and sent him back a distorted image of his own desire.

"An empty space that can change dramatically by adding one element—me. An empty space that has a lot to offer, a highway that has so much to stop for, a highway under which lies all of the satisfaction 'of a queer experience.' Safe, fulfilling, and diverse."

Mirs placed her body in a public space all the while challenging the social, cultural, or economic conditions that conferred to her body a specific meaning. She challenged this structural triangle by simply being there.



Drive
Video stills
Mirs, 2011



Rasif¹ Beirut

seriously statement street upbeirut tricolor:
this is not what I want to write.

maybe
things cannot understand
or a state of should-not
aquatic in its silence

Aquatic the rasif where drops drown into pools of grey dirt
Aquatic sha3rato² bare dripping on a cheek of grime
Aquatic the forgotten cars on a side of the road
all masfoufin³ militaries
going to war and tears
Tears on window from ceiling to hood
from ceiling to trunk

Ceiling of another ciel⁴
Ceiling of nothing on paper
nothing but tears
Tears splash the
standing pillars painted with black and tips of yellow

and I can stand above them

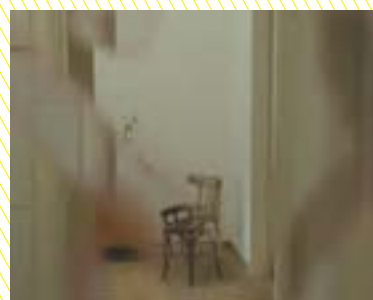
them between my legs
them stimulating my between my legs
them turning yellow at the stimulation between my legs
and then the rust.
Umbrellas of paper are slow down
fall to the bottom of the ocean
I prefer it abrupt and pang
Umbrella of paper 3am bet tesh⁵ in a pool of grey dirt.
they say the gold brand has more gusto
and I find it suave
because it has more gusto in my head now
Done the sticks de puta⁶
the stick de madre⁷
you are a person puta
and/or
you are a person de puta madre⁸

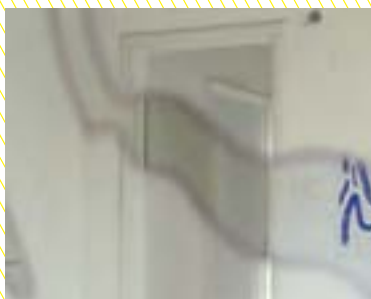
Queasy the gold brand with its mucho gusto⁹
Queasy the sticks de puta
Queasy the gipsy that I blew
and puta madre
Queasy all the city in its almost afternoon of rains
pools of grey dirt
umbrellas of paper in the pools of grey dirt
standing pillars with rusty yellow tips
and then there's me.

Put a madre
there's me.

- 1- *Sidewalk* in Arabic
- 2- *His hair* in Arabic
- 3- *Aligned* in Arabic
- 4- *Sky* in French
- 5- *Soaking* in Arabic
- 6- *Prostitute* in Spanish
- 7- *Mother* in Spanish
- 8- *Motherfucker* in Spanish
- 9- *Nice to meet you* in Spanish

Rasif Beirut
Poem
Ghiwa Sayegh, 2011





In that libretto a little boy in a fit of temper attacks various objects in his room and attempts to hurt a squirrel. The objects come alive and they, as well as little animals, grow to enormous proportions and attack the child. At some point in the *mêlée* a little squirrel gets hurt and falls to the ground. On an impulse of compassion the little boy picks up the squirrel. Immediately the scene changes. Objects and animals become friendly and the little boy calls 'Maman', and some of the objects and animals echo him.



00:00:50



00:02:34



00:02:52



00:03:35



00:03:40

I've Heard Stories 1
Video
Marwa Arsanios, 2008

THREE murders THREE movies!

I've been told that THREE murders happened in this hotel! Not ONE only! I remember very well the news about the 1995 murder when Pharaon was killed.

(My mom was very sad.) I was affected by the story too, because it was the first time I had heard about a murder that was not driven by a political motive. (It sounded more like a thriller.)

I had never heard about the TWO other murders until 2007, when they decided to destroy the hotel, and we found ourselves on-site, looking for some furniture (we also took the leftover curtains that day). We were then told that the '95 murder was the last in the series.

All related to gay men. I knew that the owner of the hotel was gay, and so it had become a very popular place for the community since the '60s. But the THREE murders being all related to gay men sounded a bit... (It sounded more like a thriller.)

The 1995 murder led to the closure of the hotel, which led to its destruction in 2007. It is quite usual not to think about the preservation of modern architecture's landmarks in Beirut (Karol Shyer, a Polish architect—Bauhaus influence—who had found himself in Beirut after escaping WWII, had a great influence on the shaping of the modern city), but does it really matter? Beirut has a wild capitalist system that eats everything in its way. Anyway, Jamil Brahimi (the entrepreneur who has been implementing all the ugly buildings in Beirut since the '90s) doesn't really care, and, believe it or not, he is the one who is building the billion-dollar tower on the rubble of Shyer's Carlton (Carlton Residences). Perhaps Modern Beirut deserves it. Why should I care? The best is yet to be built! It's your turn now.

On that day in 2007, before the destruction of the hotel, I entered every room. I knew that it had happened on the "9ème étage," in the "Suite Royale."

It was windy. The second murder was by the swimming pool, and the third I am not sure, some say it happened in the kitchen, some in a room... But who cares—the newspaper's reports from the court say they were all related to robberies and money!

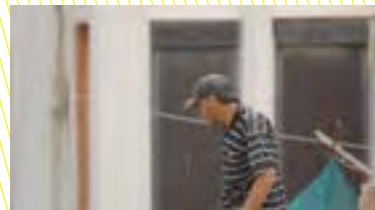
But we all knew: Passionate murders and class rebellions; one killed by his bodyguard, the second by his cook, and the third ... unknown!





Des Constructions
Video
François-Xavier Courrèges, 2011–2013







I, we, resist the other. We live with each other, or at least we learn the other. The intensity of the moment, the inability to project, leads to living, not survival.

To walk in the city is to oscillate between exaltation and total frustration. I am constantly verbally solicited: seduced, mocked, harassed, celebrated. My body and the city merge and clash.

We resist and we get adapted to this city, a city that despises us, that rejects us, to this unrecognizable and overbearing city, heavy and luminous, serious and light—as if we are speaking of a woman. Beirut. Of Beirut.

My walks and flâneries through urban pathways turn into observatories and directories of these transactions.

Tajwal
Performance

Alexandre Paulikevitch, 2012. Photos by Caroline Tabet (left) and Racha Mneimne (right).



LGBTIQ NGOs in Lebanon in the Wake of Postcolonialism and Joseph Massad's Critique

Jedidiah Anderson

Homosexuality is a Western construct. By this I mean that the idea of identifying as homosexual, as opposed to viewing homosexual acts merely as something that anyone could engage in, is a concept that originated in the West. To provide a parallel example that illustrates the contingency of homosexuality as an identity, if one eats carrots, one does not acquire an identity of being a carrot eater. At the same time, just as there are people who eat carrots throughout the world, there are people who have desires for people of the same sex without identifying as homosexual. Examples of societies where this belief was normative—that homosexual behavior was merely an act that anyone could engage in, and not a defining feature of one's identity—could be found in the premodern Arab world, and in the West itself before the late 1800s (El-Rouayheb 2005, 5–6).

However, in this current era in the Arab world, circumstances are different. Homosexuality has become more and more problematized in discourse in all sectors of the Arab world, and one can see an epistemological shift in the Arab world from understanding homosexuality as an aggregate collection of discrete acts to understanding it as an identity. Why, and how, has this come to be the case? One possible answer has been provided by Joseph Massad, in his book *Desiring Arabs*.

Joseph Massad claims that “incitement to discourse,” as Foucault calls it (17) has both intentionally and unconsciously been brought to the Arab world since the Nahda in regards to sexuality and homosexuality in particular (Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 37). This incitement to discourse has led to a problematization of homosexuality in the Arab world, the beginnings of which can be seen in the literary writers of the Nahda and which continues to this day. As in the West, religion, society, literature, and culture worked in tandem in the Arab world to create this incitement to discourse. Speaking of homosexuality in particular, Massad speaks of a “Gay International,” that is, a collection of Western gay rights organizations that work in the Arab world, which has sought through this incitement to discourse to define sexuality in the Arab world solely in Western terms, thus allowing it to better be controlled (161, *passim*).

What happened in the Arab world because of this incitement to discourse, as Massad claims, was the

creation of “gay people,” and through that, the creation of “straight people” who then could oppress “gay people” (188–189). The sudden and external imposition of this new paradigm resulted in the creation of “gay people” who were unprepared and unwilling to engage in asserting their identity—an identity they did not claim and that was thrust violently upon them by this discourse. Because of this epistemic violence, phenomena such as the Stonewall riots that took place in the U.S., which led directly to the improvement of gay rights in the West, have not been seen in the Arab world (184–185).

As homosexuality as an identity became solidified in the Arab world, homophobic oppression rose with it as well. In response to homosexual oppression in Lebanon, people in Lebanon who identified as members of the LGBTIQ population (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, intersexed, and queer) began to organize. This eventually led to the formation of the LGBTIQ activist group Helem (the Arabic word for “dream,” which is also an acronym for “Lebanese Protection for Gays and Lesbians”) and the women's support group Meem (“meem” being the first Arabic letter in the word for “woman,” as well as the first letter of every word of the full name of their organization, which in English can be translated as “Support Group for Lesbian Women”) which are currently operating in Lebanon and engaged in LGBTIQ civil rights work there.

Neither Helem nor Meem follow the current normative model of LGBTIQ rights movements in the West. Instead of pursuing their own struggle to the exclusion of all other issues that Lebanon faces, they have deliberately adopted a policy and worldview that is contingent on their struggle being wholly linked with the other problems facing the Arab world—particularly the issue of Palestine. Without understanding this point, it becomes difficult to understand the form that Helem and Meem groups' activism has taken. Shant, one of the coordinators of Meem, described their approach thus:

There is also this idea that if we are working for LGBT rights, we are working only for LGBT rights. They don't understand that I, as someone that identifies as a queer person from this country, take a more holistic approach, and that my struggle is very interconnected with the struggles of other minorities, for example, I cannot be silent about the Palestinian

cause, about the Armenian cause, the migrant workers in Lebanon, because all of this for me is part of the struggle. The cheesy way of saying it is that none of us are free until all of us are free; it's very utopian really, but personally, I believe in that and I believe that most of us do.

This critique is very similar to Chandra Talpade Mohanty's postcolonial critique of Western feminists in the developing world. This critique is something that Meem's members have understood intuitively, that they deal with in their discourse in a way that poses difficulties for Western LGBTIQ activists, and that has been a major point of contention between Western LGBTIQ groups and Helem and Meem. In an interview I conducted, Rasha Moumneh, a member of Helem and Meem, also spoke about this, saying:

The fact that LGBTIQ groups in the West do not see their issues as linked with other issues, I think, is more indicative of a failure on their part than due to a specific set of circumstances here. When we talk about the Arab world and the Third World, it is always in the context of "We have a culture, the North doesn't have a culture." Just the same way as when we talk about gender, we refer to women, as if men don't have a gender. There's this idea of neutral, or "West by default" and that's the way it is and the people that are working on these things here from this norm. But this way of working on LGBT rights is new, it didn't use to be this isolationist. The reason that a group like Helem was able to form was precisely because they made these links with other organizations and other struggles, not just as a matter of strategy but really looking at the points of intersection between these different forms of oppression. I think it's most obvious in the case of Meem—there is no way to begin to talk about lesbian rights without talking about women. And so you have this first point of intersection there and further analysis will lead you to other points of intersection. Plus, our membership is made up of a specific class, why is that, and you get into issues of access and issues of multiple layers of oppression. If you don't want to work just with a very small subset of people then you have to widen the way you think about these things. So I get very upset with these Western organizations who get really upset about saying something without prefacing it with the word "gay." I think that it's a sign of privilege and condescension as well. And I think it's their failure.

The issues do not stop there. Issues of class, race, and nationality have also cropped up in interactions with Western LGBTIQ groups. These clashes have led Shant and Lynn (the other Meem coordinator in 2010, the year of this interview) to conclude that LGBTIQ

movements in the West have become limited in their abilities, their ability to interact with the larger world around them, and their ability to accept differences in expression of identity. Religious discrimination has also played a role. Lynn provided some examples:

A lot of times there is this unspoken hierarchy, so basically when we send someone here to this conference, and suddenly it's clear that the ideology is more of a Western ideology, this person can stand up and say "In my support group, this is how it works. In a nonhierarchical way, this is how we can come together, this is how we can create an action, an agenda, etc." A lot of times you have the clichés of "How can a veiled woman be a feminist?" or "How can a veiled woman be a lesbian?" for example, which is absurd, so when they go and they meet different individuals, a clash happens then. They [the Meem member] say things like "Are you refusing me because of this identity? Are you refusing me because of one of my identities?" So a lot of times the discourse is very limited to a white, North American, or Western European crowd. When you go to Europe and you talk to the groups themselves, you can see that within them there are factions, you have the immigrant groups that are trying to come into these major LGBT groups, and they face a lot of discrimination, so who are these major groups catering to at the end of the day? What is their discourse?

Instead of having found some kind of "truth in Gay Internationalism" as Massad puts it, the relationship with the "Gay International" has been much more problematic than Massad would have the reader believe. The issues expressed by Meem have also been echoed by Makarem in his discussion of relations with LGBTIQ groups in the Western world:

At the beginning of Helem, we tried to see what was the deal with ILGA [International Lesbian and Gay Association] and other groups, and we came to the conclusion that there was really nothing there. ILGA was too Eurocentric, their policies were extremely connected with Europe. I went to meetings with [other people in Helem's leadership] and it was really uncomfortable—we were always expected to defend Islam and were put on the defensive. Other organizations had their own agenda, and we realized the best thing to do was to work locally, and that involving international organizations just like that would probably be counterproductive, especially in a place like Lebanon, where it is possible to do something locally. So the relationship with the "Gay International" as Massad puts it, is kind of on and off, and of course there is no "international strategy"—they are all individual cliques.

Instead of being “fully consonant” with the viewpoints of the Gay International, Helem and Meem’s interactions have been both a lot more problematic and a lot more selective, in that Helem has been very particular about which organizations and donors it has chosen to work with. Additionally, how Helem has grappled with the issue of identity, and the role that Western labels have played in this, is also worth delving into, as here we have perhaps the clearest example of the concerns that Massad has expressed in his critique.

Instead of approaching Massad’s critique in a completely adversarial manner, reactions to his critique have been quite mixed and nuanced, and many within Helem and Meem’s leadership acknowledge the validity of many of his arguments about how sexuality has been constructed in the Arab world and the problematization of this construction. Indeed, I think that it is possible to claim that an “operationalizing” of Massad’s critique has taken place in Helem and Meem’s discourse and activism. By that, I mean that the issues that have been articulated by Massad have been issues that Helem and Meem’s membership have given much thought to, and they have structured their movement and its discourse in response to these issues. I am not saying that this has been done *in response* to Massad’s critique, instead, Helem and Meem had already begun to deal with these issues before *Desiring Arabs* was published.

Moumneh had this to say about her understanding of and attitude toward Massad’s critique:

I wouldn’t characterize Massad’s argument as saying that Helem is working as agents of the West. That is an oversimplification and it polarizes the debate. There has been a shift in the way sexuality is configured in the Arab world—I don’t think that anyone disagrees with this. This has to do with a whole range of factors. One factor is the rise of human rights discourse. I do see that as enforcing this whole hetero-homo binary, in that if you are gay, and you want to claim your rights, you have to claim them as a gay victim. That’s the rubric that’s offered to you within the human rights framework. There are always local configurations, there’s no such thing as a cut-and-paste thing, they are always local. The problem with all this is in that transformation—there’s two registers in Massad’s argument, first, there’s the shift in identity, and there’s the shift in configuration that is not a new argument, it has been spoken of before, and the second register is about human rights practice specifically. I don’t have issue with the first part of his argument; I think it’s correct, there has been a transformation, one of the reasons that this transformation is being reinforced and reproduced is through this transnational discourse

that’s circulating now very powerfully. The second register, about human rights practice and what it does, I think is where I think we need to engage in the debate with him. The problem is that... I don’t feel that he is writing to engage, I feel like he’s writing to one-up, and that’s a bit annoying because I think that this is really important and he doesn’t open up the discussion like that.

That this shift in the conceptualization of sexual identity in the Arab World is happening, and that this is happening through the circulation of a “transnational discourse” is something that no one in Helem or Meem contested when presented with this point of Massad’s critique. That a discussion through Massad has been somewhat opened by this critique is also something that has even been welcomed by Helem and Meem’s leadership. There have been three major issues that Helem and Meem’s members have had with Massad’s critique: the dismissive manner that he has had in writing about the subject, the ignoring of the social realities and oppression that LGBTIQ people in Lebanon are facing, and the fact that, as Rasha Moumneh put it, “Massad has not spoken to a single member of Helem, during this entire thing of his. That’s just shoddy scholarship.” Shant also spoke about these issues when interviewed, saying:

I think that it’s good that someone [Massad] is trying to talk about this. But Joseph Massad I don’t think is the right person, because he has to be in it. He’s not part of it. He doesn’t live in the region, he’s barely even been here, I feel like he’s in his ivory tower in New York, and based on a few incidents he is trying to come up with this huge theory. He’s trying to use Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism and apply it to sexuality. It doesn’t fit and it’s very obvious that he is trying to force this; it doesn’t work. I don’t think he’s been here or spoken with any of the activists or any of the people receiving support, and I think our main concern is to provide support for the people that come to us. And I think at the end of the day it’s important to provide that support. We’re not brainwashing them with identities or specific words, like “this is what you call yourself.” We have a lot of questioning individuals who come, and that is fine, because the main thing is not to be branded, the main point is to get support, to feel that you are surrounded by people [who are supportive].

To accuse Helem and Meem of working as “Gay Internationalist Missionaries,” as Joseph Massad puts it in *Desiring Arabs* when talking about the “Gay International” in general terms, is quite inaccurate. Lynn goes further in explaining how she finds this dismissal of LGBTIQ activism in the Arab world by Massad problematic:

There is always this idea of sexual practices versus sexual identity. Foucault said that it was the nineteenth century during which sexual identity came into being. I feel that this [Massad's] discourse is very elitist. Basically you have these academics sitting in their offices talking about whether it is an issue or not to identify as a homosexual, whether it's an issue to have sex and have it not be part of your identity. But if the authorities know that I am having sex with someone, then they can prosecute me... At the end of the day, I'm going to be known as someone, because I fall in love with women... Just because I have that in me I'm made to feel inadequate, so whether or not I identify this as homosexuality, or queerness, or whatever, this label is used against me.

This criticism of Massad's critique is provided again and again by Helem and Meem's leadership, that while the construction of homosexuality in the modern Arab World, and the assertion of this identity may very well be problematic, at the same time this critique ignores the oppression of LGBTIQ people that already exists in the Arab world. It ignores that oppression that Massad claims will come if this identity is enforced by the discourses of the Gay International, and the perceived need to organize against this oppression. With the absence of other models, the West has influenced the activism of Helem and Meem, as Lynn describes:

I just want to know that if I am attracted to a girl, or a boy, I can be attracted to them, and it's nobody else's business. It doesn't mean that we have no right to exist, it doesn't mean that we have no right to come together, to organize. I mean—what is this discourse about? We don't have the right to organize because it is a Western concept? I think that is absurd. If we lived in a world where social justice was normal and available ... where it was OK, then I would tell you labels are not needed, and there [was] no reason to identify as anything, we'd just be people that are falling in and out of love, that are having sex. But unfortunately we need these labels to organize. It's not a question of identity, of imitating the West, I don't care. Whether two men are having sex because they identify as homosexual or because it is simply for pleasure, they can be charged with a certain [offense] and be sent to jail. So, what are you offering these individuals? It's about what is leading to the injustice, so you group against it.

Joseph Massad, when discussing the difference between "Western" homosexuality and same-sex desires, explains that the former "is an identity that seeks social community and political rights, while the other is one of many forms of sexual intimacy that seeks corporeal pleasure." (Massad, "The West and

the Orientalism of Sexuality") He bemoans the shift from the latter described "pleasure principle" to the former described "identity," claiming that this shift, taking place through the machinations of the Gay International "can and will destroy the lives of many in the process" (Massad, "I Criticize Gay Internationalists, Not Gays"). Lynn is not making a statement about the universality of homosexuality as an identity, instead she is talking about the universality of the possibility of homosexual *desire*. The leadership of Helem and Meem would claim that the oppression they are working against does not care about the identities claimed or not claimed by the people that it targets. Two men who have sex with each other and who identify as gay or who have sex merely seeking "corporeal pleasure" without claiming this identity would both equally be subject to prosecution under laws that existed long before Helem.

The Western hetero-homo binary, with its accompanying oppression and strictures, has, as Joseph Massad claims, been imposed on the Arab world through a process of epistemic violence that originated in the implementation of colonialist projects in the region. This has led to the creation of a, as Massad puts it, "straight [planet]" (Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 190) where newly constituted "straight" people are now in a position to oppress gay people as the result of this epistemological shift.

This being said, Joseph Massad speaks about this shift as if it is being mechanically applied by the "Gay International" throughout the rest of the world, as if the discourse that has been incited—and indeed, it has been incited, and I find this just as problematic as Massad does—can take only one shape, as if there is no possibility for reverse discourse from the rest of the world, no possibility of dialectical synthesis.

Helem and Meem, instead of being instigators of "incitement to discourse" are instead responding to the conditions of homosexual oppression that Massad describes as coming to the Arab world. Additionally, the shape that their activism has taken is completely and totally different from that which has been dominant and normative in the Western LGBTIQ liberation movements. Having taken a broad view of the nature of their struggle, the issues of Palestine, migrant workers, and the Armenian genocide, among others, have become issues that Helem's members and Helem as an organization have spoken out on. Furthermore, by refusing to identify with the Western LGBTIQ demands for gay marriage and full participation in the military, they have completely disconnected from the mainstream issues of the "Gay International" and adopted a discourse that can only be described as deeply radical. While there are those

in the West who would agree with many of the forms of this discourse, the views that Helem expresses on a regular basis, and that have gone on to inform discourse about homosexuality in the Arab world, could only be considered as marginal viewpoints in the Western world.

It is my opinion that this method of forming broad alliances is the most effective way for Helem and Meem to advocate for their issues. In a region fraught with issues of war, military occupation, and human rights abuses, for an organization to call *only* for LGBTIQ rights would be truly shortsighted and ultimately futile. In a region where marriage has too frequently been used as a tool to fuel sectarianism, and where the United States, one of the primary aggressors in the region, cites nationalism and military readiness as reasons that homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the military, to advocate for these causes would be absurd.

That the discourse of Helem has not taken a foothold in the West is an issue that worries me far more than the possibility that Helem has engaged in "incitement to discourse." While it has been necessary for Helem to adopt this model in order to function, in the West, to use Rasha Moumneh's words, not adopting this model has been a "failure." The possibility of a mainstream gay movement in the United States accomplishing something through joining in solidarity, as opposed to only agitation, resistance, raising awareness within the community, and using economic leverage, is almost nonexistent, and ultimately, in my opinion, will lead to the fragmentation of society, whereby all groups that engage in activism on the basis of identity will pursue their goals separately, and often in opposition to one another.

It is worth mentioning at this point what queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick had to say about the issues surrounding attempts to define the epistemological shift that has taken place, where homosexuality is no longer configured as discrete acts, but instead as an identity. She wrote:

The historical search for a Great Paradigm Shift may obscure the present conditions of sexual identity[...] [R]ecent historicizing work has assumed [...] that the differences between the homosexuality "we know today" and previous arrangements of same-sex relations may be so [...] rooted in other cultural differences that there may be no continuous, defining essence of "homosexuality" to be known[...] [A]n unfortunate side effect of this move has been implicitly to underwrite the notion that "homosexuality as we conceive of it today" itself comprises a coherent definitional field rather than

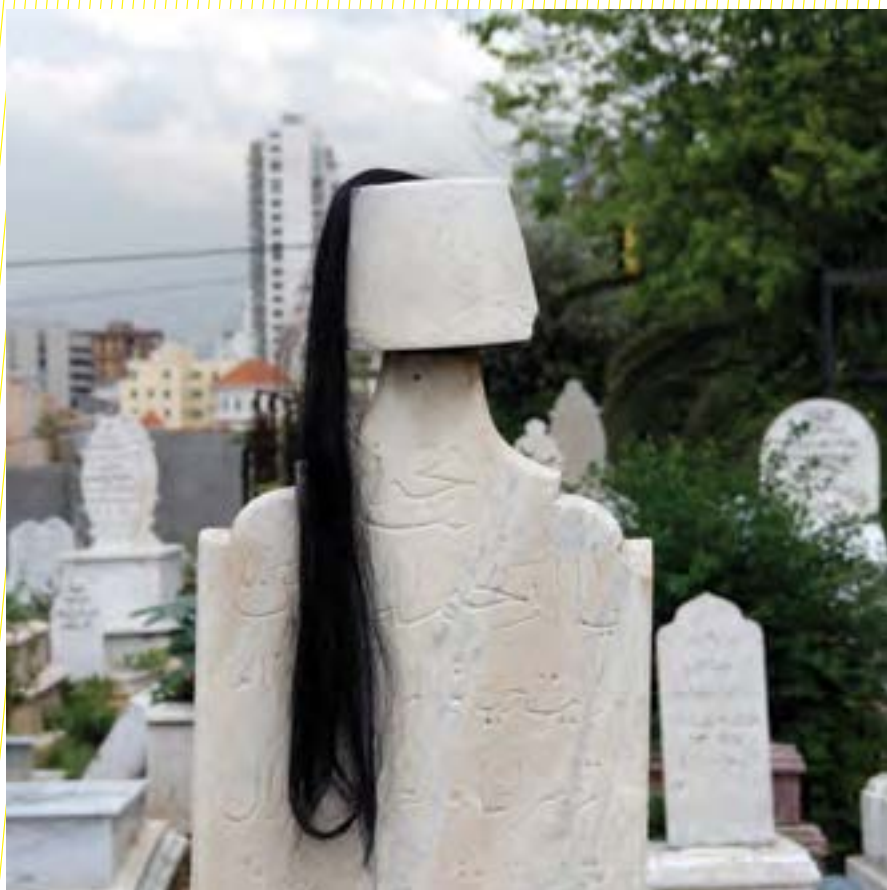
a space of overlapping, contradictory, and conflictual definitional forces (44–45).

The implicit underwriting of this notion is exactly what has happened, on multiple fronts, regarding the phenomenon of same-sex desire in the Arab world. What has been demonstrated, by Helem and Meem's activism, and by Joseph Massad's critique, is the existence of these "overlapping, contradictory, and conflictual definitional forces." While the imposition of the idea of homosexuality as known "today" has already happened in Lebanon, the way that Helem and Meem have begun to shape discourse on the subject holds amazing promise for upsetting the notion of this "coherent definitional field," and I wait with great anticipation for what is to come. ✨

- 1- The cultural renaissance in the Arab world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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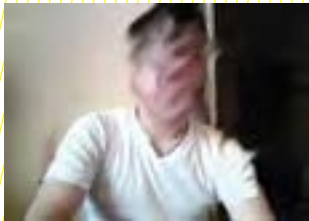
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While walking around the Bachoura cemetery, I was surprised to see a marble fez carved onto one of the tombstones. My father explained to me that it was tradition to do that when a male was buried alone, having not married yet. I thought it was an interesting way of looking at gender, so that it not only existed a priori to the individual that then acted it out, but also a posteriori/postmortem. Good place to start gender trouble.



Wigged fez on tombstone
Photography/Intervention
Hamed Sinno, 2011





Article 534 of the Lebanese penal code criminalizes “unnatural sexual intercourse,” which is interpreted as being anal sex and regarded as a behavior inherent to homosexuality. This clause stipulates the following:

“Any sexual intercourse against nature is punished with up to one year of imprisonment.”

The law severs rights from the citizen, so the citizen, in turn, severs pieces of his body from the photo.

The law criminalizes the citizen’s relationship with his own body, so the citizen displays a body with no identity.

A head without a face. A chest without a head. Nakedness without shame.

The body rebels against the law, amputating those parts subject to its rule.

The amputated body masks the identity of its owner.

The body is the front line, and the picture throws down the gauntlet. And what the picture reveals most powerfully is exactly what it is trying to hide.

The bare body, barely a body.



a Lonely Hearts on Wheels production

.....♥♥♥ Route & Routine ♥♥♥.....

Urban Mating Dances of a Beirut Gay Cruising Area

Location 📍 FREEWAY 📍 Sin El Fil, Lebanon 📍 Behind the Freeway Centre
Time 🕒 After 8

This industrial zone, buzzing with machines, steam and workers during the day, transforms into an arena of gay romance by night. This part-time love playground has its codes, tricks and know-hows. Homosexuality in Lebanon is not illegal per se, but the Penal Code article no. 534 and its ambiguous wording is at times twisted and used as means of blackmail and abuse.

Penal Code no.534: Condemns abnormal intercourse (ref. to sex against nature) for example: pedophilia, zoophilia, anal sex, premarital sex, etc.

☠ :: iDO NOT PANIC! :: ☠

III presenting the Fake Fear Factor (FFF) III

HOT TIP: DO NOT BE ALARMED BY THE OCCASIONAL SECURITY GUARD (AND ACCOMPANYING DOG) AND/OR THE SURVEILLING MUNICIPALITY PATROLS. >> although these authority figures might seem alarmed or alerted, they don't have any right to arrest you, thus forming what is commonly known as the FFF <<

Tip #1: Put your high beams on; this way you get to check out the car in front of you without being seen.

Tip #2: Pedestrians roaming the area are most likely to be escorts/rent boys who offer XXX4\$\$\$

Tip #3: Road malfunctions (speed bumps, unattended holes, etc...) are your friends. Use them to your advantage to decrease your speed and slyly give yourself ample time to exchange flirtatious glances.



Yet, see him through my eyes
Video installation
Alex Baczynski-Jenkins, 2013





Yet, see him through my eyes is a montage of scenes from Arab cinema representing narratives and moments of queer desire and intimacy. For four days in May 2013, the film was continuously projected during the opening hours of Cinema Royal in the Bourj Hammoud suburb of Beirut.

Cinema Royal is one of a few cinemas in Lebanon that screen straight erotic and pornographic films, but nevertheless serve as gay cruising places. Two such cinemas—Cinema Plaza in Sin El Fil, Beirut, and Cinema Hamra in Tripoli—were raided by the police in 2012, following reports made by the Lebanese MTV program *Enta Horr* which disclosed them as sites of homosexual encounters.

In the cine-performance *Yet, see him through my eyes*, the screen of Cinema Royal, usually in straight-drag, performs itself: the queer desires that are acted on in the theater are given a cinematic form, a luminous presence.

Pinkwashing in Context

Rayya Wehbe



In 2009, *Haaretz* newspaper reported that a senior Israeli official said Israel aims to harness the global LGBT community in its efforts to politically isolate Iran, using the human-rights angle where the nuclear one had failed to garner the necessary support in Israel's geopolitical struggle for dominance in the region. Far from representing a genuine interest in the oppression of Iranians, what this demonstrates is the ease with which the discourse of human rights, and LGBT rights in particular, can be made complicit in neocolonial warmongering.

This is a very compelling tactic. As the international LGBT movement becomes increasingly single-issue focused and myopic in its view of social justice (reducing it to a simplistic agenda of legal equality) it has become a prime target for Israel's own PR strategy. In 2005, the Israeli foreign ministry launched its "Brand Israel" project, a campaign to "rebrand" the country's image to appear "relevant and modern" instead of militaristic and religious. One of the pillars of the campaign, whose two main target groups are liberals and people between the ages of 16 and 30, is the

promotion of Israel as a playground for gays, the sole oasis of tolerance in a desert of persecution.

Activists term this strategy "pinkwashing," a play on the word "whitewashing." Israel and its supporters cynically promote "free" LGBT bodies as somehow representative of Israeli democracy, obfuscating the reality of apartheid and occupation. The disingenuous invocation of "LGBT rights" by Israel and its supporters to divert attention away from its atrocities against the Palestinians is increasingly becoming part of the public debate around Israel and Palestine. By falsely juxtaposing "oppressed gay Palestinians" with "liberated gay Israelis," and by flattening out relations of power and the political realities of occupation and the apartheid wall, pinkwashers aim to harness the global LGBT movement to support Israel at the expense of the Palestinians.

Pinkwashing is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather part of a broader strategy that seeks to both legitimize Israeli occupation and apartheid and to delegitimize Palestinians and Arabs more generally by portraying them as inherently intolerant and antidemocratic. Israeli discourse around gay rights almost always juxtaposes a putative Israeli enlightenment with Arab "barbarism." In his 2011 speech to the U.S. Congress, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu exemplified this by stating that "in a region where women are stoned, gays are hanged, Christians are persecuted, Israel stands out. It is different.... George Eliot predicted over a century ago that once established..., 'The Jewish state will shine like a bright star of freedom amid the despotisms of the East.'"

Such a statement brings to mind the civilizing discourses of European colonial powers, which used the figures of oppressed Eastern women to obfuscate the violence they committed against indigenous populations, and whose interventionist policies around indigenous women were used to justify rule. In pinkwashing we thus find the latest installment of this long history of colonial violence, replacing the "woman question" with the "homosexual question."

Pinkwashing is made legible in a context where a country's treatment of its gay population has become the litmus test of modernity and democracy, and where global Islamophobia continues to proliferate in a post-9/11 world.

Queer Arab activists and their allies in the West first became attuned to Israel's use of gay bodies to serve its political ends in 2006, when the annual World Pride was scheduled to take place in Jerusalem with the unintentionally ironic tagline, "Love without borders." A global campaign called "No Pride in Occupation" was launched urging queers around the world to boycott the event. This action pushed many queer activists to question the depoliticization of LGBT rights, and to think more deeply about the interconnections between different struggles. It also marked the beginning of a queer adoption of the 2005 call by a Palestinian civil society organization for a boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign (BDS) against Israel. For Palestinian queers, the struggle for sexual self-determination is deeply entwined with that of national self-determination—the two cannot be seen in isolation.

Today, while Israel and its allies continue to brandish their gay rights record in service of militarism, occupation, and apartheid, the movement contesting this framing is growing. Anti-pinkwashing activists seek to expose the truth behind Israeli propaganda around LGBTs within the framework of the BDS campaign. In 2010, Stand with Us, a U.S.-based Zionist propaganda organization, attempted to infiltrate the United States Social Forum and hold a workshop on LGBT rights in the Middle East, a front for more propaganda about Israel. Queer Arab activists quickly took action and were successful in having the workshop canceled. In their statement, they encapsulated both the logic of pinkwashing and the reasons why exposing it is so important:

Our struggle is deeply intertwined with the struggle of all oppressed people, and we cannot accept that we are being used as a tool to discredit the Palestinian cause. Stand with Us would have everyone believe that the Palestinian cause is an unworthy one because of the homophobia that exists within Palestinian society, as if homophobia does not exist elsewhere, and as if struggles for justice are predicated on some sort of inherent "goodness" of the oppressed, rather than on the principles of freedom, justice, and equality for everyone, everywhere. Stand with Us would have us all compartmentalize our beliefs, lives, and identities so that solidarity with the queer struggle would preclude solidarity with others.

While Stand with Us is quick to point out the oppression of queer Palestinians under the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, it conveniently forgets that those same queers are not immune to the bombs, blockades, apartheid and destruction wrought upon them daily by the Israeli government, and that Israel's multi-tiered oppression hardly

makes a distinction between straight and gay Palestinians.

We refuse to be instrumentalized by anyone, be it our own oppressive governments or the Zionist lobby hijacking our struggle [in order] to legitimize the state of Israel and its policies, thus providing even more fodder for our own governments to use against us. If you want to learn about our movements and struggles, engage with us, rather than with those who will use us as pawns in Israel's campaign to pinkwash its crimes.¹

In 2011, Palestinian queer organizations Al-Qaws and Palestinian Queers for BDS marked another milestone when they were able to pressure the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Association (IGLYO) to move its Israeli-funded General Assembly from Tel Aviv to Amsterdam. Today, queer Arabs and Palestinians form an integral part of the BDS movement, as they do Palestinian and Arab society as a whole through their understanding that sexual justice cannot be untwined from other social justice projects. ✨


1- The quote is from a statement by queer Arab groups against the inclusion of Stand With Us at the US Social Forum:
<http://www.bekhsos.com/web/2010/06/dont-stand-with-zionism/>



Beirut, a city under my skin. A place to go to face one's deepest sorrow. A place to reach the wealthiest delights. A place to get tired to the point of visceral pain and shaking anger. A place to remind humanity of its exciting affections. A faithful discovery of melodies and scents resisting aggressive noises and invasive smells, where ugly and fake fashion screens hide thunders of beauty and truth. Details are gifts privileging the finest observers, thirsty tongues on a mountain spring, hitching fingers on an emollient balm. Repeated stumbling taught me how to surf. Misused barriers suggested climbing over. A knotted body exhausted and desperate reminded of the advantages of laziness. Welcome to Beirut, a city of shortcuts and dodges, promising labyrinths and rewarding misunderstandings. A city that is not one or many, but rather a phantom of many cities.



Beirut, a City Under my Skin
Map (detail)
Giulia Guadagnoli, 2011

A nighttime photograph of a city street in Beirut. In the foreground, a dark car is parked on the left, with its headlights reflecting on the pavement. A series of black bollards with yellow tops runs along the sidewalk. Two people are standing on the sidewalk to the right, looking towards the right side of the frame. The background shows more cars and city lights, with a tree visible on the right. The overall atmosphere is dark and urban.

To Whom It May Concern

Single, Egyptian girl, came to Beirut on the 4th of March, staying for a period of only 10 days. Lonely. Looking for someone “like me”* to share my loneliness in the city. If you are the right person, call...

* Also means homosexual in Arabic

WALKABOUT DRUM CIRCLE

Live Sudanese Percussion Ensemble
with Drums and Mouth Harp Tuned
MONDAY THE 28th OF MARCH

LIVE



Seven of 8 drummers sharing their rhythms & unique beats
A performance that will surely draw you to the core!

THE DRUMMER

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Altogether
with 8
MON

لن يهزمه الأمر

فتاة مصرية عذراء
جاءت الى بيروت يوم 8 مارس
تأقبة لمدة عشرة ايام فقط
وحيدة

ابحث عن شخص
مثالي

امشاركني وحدتي في المدينة
إذا كنت أنت الشخص المناسب
عليك الاتصال

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Untitled
Poster/Intervention
Aya Tarek, 2011





Queer code is a visual poetry guerrilla project with the aim to intervene in the streets across the globe. The project is an appropriation of QR code (quick response barcode) and it is distributed in different formats: stickers, flyers, and graffiti as well as in social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Queer project reverts to the strategies of advertising in order to make visible the plurality of bodies and erotic subjectivities.

Queer code
Digital image (Quick Response Barcode) and printed materials
Abril Castro, 2011

Ventriloquy Show by Way of an Introduction: A Cacophony of Good and Bad Intentions

Felipe Zúñiga-González



View from Lui Velazquez artspace in Tijuana. Photo by Flo Maak.

You are anxious to hear fantastic stories and sociological news? Very well, I will invent them for you, and with pleasure.¹

—Heriberto Yopez

Dear Reader,

Hello! This is your doorman, Felipe. I have been assigned a very peculiar job, to “let you in” to this chapter. But I feel compelled to extend a warning that you may already anticipate: you are about to be tricked. More than a one-way entrance, this is a revolving door, and it might expel you as soon as you enter, the same way that it expelled me.

Since I refuse to act as an expert on Tijuana or on any field, and consider myself a “professional amateur” (which in Latin means someone who does something with love), I will act instead as a ventriloquist performing an act in which I will regurgitate some quotes from recent texts on Tijuana’s cultural scene to briefly summarize a few core reflections. I will also include fragments of a conversation with Lasse Lau to create a counterbalance of the topics explored in this chapter.

Before going any further, I want to acknowledge David Gutiérrez-Castañeda’s support. Thanks to his advice and bibliography I was able to get through this project,

and without him the excellent text by professor Brad Epps would not be part of this book. Also many thanks to the artists and authors who engaged with us and provided the valuable materials that you are about to read.

So, let’s get started.

“Tijuanología (...) is the last resource for us to believe and make the world believe that we are interesting. The city is quite common, but what can we do? To confess this would be boring and people need to have fun with something. So let the party continue. We will provide you with myths and beers. Cheers to you, so you will never confess what you already know: you’re Tijuana. Tijuana is a lie.”²

Tijuana, one of the most (in)famous border towns of the Mexican territory, has been a very contested space in the cultural arena in Mexico and internationally for at least the last two decades. Many positions have been developed to describe the cultural phenomena of the Region under different theoretical and political agendas: bicultural identity, cultural hybridity, third nation, transborder condition, informal urbanism, border art, and a laboratory of postmodernity are some of the most popular concepts associated with it.

Like Ciudad Juárez, Tijuana shares what has been named by many as a “black legend”—a narrative rooted in the third decade of the twentieth century that positions these cities as territories of exception with an internal logic where vice and perdition prevailed, away from the discourses and politics that operate in the rest of Mexico. Its geographical closeness with the United States exposed these populations to the cultural influence of Anglo-American culture, and during the Great Depression casinos and other leisure spaces were built allowing many Americans to consume alcohol and get involved in what we would now call sex tourism. This persuasive narrative continues nowadays even though it has gone through several transformations. Among these, we would have to take into account the implementation of NAFTA in the early 1990s, which produced exponential massive migrations of laborers from all of Latin America, as well as the emergence of what now is described as the war on drugs, exploited by Felipe Calderón’s presidential administration, now in its last months.

Transnational economies, massive migration, fluid cultural identities, corruption, and violence are the components of the “black legend.” This narrative has been taken by many theorists as the basis to promote and elaborate either negative or positive *depictions* of the region. As curator Magali Arriola articulates it, these “areas of tolerance for some and resistance for others—if we revisit the concept of heterospaces advanced by Foucault—are intermediate spaces that evade the mechanisms regulating our social behavior, acting as safety valves whereby deviations from the norm cease to look like corrupt phenomena, entering a terrain of mediation and negotiation between private interests and collective well-being.”³

I wanted Lasse to elaborate on his position when thinking of Tijuana as a complex, multilayered construction, both exoticized and auto-exoticized, where it is quite difficult to dig deep in relation to alternative narratives beyond the cliché of the “black legend” or the popular idea of the city as “postmodern neoliberal cultural laboratory.”

So I interviewed him by e-mail in September 2012, almost six years after he completed his Queer Geography project in Tijuana.

FZ: I would like to know how informed you were of these common narratives about Tijuana, and how you imagined this place before coming to produce the Queer Geography project (QG) in 2006?

LL: I am more interested in the lived experiences of gender and sexuality in space than theoretical concepts of space. When in 2006 I was invited to be an artist-in-residence at Lui Velazquez in Tijuana I had just produced a QG workshop in Copenhagen where I had experienced a significant interest in talking and mapping collective lived experiences. By repeating the event in Tijuana I had the perspective that different cultures might produce different results.

FZ: To me, location is treated as the gravity center of the QG project. Could you elaborate on the criteria for location selection? Why these cities, and particularly why Tijuana?

LL: Tijuana was a twist of fate. I think it is interesting that all three cities selected in this book have a location outside an Anglophone context of lived queer experiences, which are the basis for most queer theory, and therefore have adopted and appropriated their own connotations.

Tijuana was interesting in terms of a different point of view to Copenhagen and Beirut, and the complex global capitalist exploitation of bodies and border politics is a key subject to investigate when it comes

to gender and sexuality. The conservative and religious counter-reaction to this visible exploitation of the body was then another significant layer in Tijuana, different from, let’s say, Mexico City. To produce a “Queer Geography” workshop in a city where very few identified as “queer” was an interesting experience, and some might say a failure. Personally, the failure was the more intriguing part for me.

FZ: To engage with Tijuana metanarratives is to get involved with the iconic border, a tangible and intangible reality among the *tijuanenses*. One of the resulting figures of postmodern myths is the transnational/transborder agent.

How do you position yourself and the project in terms of the border and its resultant typology?

LL: The exotic aspect was not so present on my mind, and I believe it somehow always boils down to an essentialist view that gridlocks the potential of change. At the time I was really more interested in aesthetics as processes and a potential framework to open up dialogical paths with the possibility for social (ex)change. David Harvey talks about how we have to become our own architects in order to bridge the micro scale of the body and the macro scale of global political economy. I was willing to give up my artistic agency for the collective process and for an outcome that could turn out to be unexpected.

It became apparent that the term “queer” at the time was mostly used in artist circles in Tijuana, and that a shared language around a term other than “gay” did not really exist. The translation of the term “queer,” therefore, didn’t work. The topography of the city was to some extent mirrored in the workshop: we had feminist and queer studies guys and girls from San Diego (mis)understanding the gay activists from Tijuana, and vice versa. But the meeting itself, with its inherent possibilities for change, was what



Activist Oscar Soto-Marbán. Photo by Lasse Lau.

was needed in order to read our communal space collectively and to crystallize the position that we can either learn from something, or change. In Professor David Kip's book *Almost Home* he deals with the possibility of both successes and failures in dialogue. Although most struggles happen in spatial terms, some struggles do transcend borders. The question is how to identify these differences and commonalities and learn from them.

FZ: The Queer Geography project resonates in my head with other recent platforms, such as Carlos Motta, *We Who Feel Differently*. Could you elaborate on the urgency of these endeavors and try to establish parallels as well as distinctive spaces where the QG project is operating?

LL: I don't know this particular project by Carlos Motta well enough to give you a good enough comparison, but I do want to say I am not so sure the headline "we who feel differently" would be an overarching title for the Queer Geography project, which investigates space. First of all what if I don't feel different but am labeled as such? For me the position "to take" oozes of a surplus state of mind. What comes to mind in QG are those bodies who cannot pass but want to. I think the reality is that it is never fun to be marginalized, and there are many queers and queens and transgender bodies that actually have the desire to blend into a world of acceptance but don't necessarily have the option. Some might say, why do you have the desire to blend? Well, very simply because it is a less dangerous space to live in. There is a reason why segregation sometimes is a choice.

FZ: I think the use of the cognate "different" is more accurate when trying to establish an intercultural dialogue, at least for non-English speakers. It also reveals an understanding of how non-heteronormative sexualities have negotiated their spaces of action and influence in many Latin American countries under the parenthesis opened by difference, of "being different." Difference allows us to disagree, to differ, and in that space it is possible to engage in dialogue or discussion under the understanding that we won't have to end "being the same." It immediately makes space for left-wing positioning to emerge when we are able to imagine, propose, and act in a different way, and in this way change things.

LL: I am not disagreeing with you that difference is not a valid subject position or even strategy, but it is easy to make it sound inflated and meaningless in a consumer culture where identities often are consumed, and should be used with care. Like "rainbow difference"! There are two positions here as I see it: the one who feels different and the other that is pointed out as different, and the question is how we can unite these two groups. We always differ or defer; as Derrida exemplifies, in a signifying system it is sometimes visible and sometimes not. Now, I am not talking about a linguistic difference in the terms for "queer" as in Brad Epps's text. Although the wording differs I believe the repression of the body does not. I think what you aim at is more about the idea of "the right to differ" in a hegemonic capitalist society. And especially in the case of a non-white-straight-American-male, who usually does not control the production apparatus, nor has the ability to obtain performative power through his or her gender-neutral consumption.



Pigeon spikes at Plaza Rio, Tijuana. Photo by Felipe Zúñiga-González.

The assimilation politics of the GLBTQIA movements that for the last decade or two have dominated the discourse is an exclusive and dubious strategy that for many of us has without doubt produced a lot of antagonism. And I do agree the only way to obtain rights on your “difference status” as a minority happens by confrontation and not assimilation. I just think when it comes to understanding queer space this optic on subject positions might have its limitations.

FZ: The trajectory of the term “queer” in Mexico and Latin America is difficult to describe and follow. Even now living in Mexico City I think very few people identify as queer. Of course there are groups of intellectuals, and especially academics, that use queer theory as a basis for their reflections on gender and contemporary culture, but there are also those who simply refuse to “apply the theory” to this very different cultural topography. One of the main difficulties, in my opinion, is the impossibility of linking the word with memory and the body in this context. Queer in any Spanish-speaking country has many translations, and the tone to produce the re-coining or translating of the term in all its subtle connotations in English is difficult. “*Joto*,” “*machorra*,” “*torcida*,” “*lencha*,” are some of the many words that would have to be used to enunciate what the term “queer” alludes to in English, but none of these completely parallel it in Spanish.

I found that none of the activists’ essays address this issue at all. On the one hand, they use “queer” or “LGBTTR” without any distinction, or even more problematic, they use “gay” to speak for a community larger than a generic group of men having sex with men. Only the academic texts presented in this chapter address queer in the local Latin American context.

On the other hand, I think Tijuana is a very good example of the “*double moral*” or “double morals” that we Mexicans have in relation to these issues. For example, Plaza de Santa Cecilia, one of the oldest “red zones” in downtown Tijuana, was historically designated as a “zone of tolerance” and many LGBTTR leaders identify the plaza with the visibility and empowerment of its “community.” In this neighborhood, many groups of sex workers operate in bars and hotels under terrible conditions: exploited and in constant risk. There is confusion, even a cynical equation, in identifying the totality of the LGBTTR community with sex workers, as if the presence of sex workers in public space is a victory in terms of civil rights for the LGBTTR community. Many politicians, community leaders and business people in Tijuana exploit this problematic equation, and every year Plaza de Santa Cecilia hosts pride commemorations that, as in many places in the world, are supported by local businesses, and especially local bars. In fact, it is not

until very recently that a pride walk outside the plaza has been organized, such as the Jornadas Contra la Homofobia. So the celebration takes place in the plaza, local businesses make their money, and very little is said about the conditions of the sex workers operating there or about the community at large working on issues of health, civil rights, labor rights, cultural rights, and education. None of these topics are addressed, and seem to be out of the question. This produces an erasure at more complex levels of political and civil action and cancels the possibility of introducing a more profound questioning of the way identity and subjectivity of the members of the “community” are articulated from outside as well as from the inside. But I should note that it is also members of the community that are the first to avoid opening up to visibility in other realms of daily life, aside from the “safe” spaces of nightlife and “sexual commerce.”

LL: Yes, double standards is something we often encounter in our community. Back to the workshop and language I remember you suggested using “gay” (“*Geografía Gay: Tijuana*”) instead of queer to title the workshop at Lui Velazquez, which sort of shifted the meaning of the project, and other words for capturing similar body experiences were strangely absent. Although “gay” seemed much more inclusive than the translation, which eradicated both powered subjects of difference and marginal and vulnerable subjects. The spaces of investigation, therefore, shifted away from the framework that is usually identified by “queer.” Anyway, I think it was important to realize that there were other structures of identification in place in Tijuana, and that the problems with applying “queer” could therefore sparsely be used outside a theoretically based framework. But the ambivalence I felt about the wording of the workshop in Tijuana was exactly why it became interesting to continue the project and finally collect it into this book. I believe that some of the visual works and essays in this book actually succeed in addressing some of the more troubling and complex cultural issues that are at play when applying the term “queer.” ✨

- 1- Heriberto Yezpe, *Tijuanologías* (Tijuana: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2006). “Ustedes están ansiosos de relatos fantásticos y noticias sociológicas; bueno, pues yo se las invento, cómo no, con mucho gusto.” (Translation by Felipe Zúñiga-González)
- 2- Ibid. “...la *tijuanología* (...) es un último recurso para hacernos creer y hacerle creer al mundo que somos interesantes. La ciudad es harto común, pero qué le vamos a hacer, confesar eso sería aburrido y la gente tiene que divertirse en algo. Que la fiesta prosiga. Nosotros ponemos los mitos y las cervezas. Salud para que jamás confíes lo que ya sabes: tú eres Tijuana. Tijuana es una mentira.” (Translation by Felipe Zúñiga-González)
- 3- Magali Arriola, “Dynamic Equilibrium: In Pursuit of Public Terrain,” in *INSITE 05*, Sally Yard, ed. (San Diego: Installation Gallery, 2007).

Bring the tips of your sprawled fingers together, so that the hand is shaping a bud. Whatever smell and odor left traces on the hand before will now appear concentrated at the top of the bud. There it can smack of old deep-fry fat so intensely that you seem to be in a stuffy diner even though the place you had lunch at didn't smell bad at all. Or, maybe you just had sex and didn't wash your hands afterwards to remind yourself of the exhilarated body of the other even hours later. That's why walking down the street and taking a sniff at your fingertips is a sudden creation of a private space within the public. It's building a temporary cell of intimacy. If somebody else is sniffing at your fingers the invisible membrane becomes permeable and the whole metaphor of the cell vanishes into thin air. If the fingers held a joint before, the leftovers of the sweet smell gather in the bud. Then the act of turning your hand into a bud turns into a police intervention. In this case the fingers are isolated from the body as a piece of evidence, but this procedure can be inverted as well, so that the fingers of the policeman become the carrier of evidence. It's said that if you are suspected of doing cocaine, the policeman will put his finger in your nose and then taste the residue in his own mouth. If it tastes bitter, the illegal usage is considered proved.





Untitled
Photography and text
Flo Maak, 2007



It is a spiral of trails made out of concrete, which leads me high above the street. The cars are caught up in a traffic jam. They want to go in the opposite direction. Up here the flow of people is moving as fast as possible without actually running. The only obstacles you meet with are the two big steel revolving doors. Because of a simple and cheap mechanism consisting of a short stick of steel, which can only be moved in one direction, it is not possible to go through from the other side. If you are coming from the right side, the sound of steel hitting steel confirms your entry. This sound never stops near the gate on the other side later in the night. I hear it when I fall asleep, when I wake up and in between. The piece of steel doesn't stop hitting the steel. Sometimes of course its rhythm is faster, sometimes it is slower, but the time-out is never long enough to forget about the presence of the passing bodies.



Tijuana Cuir

Dr. Sayak Valencia Triana

The foundation for the future politics of social transformation and rupture lies in the very processes of subjectivization and singularization in opposition to the dominant modes; these processes should allow for the permanent reinvention of the word and of ways of being.

—Virginia Villaplana

Zonas de intensidades [Zones of intensities]

First, I see it as essential to begin this essay by analyzing a number of elements of the regional, geopolitical, and social context within which Tijuana is circumscribed. According to Wikipedia:

Tijuana is a Mexican city, belonging to the state of Baja California. It is the most populous city in the state and is located 105 miles to the west of the state capital, Mexicali, and approximately 30 minutes north of Ensenada. The city is the seat of the municipality of the same name and is known by other nicknames, including “the corner of Mexico” or “the door to Mexico.” Its slogan is “Aquí empieza la patria” [The homeland begins here]. It is the westernmost city in Latin America; Tijuana is located in Mexico’s sixth-largest metropolitan zone, but, combined with Rosario, Tecate, and San Diego (California), it comprises the largest “transnational” metropolitan zone in Mexico, with more than 5 million inhabitants.¹

I’ve attempted to show the geopolitical coordinates of the city because it is regularly referenced in a decontextualized way, following a style of postmodern overrepresentation that glorifies the reinterpretive dystopias of the economy and subjectivity as: “new and radically open horizons: the insurrections of the peripheral areas show us that the inhabitants of these areas are the living material, the flesh of the masses of which the globalized world is made.”² This creates a tautology in the representations of this border in international academic works.

Nevertheless, most of these interpretations ignore or disregard the regional context of Tijuana. The city is part of the state of Baja California and has been governed for more than twenty years by the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN; National Action Party), with its clear conservative and reactionary inclinations; for example, in 2008, the PAN amended the constitution to make abortion illegal in Baja California (in the

seventh article of the first paragraph). During September 2011, the PAN successfully convinced the Mexican Supreme Court to back said reform, which criminalized the right of women to make decisions about their own bodies, penalizing any kind of abortion from the point of conception on, regardless of whether or not the pregnancy was caused by rape. It’s ridiculous and unacceptable to call abortion the murder of a fetus, since the fetus is actually cell tissue which may or may not continue growing; this discourse is silent when it comes to the real obscenities of hunger, the fierce, repressive violence against women and queer subjects, the derealization of the living in favor of the economy, slavery and child prostitution, immigration and its dead in the state.

In my opinion, the prohibition of abortion in the state is a distraction tactic of patriarchal institutions, represented by doctors, fathers, priests, lovers, rapists, etc., so as not to have to speak of themselves or about the ultraviolent context in which Baja California lives on a daily basis. Talking constantly about women, their bodies, their sexuality, and their choices is the best way to continue controlling us; it’s a clear way to avoid the enunciation of an autonomous discourse about their own issues. As Virginie Despentes states: “Men like to talk about women. That way, they don’t have to talk about themselves. How can it be explained that in the last thirty years no (traditional) man has produced an innovative text on masculinity? When will there be a masculine emancipation?”³

As a transfeminist,⁴ I consider this question of antiabortionism to be essential for a more located analysis of the everyday context in Tijuana, an analysis that must take into account the weight of conservatism in the state itself, as well as the conservatism of San Diego County. Within this context, the question arises: can queerness develop in a conservative context?

Accordingly, we should remember that the emergence of the queer movement in the United States is composed of distinct movements in opposition to Reaganism (from the 1980s to the early 1990s) and to its neoliberal, conservative project, which sought to disassemble the welfare system, endangering sexual and racial minorities both economically and existentially. In this way, the rise of the *queer* movement is due to a combination of economic, political, and social factors. Of this multiplicity of factors, we can highlight two: (1) the emergence of AIDS as an illness, stigmatizing people designated

as “risk groups,” i.e. homosexuals and drug users; (2) the mobilization in Southern California of black and Chicana lesbians, who rebel against the standard of the white, heterosexual, middle-class woman used as a political category by the feminist movement. This complex popular movement set forth a new model of identity politics, which, as a reaction against the normalizing tendency of supposedly oppositional political movements, resists their definition as women, lesbians, or homosexuals in order to vindicate themselves as queer subjects (that is, as *different* or *strange*, *minority*). This new conceptualization doesn't just include sexual options that are different from the heterosexual norm; rather, any person who suffers some type of discrimination because of social class, race, culture, or sexual identity is identified as *queer*: in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, the *becoming-minorities*.

Thus, it's clear that if the emergence of the queer in Tijuana as a movement of dissidence and radical criticism hadn't occurred, it would have had to be invented. This is because the current regional and national contexts demand social mobilization and criticism of the apparatuses of power and of the technologies of gender, which have created a fertile field for the increasing use of spectacular violence and have led to its economic profitability, as well as an iconization of violent masculinity and the emergence of *endriago* subjectivity.

In order to be able to discuss the possibility of queerness in TJ, I think it is necessary to make visible the complexity of the criminal networks in the Mexican context, and its connections with rampant neoliberalism, globalization, the narcomachine, the binary construction of gender as political performance and the creation of capitalistic subjectivities, recolonized by the economy and represented by Mexican criminals and drug traffickers, who within the taxonomy of gore capitalism⁵ receive the name of *endriago* subjects.

We will begin by talking about what we understand as masculine gender performance, that is: the acritical obedience of men to a performance of the gender norms dictated by hegemonic masculinity, which holds as one of its most deeply entrenched values economic respectability: “*indifference to danger, contempt for feminine virtues and the affirmation of authority on any level.*”⁶ That is to say, in order to be a legitimate male in the Mexican context, who (re)produces and reaffirms his gender identity, he must assume and uphold the choreographies (movements, relational behaviors) constructed by sociocultural hegemony for masculinity. This fulfillment of hegemonic, masculinist demands is repeated until they become artificially naturalized and understood as the *essence* of masculinity.

However, what is the relationship between this acritical representation (performance) of the choreographies of masculinity and the Mexican state and the narcomachine? The nexus emerges in the following way: the term *macho* is highly implicated in the state construction of Mexican identity; after the revolutionary struggles, the use of this term expands in Mexico as a sign of national identity. During that period the term *machismo* was associated with the working and peasant classes, since in the incipient configuration of the Mexican nation, the *macho* became a superlativization of the concept of man that later would become naturalized artificially as a *national social heritage* and would no longer be restricted to the subaltern classes. The constructions of gender in the Mexican context are intimately related to the construction of the State.

Thus, in light of the contextual situation of contemporary Mexico (the unraveling of the social fabric, the breakdown of the state and the rise of conservatism), we need to make the connections between the state and the criminal class visible, since both of them uphold the maintenance of a violent masculinity, related to the construction of the national. In the present day, this nexus has social, economic, and political implications, leading to a high number of human casualties. This is because of the masculinist logic of the challenge and the struggle for power; if maintained, this logic will legitimate the criminal class as subjects with full rights to carry out violence: this being one of the main orders to follow, according to the demands of hegemonic masculinity, national machismo, gore capitalism, and heteropatriarchy.

In addition to the connection between gender performance and the construction of the Mexican state as a *machista* state, we must also add the economic demands of contemporary capitalism, which demands all individuals be hyperconsumers in order to be considered legitimate members of the g-local capitalist structure. In addition, we must also consider the colonialism that underlies Mexican idiosyncrasy, in which there is a desire to whiten oneself through economic empowerment, as well as homophobia: a ghost that accompanies hegemonic masculinity. All these elements add up to a Molotov cocktail for the construction of capitalistic subjectivities, which in this essay we call *endriago* subjects, in whom we see crystallized all the previously mentioned factors.

We take the *endriago* from medieval literature, specifically the book *Amadis de Gaula*.⁷ This follows Mary Louise Pratt's thesis, which affirms that the contemporary world is governed by *the return of the monsters*.⁸

The endriago is a literary character, a monster, a cross between a man, a hydra, and a dragon. It is characterized by its large stature, agility, and beastliness. It is one of the enemies that Amadis de Gaula must confront.⁹ In the book, it is described as a being endowed with defensive and offensive elements sufficient to provoke fear in any adversary. Its fierceness is so great that the island where it lives is described as an uninhabited locale, a kind of earthly hell where the only people who can enter are knights whose heroism borders on madness; the descriptions of these locales resemble those of contemporary border zones.¹⁰

We make this analogy with the literary figure of the endriago, who is one of the Others, unacceptable and the enemy, since its construction was based on a colonialist optic that is still present in many parts of the planet that are considered ex-colonies, places which are being economically recolonized by the demands of global production and hyperconsumption, creating new ultraviolent, destructive subjects who make up the rank and file of gore capitalism and the narcomachine.

However, apart from the characteristics attributed to this literary figure, and shared by the endriago subjects, these have another set of characteristics and contexts that we will detail now. The endriago subjects arise out of a specific context: post-Fordism. This makes clear and traces a basic genealogy to explain the connection between poverty and violence, between the birth of endriago subjects and gore capitalism.

In the contemporary global context, we find that "petty crime, robbery, and scams tend to be justified as easy ways to acquire money and to participate in the dominant lifestyles with which the media bombards us."¹¹ With this epistemological alteration in the conception of violence, it comes to be perceived as a tool for personal self-affirmation, and at the same time as a means of subsistence; this turn is especially evident in border zones, Tijuana being a key example.

In terms of the identity characteristics of the endriago subject, we can mention the fact that said subject is anomalous and transgressive, combining a logic of lack (poverty, failure, dissatisfaction) and a logic of excess, a logic of frustration with a logic of heroification, a hate drive and a utilitarian strategy. We understand endriago subjects as a set of individuals who circumscribe a capitalistic subjectivity, filtered through globally precarious economic conditions, along with a subjective agency from ultraviolent practices that incorporate, in a self-referential, delimiting way, "the systems of direct connection between the great productive machines, the great machines of social control and the psychic instances that define

perception of the world,"¹² as well as the fulfillment of demands of gender prescribed by hegemonic masculinity. The everyday context of Tijuana is formed within the previously mentioned structure in a paradoxical way: on the one hand, the endriago subjectivities, the economic transactions and the double standards of the political class; on the other hand, Tijuana as a young city that disobeys and makes pertinent a critique of this retrograde system, which is conservative because it seeks to preserve certain values of oppression, discrimination and fear of difference and of becoming-minorities, but Tijuana is made up of these becomings and of contradictory multitudes.

From my point of view, it is also crucial to analyze what we understand by *queer*. In another article in this same book ("*Technicolor? Or Just Rainbow Tinted Lenses...*"), Jennifer Donovan and I asked ourselves if it was appropriate to label Tijuana as a queer geography. This (self-)questioning was founded in two motives: (1) We refused to impose a hegemonic and ethnocentric vision on semiotics, choreographies, and processes specific to the city in order to make them "easily" identifiable; (2) We were opposed to treating the term queer as another label in the capitalist market, exportable to diverse contexts and phenomena, without considering the geopolitical context of the city. Both of these concerns can be found in this article as well. Nevertheless, once the context of Tijuana has been presented briefly, we will move to situate what we understand as queer and in what way this term can be used to describe certain recreational and micropolitical practices in the city.

The term *queer* is complicated since it cannot be applied universally, nor in a totalizing way, although I am conscious that said concept was reappropriated and resignified during the struggles of becoming-minorities in the United States during the 1980s and taken up again during the 1990s by certain feminist theoreticians, like Teresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who built a discursive corpus about those oppositional movements that later would be called Queer Theory.

Nevertheless, the richness of the term exceeds that genealogy; in this sense, if we confront the problem of the translation of the term into Spanish, the dictionary throws us a list of words like the following: "strange, weird, unwell, dejected, mad, eccentric, outlandish, bizarre, suspicious, mysterious, false"; whereas *queerness* means something like "strangeness, weirdness, ridiculousness."¹³ If we dig a little deeper, it is said that the term *queer* is derived from the Latin *torquere*, which means twisted; this meaning at the root of the term would create another genealogy, no longer attributing the copyright solely to the

Anglo-Saxon context, which has been the cause of multiple debates and rejections of the queer and its applicability in the Latin American context.

Beyond the etymological debates (which for me seem to be fundamental and justified) and the complexity of the translation/transfer of the term to other geopolitics, for this essay it is important to say that *queer* refers above all to those who are able to evade interpretative unidirectionality, who are able to be unintelligible at first sight, those people outside of the simple models and frames of hegemonic representation, which is not very difficult to achieve in a g-local world that is presumed to be “white” even though the majority of its inhabitants are not “white.” Thus the queer would be a massive thing, more specifically, of the masses opposed both to the traditional political institutions that present themselves as sovereign and universally representative, and to the heterocentric, sexopolitical epistemologies that still dominate the production of politics, economics, science, discourse, gender, and somatopolitics.

So then, we understand the queer as a type of choreographic flow of becoming-minorities; now we still need to investigate how this concept can be applied or refer to the social, political, cultural, and geographic space of Tijuana. With this in mind, we endorse said concept as possible in the context of Tijuana in its phonetic, improper/deviant/Hispanicized form: *cuir*. We are inspired by the “The International Cuir,” which argues: “The variation *queer/cuir* [...] registers the geopolitical inflection towards the south and from the peripheries, in counterpoint to colonial epistemology and Anglo-American historiography.”¹⁴

Once these points have been made clear/explicit, we can then have a dialogue about the term *cuir* and the way in which this phenomenon, in existence, coexists with the three most insidious clichés about the city: *Tijuana, laboratory of postmodernity*, *Tijuana, city of passage* and *Tijuana, city of vice*. Subsequently, we will analyze whether the city can be considered as representative of *cuir* geography.

Tijuana, Laboratory of Postmodernity

From the mid-1990s through the present decade, much has been written about Tijuana; in fact, Tijuana has suffered a kind of overrepresentation and glorification by cultural studies and other disciplines, beginning with the famous quote by the Argentinian anthropologist Néstor García Canclini who said about the city: “[Tijuana is] a modern, contradictory cosmopolitan city with a strong definition of itself [...] this city is, along with New York, one of the major laboratories of postmodernity.”¹⁵

Even prior to the popularization and exoticization of Tijuana as the epitome of postmodernism, the city already had attained, in the Mexican social imaginary, a *leyenda negra* (black legend) because of its location on the border. It is said that illegality is characteristic of borders, that these territories have been created to this end, that that is the function they serve within the State. In any case, these affirmations do not apportion anything at a discursive level, since “naturalizing” the conditions of a territory with a word like *postmodern*, to the level of exalting it, places us in an acritical and resigned position in regard to the potentiality of our actions to redirect that “nature.”

Tijuana, City of Passage

Tijuana is also interpreted as a *ciudad de paso* (city of passage). Nevertheless, we consider it more appropriate to read Tijuana as a *trans-city* since this prefix implies a displacement, not just physically but also between languages and economic perspectives “opposite the cities of California that consider themselves post-peripheral, wealthy metropolises.”¹⁶ Tijuana appears as a postapocalyptic landscape, an indisputable product of neoliberalism, while simultaneously becoming a key city in the New World Order, demonstrating that this *New Order* is far from fulfilling other, noneconomic pacts.

This *state of passing through* that converts Tijuana into a trans-city can be identified in its lack of urban planning, in its architecture dotted with emergency constructions, in which golf courses coexist with shantytowns; we find the widest possible array of constructions, from houses made of refuse materials to enormous mansions built in a style we could classify as *narcoarchitecture*.

We must not forget that space affects bodies through biopolitics and somatopolitics; in this sense, the emergency architecture of Tijuana could be read as falling outside the paradigms of traditional beauty and livability. This positions the city and the bodies that live in it within social exchanges closer to *cuir* politics than the discursive hegemony; however, these bodies and the city itself play a fundamental role in the world order, because of their flexibility and their capacity to adapt to the changes required by the conditions of competitiveness and economic and existential precarization, brought about by economic globalization.

Tijuana, City of Vice

Tijuana’s proximity to the globalized world’s most influential economic and political power means that the city, since it is located at a strategic geographic point, becomes an ideal zone for the transit of illegal

products and services that attempt to enter the U.S. market, as it is one of the most prosperous consumer markets in history. The reading of Tijuana as a *city of vice* must be inscribed and codified in relation to the First World's demands for leisure and consumption. In the case of Tijuana, this relationship necessitates an analysis of the U.S. market, since said market is considered to be the principal consumer of services offered by gore capitalism to satisfy its practical and recreational necessities.

In this regard, we can reflect on the fact that the supply of gore services and the management of violence as the principal source of income for Tijuana's economy are founded on the fulfillment and also the reappropriation of the logics of the U.S. market.

Looking at the three interpretative clichés of the city, Tijuana could be considered a capital subjected to the New World Order, which shows us a countergeography produced by gore capitalism, understanding as countergeography what Saskia Sassen affirms in this regard:

I call these circuits counter geographies of globalization because they are: (1) directly or indirectly associated with some of the key programs and conditions that are at the heart of the global economy, but (2) are circuits not typically represented or seen as connected to globalization, and often actually operate outside and in violation of laws and treaties, yet are not exclusively embedded [though neither can they be completely separated from these circuits] in criminal operations as is the case with the illegal drug trade.¹⁷

The concept of countergeography of globalization in some way refers, like an interpretation of space-city, to the way in which becoming-minorities are treated, discriminated against and exploited by hegemony. For that reason, we can say that *Tijuana is cuir* insofar as it has a problematic relationship with its context and insofar as it is a zone that can be considered, like the majority of borders, as a *national sacrifice zone*. We use this term to refer to the boundaries between poor countries and powerful countries; within these boundary zones, double dynamics are established that make these territories a space where *anything goes*, that is to say, they are considered the garage of the two countries.

Similarly, these are portal-territories in which undesirable and desirable merge, and simultaneously, hybridize these characteristics and make the application of a traditional axiology hard to conceptualize, creating a kind of eschatological rupture because of which they are conceived of as self-cannibalizing and sinister. Tijuana is one of these

backdoor cities, cities that challenge intelligibility, that exceed the interpretive frames. Thus the city is directly related with the agencies of the queer masses and with the necessity to begin to establish a movement of radical, transfeminist critique, as well as the need to posit other masculinities that reorient the capitalist, homophobic, machista and gore structure, which is crystallized in the dynamics of the city through extreme violence executed by endriago subjects. ✨

- 1- Wikipedia Tijuana: <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tijuana>.
- 2- Antonio Negri and Giuseppe Cocco, "La insurrección de las periferias," in: *Revista Caosmosis*, July 10, 2007.: <http://caosmosis.acracia.net/?p=509>
- 3- Virginie Despentes, *Teoría King Kong* (Barcelona: Melusina, 2007): 118-120.
- 4- The transfeminist movement can be understood as an articulation both of thought and of social resistance; this movement is able to retain certain suppositions of the feminist struggle as necessary for acquiring rights in certain geopolitically diverse spaces, and at the same time includes the element of mobility between genders, corporealities and sexualities leading to the creation of strategies applicable in situ. These strategies are identified with the Deleuzian idea of minorities, multiplicities, and singularities that make up a reticular organization capable of a reappropriation and intervention irreducible to the slogans of defense of women, identity, liberty, or equality, that is, it brings together a variety of living revolutions.
- 5- We propose the term *gore capitalism* to refer to the reinterpretation of the global, hegemonic economy in (geographically) borderland spaces, in our case we posit as an example of this phenomenon the city of Tijuana, the border located between Mexico and the United States, known as the *last corner of Latin America*. We take the term gore from a cinematographic genre that refers to extreme and categorical violence. Thus, with gore capitalism we refer to the explicit and unjustified spilling of blood (as a price the Third World pays, as it embraces adherence to the logics of an increasingly demanding capitalism), to the extraordinarily high percentage of viscera and dismemberings, frequently mixed with organized crime, gendered and the predatory uses of bodies, all this by means of the most explicit violence as a tool of *necro-empowerment*. Cf. Sayak Valencia, *Capitalismo Gore* (Barcelona: Melusina, 2010).
- 6- Carlos Monsiváis, "¿Pero hubo alguna vez once mil machos?" *FEM*, no. 18 (April-May 1981): 9.
- 7- It is a masterpiece of fantastic medieval literature in Spanish and the most famous of the so-called *libros de caballería* (books of chivalry), which were extremely popular during the sixteenth century on the Iberian Peninsula.
- 8- Mary Louis Pratt, "Globalización, Desmodernización y el Retorno de los Monstruos," Third Gathering on Performance and Politics, Universidad Católica. Lima, Peru, 2002.
- 9- Amadis de Gaula would represent the knight and the inherited values of all Western culture. Amadis would be the Western subject par excellence, the nonmonster, the non-Other; that is, the universal subject without fissures that later would be defended by the logics of the Enlightenment and humanism.
- 10- By *border territories*, we mean borders in general, but we emphasize the borders in Northern Mexico that are next to the United States and especially Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Tamaulipas, which fit perfectly as they are territories that have been overrun

for decades by the drug cartels, human traffickers, prostitution and the different repressive forces of the State, thus made into a battlefield, a territory in a state of emergency that clearly shows the connections between the State and organized crime in Mexico.

- 11- Gilles Lipovetsky, *La felicidad paradójica: Ensayo sobre la sociedad hiperconsumista*. (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2007), 184.
- 12- Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Micropolítica: Cartografías del deseo* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2006), 41.
- 13- *Debate Feminista* 16 "Raras rarezas" (October 1997): 9.
- 14- "La internacional cuir. Transfeminismo, micropolíticas sexuales y video-guerrilla," <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/programas-publicos/audiovisuales/internacional-cuir.html>
- 15- Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1989), 293-294.
- 16- Mike Davis, *Ciudades Muertas. Ecología, catástrofe y revuelta* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2007), 113.
- 17- Saskia Sassen, *Contrageografías de la Globalización. Género y ciudadanía en los circuitos transfronterizos* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2003), 66.

The Tripie Collective (Tripod) was formed during the gender and culture seminar, by students in the bachelor's program in visual arts and theatre at UABC (Universidad Autónoma de Baja California) coordinated by Felipe Zúñiga-González and Miguel Corral in 2010. The students worked with las Divinas, a transgender group hosted by AFABI. The encounter between the two groups produced a process of reflection on shared conflicts regarding transgendered identities in the daily life in the city. The video performance *Ser yo sin morir en el intento/To be myself without dying in the attempt* recovers sometimes conflicting experiences regarding body, gender, and subjectivity.





Ser yo y no morir en el intento
Performance, video, and photography
Colectivo Tripié. Cesar Fassio, Yaira Noble, Michel Rivera, Elisa Zapata, 2011

chico busca chico



soy **activo** en busca de **pasivos** - **mdm** - 25 (ujana)

Perfil: 2011-02-10 10:10:10

Comentarios:

Comentarios:

hola soy un chico
tenga
si te intereso dale en el botón
rápido.

la discreción
me prende machin

que
sexo soy

sexy.



Perfil: 2011-02-10 10:10:10

Comentarios:

Comentarios:

yo
solo sexo
busco
siempre busko
k pasa
nunca enkuentro
si

NO se puede



EN ESPERA DE MI PRIMERA VEZ SIGO

24 (Tijuana)

BUSCO
EXPERIMENTAR
UN HOMBRE QUE
LATE

ANDE CON JOTADAS
CON MUJERES
DE PREFERENCIA

SOLO QUIERO
LO QUE ES ESTAR
MAYOR

MANDAME
MAMADA
CON LA VERGA PARADA

YO NO TENGO
TU VERGA

MAS RICO SERIA
CUERPO PEGADO

SERIA TODO LIMPIO SIN

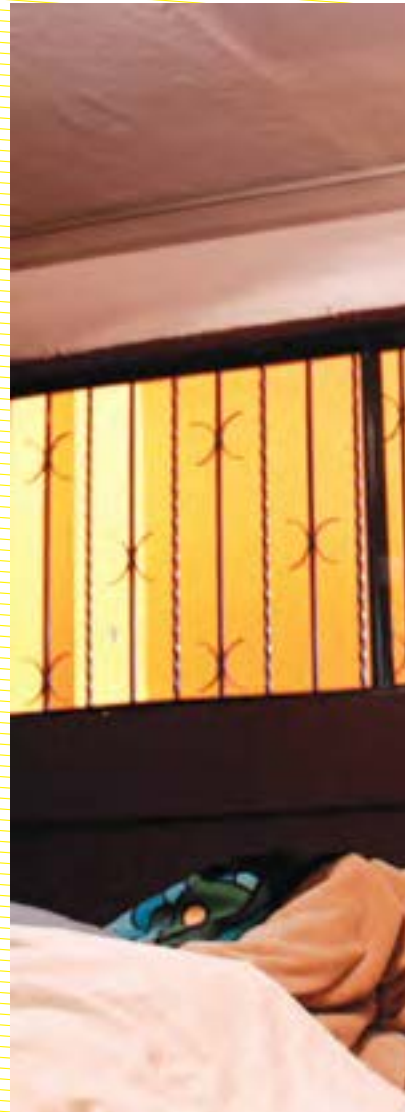
intereses

que anda... 29 Libertad

busc o activo o mas activo,
penetrado, se siente la verdad... vivo en la
verdad, honestamente, que ya
no vea esto como un juego

Chico busca chico
Four poems as digital images
John Pluecker, 2011

Galán
Photography
Gabriel Boils, 2011

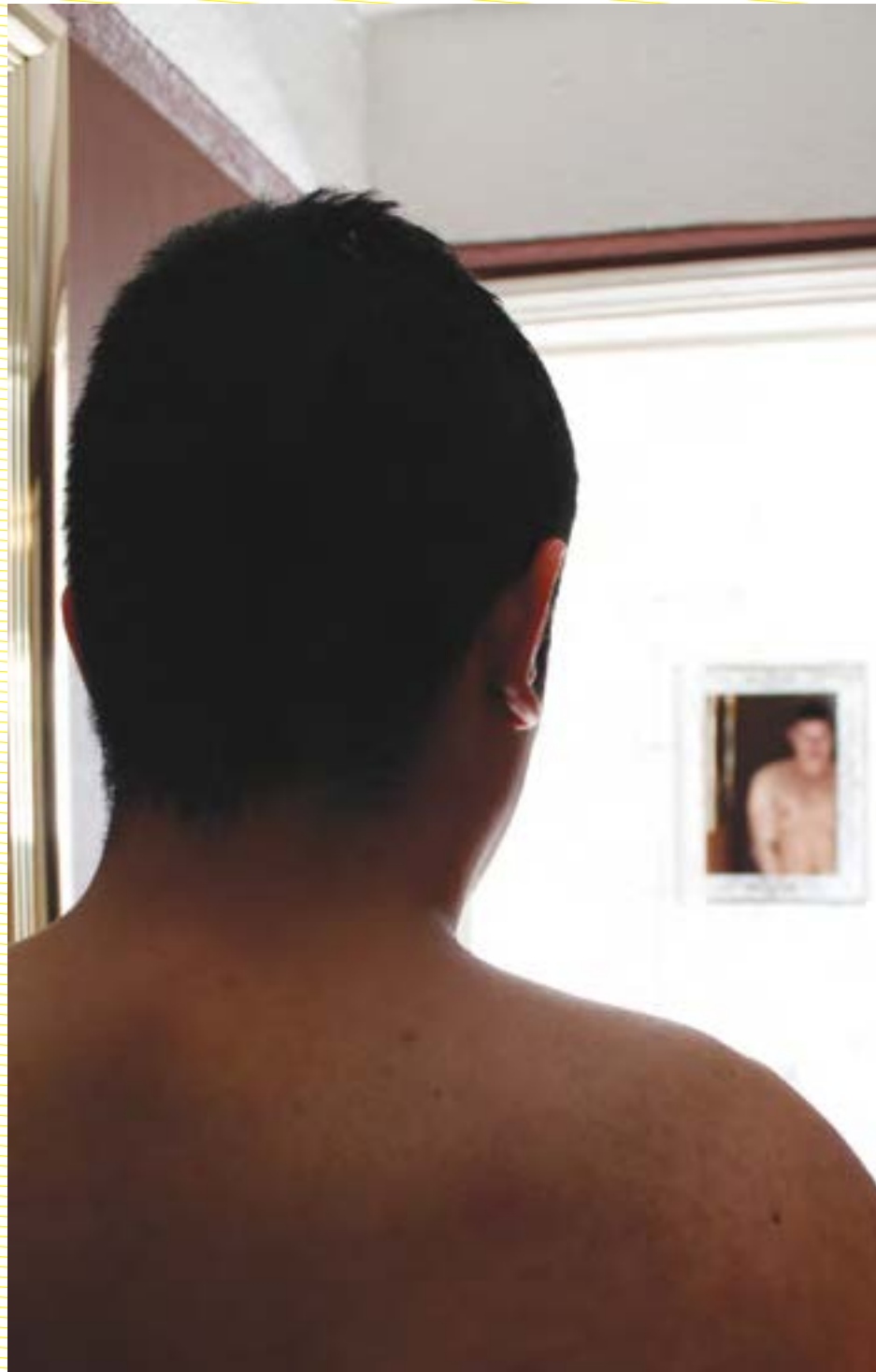












Plaza Santa Cecilia: Public Territory in the Process of Being Conquered

Max Mejía and Jesse Anguiano

Any great city has districts identified by the kind of people who frequent them. Tijuana is no exception. This is the case with the popular Plaza Santa Cecilia, or Argüello Avenue, as it is officially known, which undoubtedly represents the most significant public space in Tijuana used by people of the LGBT community.

On November 22 of 1980, Tijuana municipal authorities inaugurated Plaza Santa Cecilia. The objective: to create a commercial and tourist corridor. This heterogeneous demographic composition was defined by Martin Romero, a feature writer and a native of Baja California, as follows:

Heterogeneity, multiracial: intellectuals, workers, tourists, immigrants, pimps, artists, beggars, pickpockets, mad persons, prostitutes, gays—Santa Cecilia remains because of the drunks, and the sex seekers who give life to the place as they look for desire and the necessary means to keep functioning in this wonderful state of things (Romero, 1999, p. 62).

But the place itself is older; indeed, it is part of the first urban layout of Tijuana, and its official name is Avenida Argüello, as stated on the street plates that can be found along it. When in the plaza we are, indeed, in a meaningful site within the historic heritage of the city.

In the early '90s the LGBT community needed at least one public space in the city where they could gather and express themselves without fear of harassment and police extortion. Up until then, this community had been satisfied with being able to walk discreetly around downtown streets, flirt beneath the leafy Teniente Guerrero Park, and have access to the modern Río Mall.

The old downtown has a concentration of bars, discotheques, and *cantinas* (traditional Mexican bars). One of them, Los Equipales, offered a modern discotheque option; the other one, El Ranchero, was the classic Mexican little town bar, simple and plain, located at the bottom of Plaza Santa Cecilia, and it brought together a peculiar group of men who feigned—in most cases—not to be interested in gay matters and whose constant denial made us think of *paisanos* (a word we use for our fellow countrymen from rural areas) newly arrived in Tijuana.

El Ranchero is a single-floor place, shed shaped, dominated by a counter and a jukebox that plays

ranchero music and northern *corridos*. The clients gather mainly around the bar counter and the back wall; they drink beer, exude an air of caution, and resign themselves to waiting for someone to dare to make a move. One has to wait three or five beers before the caution fades and gay desire becomes evident, the body language beginning to show a willingness to be taken away. Even after what has to happen happens, these men keep up a determined effort to hide behind the word “man,” and cast out those who openly assume a gay identity.

Coincidentally, the ambiguous mood of El Ranchero, with its exaggerated decoration and its napkin carpet covering the floor, gave charm and fame to the place. As if that wasn't enough, its central downtown location and the mix of gay men of all colors who congregated there catapulted it all through the '90s as the go-to place for people from both sides of the border. It was the place everyone associated with current gay issues wanted to know about.

And this spectacular boom had an effect on the bar's immediate surroundings, that is, Argüello Avenue, which began to be taken up by more and more members of the LGBT community. At that time, Plaza Santa Cecilia already had a mixed population of its own, frequented by university students and deported migrants, to name just a few; reinforced by the LGBT community, it became a clear mirror of the cultural diversity that characterizes Tijuana.

However, the visibility gained by gay people among the assorted group of the square was at the same time a challenge. To its negative fame, the place, as a zone of tolerance, became associated with deportees using it as a passage through downtown; add to this the fact that it became a base for openly gay establishments operating in the square and its surrounding area.

As a result, the area was associated with the meeting and the expression, more and more open, of homosexuality, of same-gender people coexisting in public space, showing off the latest fashion trends and rather singular behavior, including flamboyant flirting and even sex-trade transactions. Transvestites (a lot of them workers in the area's bars) and transgendered people also occupied the square.

As a matter of fact, the process of LGBT territorial appropriation was followed by a period of instability in the area. Beginning in 1992, the economic corridor became a confused and dark landscape dominated by delinquency and, frequently, also by police violence. With their deliberately gay appearance and effeminate behavior, *las vestidas* ("the dressed up ones") and prostitutes of all sorts were the usual victims. If it was impossible to ignore homosexuality in the area, then it had to be dominated, leaving its members to their own devices as they faced incessant muggings, beatings, and the conspiratorial indifference of the police.

The mainstream media did little to untie this knot. When they dealt with the issue, they focused on child prostitution in the square, in fact a minor problem constantly exaggerated to demonize the LGBT community. A community newspaper, *Frontera Gay* (Gay Frontier), denounced the huge police raids against El Ranchero and other gay businesses in the city in 1991; and later in 1994–95 it denounced the delinquency siege over the square.

It is worth noting that some members of the local LGBT community showed resistance to the siege, which doubtless helped raise awareness of the problem and led to its eventual solution. However, the lack of conscience and participation of the community's majority was disappointing. Ultimately, the community's process of space appropriation has been slow.

In fact, the atmosphere of tranquillity and freedom that Santa Cecilia and Avenida Argüello exude today, and which is the result of overcoming its once chaotic circumstances, is not guaranteed to continue. We must recognize the efforts of all the square's occupants: businessmen, workers, and visitors who, by means of interaction and coexistence with the LGBT group, have overcome their prior prejudice against the community as a congregation of menacing and strange people.

Today, Santa Cecilia Square/Avenida Argüello is a business district, influenced by a globalized market, where it is possible to find everything in one place. There are dental clinics, hotels, Mexican food restaurants, supermarkets, drugstores, and kiosks managed by Mesoamerican Mixtec women from the state of Oaxaca.

For the LGBT community of Tijuana, Plaza Santa Cecilia has symbolized, as we stated before, a space that on the one hand is a product of resistance, and on the other is a product of the coexistence between the LGBT group and the diversity of the commercial corridor occupants, which results in remarkable progress toward respect for gay difference.

However, the LGBT community's capacity to negotiate with other figures of the square, particularly

businessmen, has been uneven. It is true that efforts in this area have been made by activist groups, including Choice Baja, which two years ago launched an initiative to organize a festival at the square to celebrate the gay population and the freedoms of the place; or the efforts by the group Orgullo GLBT Tijuana (LGBT Pride Tijuana), responsible for the organization of the annual gay pride parade, which ends at the square—but these don't contribute enough of a discourse to ensure further gains. Moreover, the contributions of organized groups are not always very clear because some of them deliberately underplay the freedom symbolism of the square.

In the last three years, Plaza Santa Cecilia /Argüello Avenue has been associated with a cultural evolution. As a result of the launch in the square of the collective Queremos Tijuana (We Want Tijuana)—in which Max Mejía and the president of the Established Businessmen of Santa Cecilia Square Association participated—an effort has begun to recognize the marriage of cultures and the plaza's transformation into a cultural district. This process includes festivals and several art-related activities.

This cultural development involves the defense and consolidation of the diverse composition of Plaza Santa Cecilia. The cultural project of Queremos Tijuana and its significance is not alienated from the LGBT community's project of appropriating public space. On the contrary, both the LGBT community of Tijuana and Queremos Tijuana collaborate in favor of a vindication of cultural plurality and civil freedoms within the threshold corridor of Plaza Santa Cecilia. ✨



Plaza Santa Cecilia. Photo by Jesse Anguiano.



Cosmonaut
Performance and photo and video documentation
Felipe Zúñiga-González, 2007



In 2007 Felipe Zúñiga-González staged a performance at the border crossing between Mexico and the United States. He was inspired by a mural of a “moon landscape” painted on a wall near the U.S. border in Tijuana. Wearing a space suit, he walked toward the border to confront the ideas of unlivable territories.



virus.circus.laboratory, 2011, Micha Cárdenas and Elle Mehrmand. Photo by Christopher O'Leary.



virus.circus.probe, 2011, Micha Cárdenas and Elle Mehrmand. Photo by Christopher O'Leary.

Transborder Immigrant Tool and Autonets: Survival as Resistance
Mixed Media
© Micha Cárdenas, 2011

Transborder Immigrant Tool and Autonets: Survival as Resistance

We are the ones who cross. We cross borders, genders, and sexualities. We cross national borders temporarily, permanently, on the weekend. We cross from straight space and time into queer space and time and back. Crossing, traveling, and all the required documents, desires, fears, and fashion accessories are part of our lives. The ones I love crossed borders to be where we are, and their parents crossed to get them here. Crossing is a part of us. We cross because we have to and we cross because we want to, and we face the violence of crossing as part of our lives.

As I watch the news clips of the London riots spreading to other cities, following on the heels of the Arab Spring uprisings, the words of Darcus Howe in a YouTube clip from the BBC resonate with me: "I don't call it rioting. I call it an insurrection of the masses of the people. It's happening in Syria ... It's happening in Liverpool. It's happening in ... Trinidad and that is the nature of the historical moment." It seems that we are at a tipping point for global capitalism, and that the structures that we live our lives in are rapidly changing on a daily basis. Perhaps, to be optimistic, they are crumbling. But in the optimism about the instability of neoliberalism, I also resonate with the stories of people "huddled in the front room with some shell-shocked friends, watching my city burn." My concern is that as economic and ecological instability increase, the threat of violence against individuals also increases, be it sexual violence, state violence or the violence of poverty. In *The Revolution Starts at Home*, Ana Lara makes this link clearly, saying:

People of color, queers, genderqueers, we are the living proof that we do not accept institutionalized forms of violence as inherently true or valid—that we believe in our own worth and right to live life on our own terms.... When we extend the definition of oppression to include violence in all its forms, we are extending it into an understanding that all forms of abuse are unacceptable: from institutional racism to partner abuse, from police brutality to date rape, from financial control to compulsive heterosexuality. In other words, WE ALREADY HAVE A BASIC FRAMEWORK FOR MAKING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN OUR OWN EXPERIENCES AND THOSE OF OUR COMMUNITIES.³

I bring in Lara here to make explicit the links that drive this writing and my own art and activist work, and to make an intervention into this discussion of Queer Geography in Tijuana. I am interested in understanding how queer space⁴ is shaped by gender-based violence, and how as an artist I can intervene to lessen such violence. In an interview with *Ms.* magazine with contributors to the recent book *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*, Yasmin Nair states, "Our work is embedded in

a deep awareness of how the prison-industrial complex affects our lives.... We don't see queerness as existing separately from poverty and economic inequality."⁵ Nair thus expands on the connection I am making here, between a personal experience of violence and how that affects our ability to move within space, and a larger analysis of the social structures that use forms of violence to police the borders of queer versus straight space, male versus female space, transgender versus cisgender space and citizen versus immigrant space. My current work is inspired by femme, queer/trans, and differently-abled people-of-color artists and activists including Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Sins Invalid, and Gay Shame, who claim that "fighting racism, classism, misogyny, heterosexism, transphobia, ableism and all other hierarchies is the central purpose of GAY SHAME, not an add-on." Finally, add to the existing structures of social oppression that legitimize violence against women, queer, and migrant people the instability arising out of increasing global crisis, and one can see a need for communities to organize themselves for defense and collective autonomy.

I see the idea of queer as a move to escape rigid boundaries of gender and sexuality, and queer geography as a move to continue the writing and thinking of queer and feminist authors like Jack Halberstam, David Bell, and J. K. Gibson-Graham, to use the ideas of queer and feminism as a line of thinking that can exceed identity. Yet I experience the limits on a daily basis of these attempts to exceed social and theoretical boundaries in the form of varying degrees of violence. As an artist I am choosing to create technologies that can resist these forms of violence by providing people with a means for personal safety, creating dialogue about the issue of violence, and creating social situations in which to collaboratively develop responses to violence.

My current trajectory as an artist and activist is rooted in my personal experiences as a queer trans mixed-race femme and my commitment to my community. Yet, can artists promise means of survival to their audiences? Or do rhetorics of survival, crisis culture, and emergency aesthetics reify narratives of fear? I will describe my collaboration with the Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) on the Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT), a project designed to take recycled cell phones and turn them into life-saving devices by providing a Java applet to access the GPS signal and a map of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The TBT is framed by EDT as both a queer technology and a Global Poetic System that offers both poetic and physical sustenance to users attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border. My more recent work, the Survivor Series, uses wearable electronic technologies to provide a transmission of GPS coordinates in the event of an emergency. The devices are intended to challenge sexual violence and kidnappings, a widespread



Local Autonomy Networks. Los Angeles with Gender Justice LA, School of Cinematic Arts Gallery, University of Southern California, 2013. Photo by Micha Cárdenas.



problem that often targets women, people of color, and queer people.

The Transborder Immigrant Tool as Queer Technology and Augmented Geography

As a collective project, the Transborder Immigrant Tool can be understood as polyvocal, as embodying many voices, desires, and drives. Any attempt to summarize the tool seems inadequate, but I will do so here, from my own perspective. The Transborder Immigrant Tool is a project by the Electronic Disturbance Theater with the aim of reappropriating widely available technology to be used as a form of humanitarian aid. The tool consists of an inexpensive cell phone, with a global positioning satellite (GPS) chip, and a custom piece of software. The software will direct the user of the phone toward the nearest aid site, be that water, first aid, or law enforcement, along with other contextual navigational information.⁶ Along the journey, users are given the option of also being given poetic sustenance, including poems with information about how to endure the harsh desert travel.

In my writing about the Transborder Immigrant Tool, I have proposed three sites of intersection between the ideas of transgender and transnational. The first and clearest is people like Christina Madrazo, a transsexual woman who tried to immigrate from Mexico to the U.S. after being a victim of violence because of her gender, only to be placed into immigration detention at the hands of U.S. officials and being raped twice while in custody.⁷ Cases like Madrazo's, and there are many,⁸ are enraging and deeply saddening, and demonstrate the degree to which transgender people are at a greater risk of violence than other migrant people. The second intersection is an affective one, in the similarity of affects involved in crossing national borders and gender borders. These include the hope of transformation, the courage in undertaking the act of crossing and the fear of the unknown result on the other side of the transformation. The third intersection I identify, which indicates an operation useful for considering in the work of queer geography, is the politics of categorization. The same mental operation is involved in deciding whether or not someone fits into the category of male or female or into the category of citizen or immigrant. This operation allows the perpetrator to then feel justified or allowed to exercise violence on the person who has been categorized. One of my goals with the Transborder Immigrant Tool is to help create a technology that will help people escape these regimes of categorization and avoid, survive, and ultimately heal from the violences that result from them.

We Are the Intersections

[32' 53.64608 // -117 14 20.4282]

Working on the Transborder Immigrant Tool was a given for me.

After years of creating electronic disturbance online,

Ricardo and Brett came to me with a plan to create border disturbance, at the intersection of recycled electronics and networked GPS satellites, to direct people attempting to survive the desert of the U.S.-Mexico border to water.

[25.684486, -80.441216]

My father fled the violence of the drug war in Colombia, and ended up in Miami, Kendall Drive and 152nd Avenue.

My birth was a result of the neocolonial policies sending weapons and neoliberalism to Colombia, and a result of the endless hunger of the U.S. for illegal drugs, the same drug war causing massive nonviolent uprisings across Mexico now.

[32.71215, -117.142478]

Five years ago, I finally found a queer community and an activist life that supported me in being the trans girl I've wanted to be for so long, 3,000 miles away from Miami's anti-Castro anti-gay anti-communism, away from my parents' Catholicism, both Irish and Colombian.

This year, thanks to the femme wisdom of my friends and lovers and the femme science we are developing, thanks to spironolactone, Prometrium, estradiol, I started passing as female, passing enough to get harassed on the street.

[32' 50 26.4402 // -117 15 31.6542]

Walking around as a femme in most places, feels like walking around being hunted.

I am conscious every day that I live in a country, the U.S., that silences victims of sexual violence and often provides more safety for rapists than for their survivors, every night as we walk home from wherever we can find parking, often in dark alleys or poorly lit streets, since we can't afford housing that includes parking. Fearing for our physical safety, constantly avoiding the men who stare at us, leering, is perhaps a nanoscale molecule of the feeling of being hunted by the Border Patrol that migrant people feel when they cross borders.

Hungry eyes like hollow circles of night-vision goggles. The year that I finally felt that people saw me as a woman, was also the year I joined so many women I've ever been close to who were survivors of sexual violence of some kind.

In January, I learned I was a survivor of sexual violence I could not remember, committed by a family member, incest.

First came the numbness, then came the paralyzing fear of telling anyone, the fear of being wrapped up and written off in a narrative of pathology.

I was reminded of the words of Professor K. Wayne Yang to his students: "You may not choose to be in this war, but you were born into it."

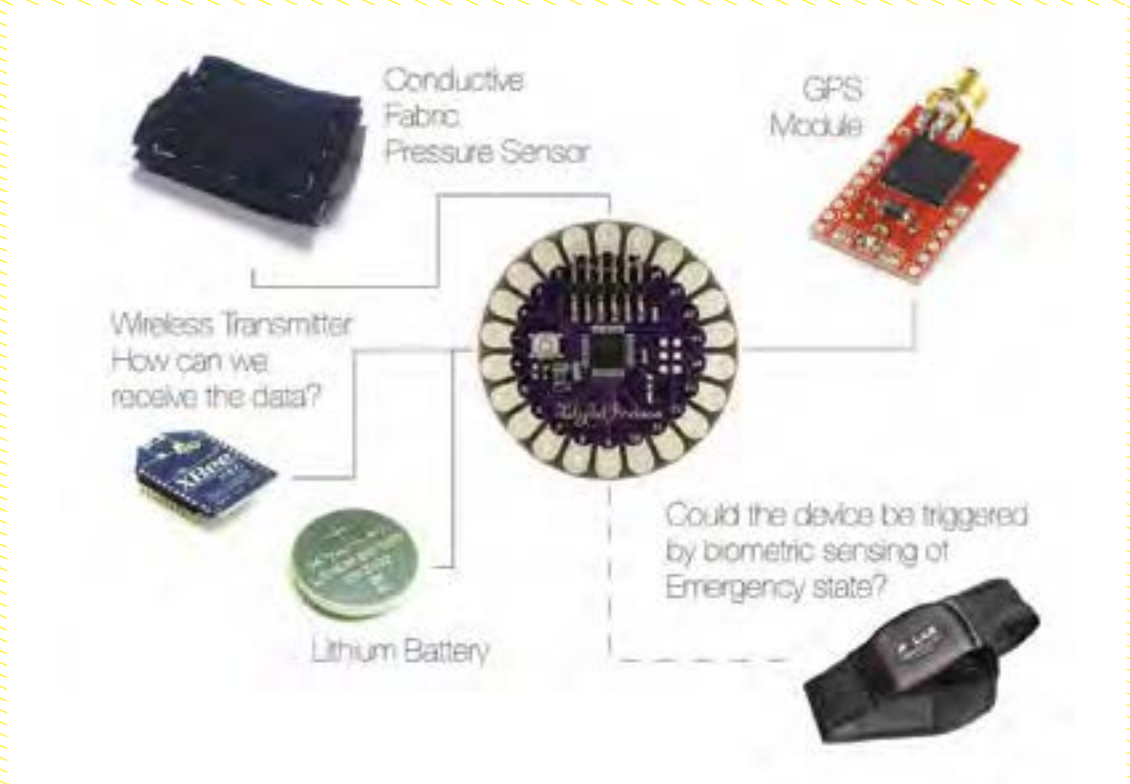


Diagram for a Social Emergency Bracelet, part of the Local Autonomy Network Series

Perhaps, again like how people born in the global south feel, in countries like Colombia and Mexico, terrorized by war and poverty—do they feel that they were born into it? That through no fault of their own they are survivors of violence, like me?

Violence of colonial steel walls, corrugated and mesh, akin to the force of sexual and gender-based violence, We are constantly navigating the violence of borders of all kinds, skittering across earth pinging satellites that never correctly know our exact locations, for they never know how many kinds of thirst we feel.

[34.088705, -118.281894]

Now this fierce mixed-race transgender incest survivor femme lesbian pornoterrorista is even more unraveled, bare, stronger, even more pissed, behind her eyeliner, in her too-red lipstick, leather V heels and her black miniskirt dress, even more ready to fight and burn and create and dream new worlds into existence, where the logic of Western reason isn't used to uphold

some false image of nations and laws that mask the absolute violence faced by so many who step outside the borders, or who are born outside them, or who choose to cross them.

and I am here to fight and fuck and give birth to border disturbances, to queer and Mayan technologies that can reveal national borders for the fictions they are, to femme disturbance and technologies of survival.

I am the intersection, of too many coordinate systems to name.

We are the intersections, and we exceed the borders placed upon us.

A Proposal for Survivor Technologies

Moving forward with my work, I propose here a project called Survivor Technologies, based on my own experience as a survivor of sexual and gender-based violence and my desire to create social situations to understand structural oppression and respond to it effectively. The project will include a series of workshops,

performances and technologies and will involve collaborations with Elle Mehrmand and Adam Tinnell.

Survivor technologies include:

- **DIY Medicine:** inventing our own technologies of healing to help us survive in a world that wants us dead, including safety and survival devices, learning ways of passing, or of building community, or of finding each other, or of loving each other, rejecting narratives of pathologization that reduce our identities to illnesses or symptoms



- **Erotic Theory, Erotic Poetry:** understanding our desires, exceeding our understandings, finding better questions, writing from our bodies
- **Horizontal Knowledge Production:** teaching each other, learning from each other, sharing our stories on YouTube, on Tumblr, on Twitter, face-to-face, in poetry, in bedtime whispers, in breathless gasps, in workshops, everywhere
- **Emergency Aesthetics and Crisis Culture:** Resisting narratives of crisis that perpetuate economic and social inequality, learning skills to redefine and respond to crisis in a way that works toward the world we want, a world without prisons, rape and war.

My first project in the Survivor Technologies series was the Trigger Bracelet.

I made this prototype soon after I learned that I was a survivor of childhood sexual violence. In my extremely raw emotional state, as I tried to make sense of the events I had no memories of, I found myself being so easily upset by reminders of sexual violence that it was difficult for me to even function at work. The Trigger Bracelet was designed to provide a visual cue, a timer that I could give myself to calm down once I realized that I was triggered. The prototype had an arduino, a handmade

pressure sensor, and an RGB LED that, when the button was pressed, would light up and fade from red to blue and then and fade out. The project also enabled me to discuss my experience more openly, and also provided me with an opportunity to take time to work on a task related to healing when sitting and feeling and writing didn't seem to be leading to any relief.

A previous project that informs the Survivor Technologies project is the SOS SMS project by the Hack-It group in Spain in collaboration with the Nuevo Amanecer shelter for abused women and children. The project, presented at "Hackers: The Art of Abstraction" at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in 2004, created an SMS text message network of women who were at risk for partner abuse.⁹ The goal of the project was to create a community of support who could quickly respond to incidents of violence as they occurred, but it also became incredibly useful for distributing information after the bombing of the Atocha train station. As the government tried to cover up the causes of the bombing, people used the SOS SMS network to organize public actions of solidarity and denouncement of the government. The SOS SMS project underscores again the intersections of personal violence and structural violence and the need for artists and activists to foster networks of solidarity and autonomy to counter the negative effects of emerging social instabilities. In this context, apolitical gestures to create relations as merely aesthetic seem not only self-indulgent but negligent.

The next project I imagine in the Survivor Technologies series is a GPS-enabled wearable device that can help survivors of sexual assault or kidnapping. Ideally, this device could be activated in an emergency to alert a list of contacts that an incident is taking place. My basic idea is that the device could have a GPS, a button which would not be easy to accidentally press, and a transmission method to send out coordinates for the person wearing it. As the device presents a number of technical difficulties including the means of transmitting the coordinates and the cost of the device, I am proposing workshops at a number of venues in the U.S. and Mexico so that the project can be collectively developed. Additionally, through the workshops I wish to make the issue of gender-based violence and kidnappings into a social issue to be discussed openly and not only dealt with by individuals.

The GPS bracelet came out of my thinking about the Trigger Bracelet, but also made me recall my experience in Bogotá, where artists and activists were deeply engaged with the problem of the "falsos positivos" and the desaparecidos, people who have been kidnapped and never returned, or who show up in military reports as being guerrillas to improve the numbers of apprehended enemies. I have begun discussions with the Grupo 0,29 collective in Bogotá, who also expressed a desire for approaches that are affordable and widely accessible to nontech-savvy audiences.



Programming the Autonets Lilypad prototype, 2013. Photo by Micha Cárdenas.

Theories of queer space and practices of queer geography need to be grounded in actual experiences of both pleasure and violence. I have attempted here to describe two projects I am working on to propose that artists can ground their practice in valuing concrete strategies for survival, resistance, and healing for those who participate in their artworks.

The Survivor Technologies project continued and transformed into my current project, Local Autonomy Networks / Autonets.

<http://autonets.org>

- 1- "London Riots. (The BBC will never replay this. Send it out) - YouTube," n.d., <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biJgILxGKoo&feature=share>.
- 2- Laurie Penny, "Penny Red: Panic on the Streets of London," *Penny Red*, August 9, 2011, <http://pennyred.blogspot.com/2011/08/panic-on-streets-of-london.html>.
- 3- Ching-in Chen et al., *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2011).
- 4- In the sense of Halberstam's "perhaps overly ambitious claim that there is such a thing as 'queer time' and 'queer space.'" Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
- 5- "42 Years After Stonewall, A Look at Policing of Queer and Trans People," *Ms Magazine Blog*, n.d., <http://msmagazine.com/blog/blog/2011/07/25/42-years-after-stonewall-a-look-at-policing-of-queer-and-trans-people/>.
- 6- This section originally from the essay "The Transborder Immigrant Tool: Violence, Solidarity and Hope in Post-NAFTA Circuits of Bodies Electr(on)ic," http://www.uni-siegen.de/locatingmedia/workshops/mobilehci/cardenas_the_transborder_immigrant_tool.pdf
- 7- Laurel Anderson, "Punishing the Innocent: How the Classification of Male-to-Female Transgender Individuals in Immigration Detention Constitutes Illegal Punishment under the Fifth Amendment," *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law and Justice* 25 (2010): 1.
- 8- *A Transgender Detainee Speaks Out*, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEGWrMSXg8k&feature=youtu_gdata_player.





Queer crossing
Photomontage
Madam Fancy, 2007

Experiences and Reflections on Citizenship Construction in Baja California from a Perspective of Gender and Sexual Diversity

Rocio Del Rio Valverde and Heber Huizar Contreras

This document expounds experiences and reflections on citizen participation, citizenship construction, and the struggle for human rights in Baja California. It also analyzes and debates, from different perspectives, the participation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transvestic, transgender, and intersexual (LGBTTTI) population in social activism and citizen politics. Additionally, it discusses individualism and social self-image among LGBTTTI youth, men, and women.

There is a lot yet to be known about the logic of queer¹ spaces in the city of Tijuana, where traditional forms of socialization are the only ones recognized, regardless of a person's sexual identity. Queer people are turned invisible in several dimensions; for example, the nightlife industry tends to homogenize the mood of social practices such as going to a nightclub: same music, atmosphere, and "cross-dressing" shows. This reality, visible every weekend, does not provide more meaningful interaction than you would find in a typical bar—just sexual fun and alcoholic beverages. Therefore, diversity diffuses, blending and mimicking, and remains clandestine.

First of all, when contextualizing the situation on the subject of freedoms and rights in Baja California, we recognize that the state has been governed by a conservative party, which has been very clear about its position on sexual diversity, sexual and reproductive rights, obscurantist education and the lack of freedoms for Baja California's youth, as evidenced by public statements and laws passed in the state's Congress. A 2010 survey conducted under the auspices of the "Prevention of Partner Violence: Sexual Diversity and Citizenship" project (Del Rio and Huizar, 2010) showed that 75 percent of the surveyed population considered its local environment to be homophobic to some degree (from a *little homophobic* to *very homophobic*); 56 percent didn't participate in any sort of citizen politics or any other kind of social activism; and 70 percent stated that if they were a victim of discrimination they wouldn't contact any governmental entity to file a complaint or ask for legal advice.

The efforts in education, activism, and citizenship construction to advance human, civil, and political rights, and to end discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, are at odds with the indifference, depoliticization, lack of social structure, and, above all,

the belief that everything that must be achieved has already been achieved.

LGBTTI Rights and Social Democracy

It was only in 2006 that, for the first time, it became possible to hear in the media a political figure talking about "minority" issues, sexual diversity, and sexual rights, without the purpose of criticizing or demonizing, but to propose new ways of making politics include and respect diversity as a central point on an agenda; we're talking about the Partido Alternativa Socialdemócrata (Alternative Social Democrat Party), led by its female candidate for the nation's presidency, Patricia Mercado. From that point on, young people in the country began to develop discussions on topics like equality and gender, citizenship construction, and advanced subjects like the right to self-determination, which is fundamental to the feminist agenda.

In 2007, we integrated Alternativa's political campaign team in the state, and the team of young members from both genders began to organize activities and political platforms with a strong basis in gender and human rights, based on a political agenda established by the campaign team. That was our first effort to incorporate the subject of sexual diversity in the topics on the agenda.

As one action, we participated in the Primera Marcha del Orgullo (First Pride March) in Ensenada municipality, which took place at a watershed moment, one year after the Coexistence Societies Law was passed in Mexico City.

Afterward, Alternativa underwent internal restructuring and, in an effort to recapture the topics of the agenda, we committed ourselves to form Comités de Acción Política, or CAP (Political Action Committees), work cells that would focus on specific topics. The CAPs called "Diversifying" (Diversificando) and "Free Minds" (Mentes libres) were formed to deal with health issues, discrimination, and education in the LGBTTTI population inside the party and the community. Unfortunately, differences in perspective and ruptures between party factions forced Alternativa out of the party system and forced the team members to engage only in individual causes.

From a political standpoint it was very complicated to approach the youth to promote human rights activism or even to convene for conferences, workshops, or talks, basically for one reason: we are depoliticized. Simply, I don't associate my body, my private sphere, and my sexual and reproductive rights with either politics or social matters. There's no understanding of the immediate connection; people are better able to relate to gas prices and electricity costs as public matters. In addition, organization and activism within a political party seems unilateral; a party represents a semi-closed entity that has its own interests, which generate mistrust about participation.

When we invited people to participate or to attend the march, we got answers like: "Me? Not even if I were crazy!" or "What will I do there? Stand around and look stupid?" These demurrals, perhaps manifestations of fear of getting exposed in a march, may come from a variety of reasons: a bad call strategy on our part, a city without history, the absence of organized LGBTTTI groups, etc.

Baja California lacks a social and political culture of community expression and protest. If you complain or publicly disagree you are seen as a "*grillo*" (*cricket*, also used in the context of political corruption) or a "*querulous*" person, someone who should better get to work. These are language codes that transform into real life behaviors, such as refusing to participate in a march or a protest meeting.

Along the same lines, to be discriminated against at a coffee shop, a restaurant, or a nightclub is still perceived as a personal matter instead of a public issue; young men and women in the state don't feel empowered to denounce an act of discrimination at a service establishment. This was demonstrated in 2011, at a gathering of LGBTTTI young people between twenty and twenty-six years old. Each of them had been a victim of some sort of discrimination during high school; they considered it normal and perceived it as a personal problem. During one group interview session, we spoke about day-to-day discrimination and invisibility. We found that invisibility and the deficiency of space appropriation are the main factors that debilitate or totally stop the empowerment of young queer women and men.

In the same way, the activist agenda of a political party that promotes or works for the development of LGBTTTI rights in Baja California will find much less social fabric on which to rest: a few OSC² or LGBTTTI and feminist groups will give them support. But the difference is an enormous one if we compare this situation with what happens in a place like Mexico City, referred to as a "legal island" on social and civil rights

for LGBTTTI people, whose progressive development has outpaced the rest of the country.

Bodies Appropriate the Space: The "Out & Proud" Bicycle Ride, 2008

Naturally, we kept up our interest in political and citizen activism in another phase; our participation extended to other fields, but this time from within organized civil society.

In 2008, we helped organize a bicycle ride for the LGBTTTI community in Ensenada city. The idea was to promote social participation and space appropriation through a recreational activity. The event was advertised as a pilot project through a press release and an interview in ERadio³. Even with little response, the experience was a very amusing one, proving that organizing this same project, or something like it on a major scale, would be a huge success. Recreational activities achieve space appropriation in a way that is more meaningful and significant for people. The difference between these kinds of activities and festivals, nightclubs, or gay parades is that we participate directly with our bodies, in a tribe, at the same moment and space, sharing a goal. We arrived, rode our bikes, pedaled, laughed, turned around to see each other, felt supported by each other. This time, because it was a "sports" event, we had a municipal escort without any problem. As we've said, queer participation is more significant when it involves actions that "we all like" or that "we all have lived before," in other words, we use our insights from past experiences. Maybe because of our sexual orientations, we have discrimination experiences in common, but that is not what brings us together. Maybe this recreational way of expressing commonality can bring us together in a stronger way. At the end of the day, we all are people and share codes that are the link for space appropriation.

A Free Baja California: In Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Rights

By the end of 2008, the right wing had gained power in Baja California, but it was still possible to respond to the initiative contained in the 175⁴ decree that established the protection of life from the time of conception and invalidated any law that contravened it (for example, parts of the penal code that contained abortion rights exceptions).

When our citizen network found out that the proposal had been taken to the plenary Congress and had been passed, a citizen group formed to protest it and show our indignation toward the state, which hadn't consulted its citizenry ahead of modifying a law of

this nature. The name of the group was Baja California Libre (Free Baja California), better known as BCLIBRE⁵, under the banner of more freedom of choice and against losing rights already achieved.

Group activities consisted in civil demonstrations at events and at the offices of representatives who had voted in favor of the law; raising the public's awareness through fliers, T-shirts, press releases, etc.; and lobbying for support from whoever might fight for the cause. Citizen efforts were made in conjunction with Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos de B.C. (B.C. Human Rights Office) and with support from the citizen network that was organized around this subject; that's how an unconstitutionality appeal was brought to the Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación (Mexican Supreme Court).

At the same time, an amendment to the law's 7th article, related to marriage, was being formulated in order to put a legal lock against the introduction of a law similar to the Coexistence Societies law. It was then that we decided to contact other groups who were working on the same problems but from a standpoint of sexual diversity.

Out of this unfortunate situation, women's and youth networks formed with the goal of retrieving rights already achieved and preventing new human rights violations. That's how the collaboration with the Asociación Civil Gente Diversa (Diverse People Civil Association of Baja California) began, with a commitment to reintroducing sexual diversity topics from a gender standpoint, although always open to other views, such as queer ones.

We also tried to get the LGBTTTI community included on the agenda at the feminist conference of Baja California for the first time. We succeeded in creating a synergy between sexual diversity groups and feminist groups that continues to this day. We are still adding sexual diversity elements to the efforts of our fellow feminists, and vice versa.

Difference without Violence: Workshops to Prevent Violence between Same-Sex Partners

The most important LGBTTTI intervention we made was to participate in the organization committee of the first LGBTTTI festival in Tijuana, "Inclusion in Revolution," where we began by conducting surveys to investigate discrimination against the LGBTTTI population in Baja California.

Another action was the "Prevention of Partner Violence: Sexual Diversity and Citizenship" project, with the goal of continuing research on discrimination and implementing

the workshop "Difference without Violence," which concluded with a presentation of the results of our survey before Baja California's State Congress.

In addition to the resistance to political activism and organization, we also discovered that same-gender couples are not immune from violent and codependent relationships, with violence expressed in several ways. Thus, we thought, Why don't we approach the human rights topic as a learning tool to prevent violence? Therefore, in 2010 we participated in a contest promoted by the Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud (Mexican Youth Institute), a pioneer in the state in the area of same-gender-couple violence. The main goal was citizenship construction through education that will benefit the participants in their interpersonal relationships and help them deal with discrimination and asserting their sexual and reproductive rights.

In September of the same year, we officially announced the workshops on Facebook⁶, and, people from Ensenada, Tijuana, and Mexicali showed immediate interest. The entry quota was quickly filled, and we even had to close registration. That's how we proved our theory that people are more interested in the personal—"when it affects me"—rather than if it's a widespread discrimination problem or a public affair. They don't immediately perceive discrimination as a problem that concerns them. Our experience indicates that for the majority of gays and lesbians in B.C., discrimination doesn't exist until it happens to them, until they get kicked out of a bar or fired from a job. But partner violence and codependent relationships are situations that a lot of people experience, and it's a problem that lacks focused attention in LGBTTTI groups. We found that the "Difference without Violence" project attracted gays and lesbians from the state's big cities.

At first, because it was a sensitive issue and we lacked a budget, we used only social media as diffusion channels. Later we distributed posters in coffee shops and universities mainly in Tijuana, and finally we visited the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (Baja California Autonomous University). The posters used a rainbow as a visual code, but it wasn't the focal point. We wanted to communicate the seriousness of the subject and also to break down visual barriers for people who don't identify with the rainbow.

In the case of Tijuana, the workshop quota was surpassed, but it was attended mostly by activists or people who already had a history with human rights events—they showed a strong sensitivity on the subject and were curious about the workshop. At the end, feedback was positive, and something interesting happened: one attendee, as a result of his participation

in the workshop, took part in the conference series “Jornada Cultural Contra la Homofobia” (Cultural Symposium against Homophobia) and thereby brought to that event some of the ideas developed in “Difference without Violence.”

In 2011, the workshop was held again, in Tijuana city; Tijuana had the recent experiences of the “Inclusion in Revolution” festival and the Cultural Symposium against Homophobia, which helped the workshop gain wider reception.

To Sum Up...

Some people question the point of having LGBTTTI spaces—“What is the point of having an LGBTTTI park?” “What is the point of organizing a gay volleyball tournament?” The idea is that LGBTTTI people are thereby “excluding themselves”; but this is not necessarily true. The rights to organize and to be part of a diverse society are fundamental to the development and protection of groups. Even though we live in a world where solipsism is privileged, in line with the United States’ materialistic and globalized lifestyle, at the end of the day we are in Mexico, on a border that is far from sympathetic to sexual diversity, in a binational atmosphere that only fakes modernity, that is still dominated by aggressive heterosexuality and Catholic values.

Although Tijuana is at the forefront of innovation in technology and art, it’s not the “queer habitat” it should be. We still have a very short record of activism, space appropriation, organization, and political development of LGBTTTI groups and queer expression.

We believe in the existence of two possible means of citizenship construction for queer people or LGBTTTI groups in Baja California. The first one is space appropriation, using the body and recreation as a tool. The second means is nonformal education services, with general-interest topics geared toward the LGBTTTI or queer community, recognizing difference within equality.

Another step is the appropriation of political and decision-making space, where a diversity of viewpoints is necessary in order to achieve the representation of formerly invisible and marginalized groups. Primarily we want to take on topics that concern us as LGBTTTI or queer people, and continue with the planning, implementation, and evaluation of political activism that recognizes diversity.

To sum up, diversity issues, LGBTTTI or queer, are still very much alive in Baja California and in the rest of the country. Citizen participation is required, along

with efforts by the state, to make visible the plurality we are living in, in a Mexico where establishment and traditional values have been overcome by reality. ✨

- 1- From the queer theory born of feminist and LGBTTTI debates, which recapture the challenges of gender and identities.
- 2- Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil (Society Civil Organizations), formerly known as nongovernmental organizations (ONG).
- 3- Today ENewspaper (<http://www.ene newspaper.mx/>); before ERadio (<http://www.eradio.com.mx>).
- 4- Modification to the 7th article of Baja California’s Political Constitution.
- 5- See <http://bc-libre.blogspot.com/>
- 6- See <https://www.facebook.com/DiferenciaSinViolencia>

"The queer movement is not a movement of homosexuals or gays, rather one of sexual and gender dissidents who resist the rules imposed by the dominant heterosexual society, and who are alert to the processes of standardization and internal exclusion in gay culture: the marginalization of dykes, of transsexuals and transgender people, of immigrants, workers and sex workers. [...] Being a fag is not enough to be queer: one needs to submit [one's] own identity for critique."

At the beginning of this investigation we wondered if it was appropriate to use the term "queer" when describing Tijuana. Our resistance was based on two fundamental questions: first, we refused to impose a hegemonic and ethnocentric view onto the semiotics, choreography, and processes of the city in order to make them "easily" identifiable. Secondly, we opposed the term "queer" as a label as used by the capitalist market, exported to various phenomena and contexts, without taking into account the geopolitical context of the city.

Under our (self) critical premises, we decided to develop an action (gesture) that would link the visual, the reflexive, and the physical, and at the same time be a single element able to be confused with the visual noise of the intervened spaces. Our logo became a pair of lips, apparently feminine, wearing a mustache, in the center of the circular questions: ¿Quién es un hombre? ¿Quién es una mujer? (Who is a man? Who is a woman?) Two simple questions that could



easily reach the reader/passersby and simultaneously unleash an internal inquiry about gender. The logo was made into small stickers that were placed near or on advertisements and other images in public space, interpolating in order to complicate the reading of the images and spaces.

DATE: 09.24.2011

We focused our actions in downtown Tijuana, as it serves as the off-center site where a reasonably representative cross-section of the city's population converges, and where you find the highest concentration of pedestrian traffic (ideal for our interventions). We decided to direct our interventions towards publicity located in outside spaces near bars and businesses. As we moved through the city on a Saturday night, we intervened on various advertisements and spaces, painting male lips red with lipstick and giving women black mustaches.

Another important factor was the intervention of space through our presence as drag kings and femmes, which created an ambiguity and instigated questions and interactive situations with the people around us. The reactions ranged from evasive looks to direct questions about our gender, fascinated glances, both mocking and confused, and some implicitly violent exchanges. At no time did we feel explicitly threatened as a result of our simulated and marginal physicality's having "insulted" anyone. This is most likely due to Tijuana's nature of perpetual becoming, where the idea of "normal" does not exist per se. The city and its constant flow cannot be conservative because it lacks something to conserve, and tends to embrace the new and the shocking from a perspective of "tolerance" because it's a possible market niche: a potentially profitable commodity. However, this early intervention has shown us the need to explore the apparent tolerance our interventions were met with and to continue these interventions regularly. Our research has left us with more questions than answers, but has provided an opening with which we can begin to understand Tijuana's complexity in terms of a queer geography.

- 1- Beatriz Preciado, "Historia de una palabra: queer," *Parole de queer* no. 1, (April-June 2009): 16. (The text has been translated from the original Spanish.)

Technicolor? Or just rainbow tinted lenses.
 Printed stickers, performance, and digital photography
 Jennifer Donovan, Sayak Valencia, 2011
 Photography: Gabriela Torres Olivares







Challenges, Promises, and Pitfalls Of Queer Theory¹

Brad Epps
University of Cambridge

To construct a queer discourse involves ... placing oneself in a strange space that renders us strange subjects of a strange, inappropriate, and rude knowledge.

— David Córdoba García

... as the rights discourse of internationalism is extended to more and more cultural contexts, Anglo-American queer theorists will have to be more alert to the globalizing—and localizing—tendencies of our theoretical languages.

— Michael Warner

Abandonamos el cuerpo personal.
[We abandon the personal body.]

— Néstor Perlongher²

Can there be a truly alternative, countercultural, international movement based on the moniker “queer”? Is the conservation and dissemination of “queer” the best way to pay tribute to and advance gender and sexual diversity at a planetary level? Is the translation of “queer”—or the promotion of other non-Anglophone terms—necessarily more attentive to diversity or does it reinforce instead attitudes of ethno-linguistic essentialism and pan-national division? To what extent is it possible, let alone politically productive, to separate the term “queer” from the sociolinguistic contexts in which it first appears?

In what follows, I will first provide an overview of queer theory as it has been developed in a broadly Spanish-speaking context, paying particular attention to questions of language, nationality, and history, and then proceed to a brief presentation of the work of the Argentine poet, essayist, and activist Néstor Perlongher (1949–1992) as an example of a project different from, albeit relatable to, queer theory.³ My aim is neither to oppose nor to reconcile Perlongher’s work and queer theory, which began to crystallize only *after* the Argentine’s death. Instead, I prefer to sound out some overlap, tension, and divergence that may help to internationalize, and hence to complicate, queer theory and its practices and performances. Tersely put,

the present article contends that Néstor Perlongher’s writing, particularly his essays, can offer as substantive a contribution to ongoing reflections on gender, sexuality, identity, normativity, and anti-normativity as do the works of Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and other major figures within the Anglo-American academy; it also contends, in a more general way, that a truly international movement would do well to attend to formulations that are neither strictly Anglophone nor academic. Although I will here be focusing on the play of “queer” in Hispanophone texts and contexts, the implications for other non-Anglophone texts and contexts are arguably no less important.⁴

I. Between Microhistory and Collective Memory: The Limits Of “Queer”

Before addressing Perlongher’s work, which constitutes a major political and aesthetic *mise en critique* of normative assumptions and practices, I should say that something troubles me about the word “queer,” a word that a growing number of Spanish speakers, especially in academic and activist settings, deploy with a familiarity that recalls that of other Anglophone words that have entered the Spanish language, such as “iceberg,” “airbag,” “lifting,” “bullying,” “performance,” “straight,” “gay,” “closet,” or, for that matter, “dildo” and “cock ring.” What troubles me is not so much the hint of linguistic imperialism—after all, Castilian, or Spanish, is itself hardly immune to such an accusation—or much less the hint of linguistic impurity but rather the lack of interpersonal memory and “street smarts” that the word “queer” at once reveals and conceals when used in a non-English-speaking context. The term “queer,” which in English originally meant “odd,” “eccentric,” “strange,” “twisted,” or “deviant,” has long functioned in Anglophone contexts as a verbal weapon directed with particular intensity against homosexuals and in a more diffuse way against anyone and everyone whose behavior, appearance, “lifestyle” or “way of being” does not adhere to the prevailing standards of what is all too perfunctorily designated as “human nature.” Indeed, it is precisely the status of “queer” as a historically charged form of “hate speech” that infuses its contemporary critical and political resignification with so much passion.

Passionate or not, resignification presupposes, obviously enough, a preexisting meaning. In an English-speaking context, the rhetorical force of “queer,” precarious and polyvalent as both a long-

standing insult and a more recent value, remits to the street and the lecture room, the private home and the public sphere, the lofty reaches of philosophical reflection and the lower depths of physical violence. Lately ambivalent, it nonetheless continues to be a word whose offensive and violent connotations are readily understood by virtually any and every English speaker without the need for definitions, explanations, or translations. Its more recent affirmative valences are another matter, attaining currency, beyond academic and activist circles, by way of any number of popular cultural endeavors. In a non-Anglophone context, however, the word “queer” has neither history nor “street cred”; instead, it is foreign, strange, and novel, and tends to be used almost exclusively in theoretically informed and internationally oriented academic and activist settings. In other words, “queer” is a word whose radical force, rooted as it is in the linguistic practices of Great Britain, the United States, and other Anglophone countries, *precedes* every activation—or, better yet, reactivation—of its offensive charge. Such reactivation entails some form of memory, whether conscious or unconscious, deliberate or involuntary, that obtains in some places more than in others. The differences, temporal and spatial, historical and geopolitical, are important, since the resignification of “queer” depends, in the first and final instance, on stories, recollections, and situations not always so different from what Perlongher calls, in reference to an interview with a male prostitute in São Paulo, a “happening in the street” (“Avatares” 49). These happenings in the street, in many respects as open and fluid as they are codified and overdetermined, also involve “sayings” in the street, and from the street, whose resonances should not be underestimated.

The resignification or resemantization of “queer” involves, then, the *inversion* or *reversal* of its exclusively injurious sense and the defiant, even proud, assumption of a moniker that formerly spelled ignominy and shame—formerly, at least, in an Anglophone context. The proponents of queerness, inside and outside an Anglophone context, mine the term’s polysemy, presenting it as a portmanteau for all sorts of offense and, for that very reason, presumably capable of configuring, in the spirit of resistance and advocacy, a community that is, as David Córdoba, author of a brilliant review of queer theory in Spanish, notes: “more than the sum of gays and lesbians, [because it] includes them as well as other identity figures constructed in that marginal space (transsexual, transgender, bisexual, etc.), at the same time that it embraces all those who can proliferate within it,” that is, “all those who deviate from the sexual norm, whether or not articulated in terms of identity” (22). In a similar vein, Hortensia Moreno, in the introduction to a splendid edition of *Debate feminista* dedicated

to “odd oddities” and “queer” theory, states that, “[t]he important twist in queer reflection is its will to inclusion,” a will that leads Moreno to refer not only to gays, lesbians, and “those who exercise some kind of ‘dissident sexuality,’ ” but also to women and “so-called ‘people of color’ ” (x).

And yet, regardless of how open, inclusive, and anti-normative it is declared to be, “queer” is susceptible, like any sign-*cum*-motto used repeatedly and even ritualistically, to normalization, institutionalization, and identification, to becoming, that is, a more or less stabilized mark of identity, perhaps even a cultural trademark of sorts. As much as it may grieve the proponents of radical queer exceptionality (a phrase that ironically recalls claims to U.S. exceptionality), such a process of normalization, institutionalization, and identification is not at all exceptional; indeed, in loosely sociolinguistic terms, and at the risk of tautology, it is “normal.” It could be summarized, somewhat cynically, as the failure of success: the more the word and the concept “queer” circulate, the more supporters it has, the more its conformist consistency is accentuated and the more its limitations as a tool of radical resignification and questioning become apparent.⁶

One of its limitations, arguably the most important (we are, after all, dealing with a word), is linguistic in nature. As has already been noted, “queer” has more weight, more force, and more resonance in an Anglophone context than in any other. This fact, apparently so obvious and simple, tends to fade in the face of the generalizing and speculative tendencies that are typical of theory (this too is clearly a metatheoretical generalization), even when the theory in question tries to be attentive, as in the present article, to localizations, peculiarities, and specificities. What is more, specificity does not always harbor a “solution,” for as Alfredo Martínez Expósito remarks with respect to Ricardo Llamas’s attempt to promote, in Spanish, a *teoría torcida* or “twisted theory”: “its very cultural specificity is what keeps ‘twisted theory’ from being comfortably generalized to the entire spectrum of homosexuality, despite the self-critical potential that [Llamas’s] theory evinces” (21, emphasis in original).

Leaving aside the dubious notion of comfort as a critical value and remembering that what is at stake is not just “the entire spectrum of homosexuality” but “everything that deviates from the sexual norm,” it is important to note that the generalization of queer theory—which U.S. critic Michael Warner presents as a virtual article of faith (xxvi) and which, it seems, has more currency among Spanish-speaking critics than Llamas’s *twisted* counterpart—feeds on Anglo-American cultural specificities, and generalities, that render its international, multilingual generalization

uncomfortable indeed.' Martínez Expósito himself, acknowledging that "it is very tempting to use theoretical models developed in the United States and other Anglo-Saxon countries," recognizes that "their application to Spanish-speaking societies is at the very least problematic, when not downright harmful," and, more positively, that "a queer theory of a strongly social cast is only possible after years of militant activism" (23). I concur with Martínez Expósito, with the caveat that I would not limit myself to considering problematic—or harmful—the use of queer theory in Spanish-speaking societies only, but would instead extend the problem to any society that is not primarily Anglophone (which does not by any means suggest that the use of "queer" cannot also be problematic in primarily Anglophone societies). That said, it is just these "Spanish-speaking societies" to which Martínez Expósito refers, and which are themselves rife with internal differences, that are at the heart of my reflections here on the times, places, and limits, the generalizations and specifications, of "queer" and "queerness."

It is in the light of past and present usages, variously localized and globalized, that I offer a little "sociolinguistic" story, so deceptively limited that it might well be labeled "mine," in order to theorize—and hence to generalize—it in a deliberately incomplete and insufficient way. The story, trivial in its "personological drama" (as Perlongher might put it), is "sociolinguistic" insofar as it describes the "I," the "mine," as an effect of habits, customs, and attitudes that are condensed and activated in speech acts that precede it, surpass it, and make it persist in and as the work of memory. Memory: I still remember the mixture of fright, fury, confusion, and anxiety that my mother manifested when, as a twelve-year-old boy given to reading the dictionary, I used the word "queer" in reference to my brother as if it really meant "strange" or "odd" and nothing else. It took me quite a few years to understand—or as the Spanish would have it, "entender"—why my mother reacted with such passion at hearing the word "queer" spill from her older son's mouth in relation to her younger son. Although the moment of complete clarity would not occur until I was still older, it was while going home from school one day that I heard someone in the street hurl the same word, "queer," at me in a tone that not only bewildered me, but that made me afraid: as if after the mean-spirited interpellation, an act of physical violence perforce must come. Without understanding the full thrust of the word, I understood enough to realize that it was a word freighted with potentially harmful significance, a word with which one needed to proceed with caution.

Marked by the home, the school, and the street, this little anecdote, in which the word "queer" plays a

decidedly nontheoretical part, could hardly happen in a non-Anglophone context, where other acts of speech precede other acts of violence, and serves to put the brakes on the global, or globalizing, expansion of "queer." I should clarify that the anecdote that I have here narrated happened decades before the uneven dissemination, commercialization, and standardization of the word "queer" in television shows such as *Queer as Folk* and, more vividly, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (translated in Spain as *Operación G*, the "q" of "queer" erased in favor of the "g" of "gay"), where the erstwhile "love that dare not speak its name" was unfurled as a decorative marketing device. Although it is true that "queer" has lent itself to commercial usages in keeping with the voracity of a late capitalist market that wolfs down everything from Che Guevara's bearded visage, the Soviet flag, and fragments of the Berlin Wall to the ways of talking, dancing, and loving of marginalized communities, it is also true that it constitutes a memorable trace of humiliation and aggressiveness that is still capable of being (re) activated in an Anglophone context but that remains all but inoperable in other linguistic contexts, where it functions, if at all, as a trace of Anglo-American cultural hegemony (a different sort of humiliation and aggressiveness).

The problem with the global expansion of "queer" is, among other things, that it implicitly takes little anecdotes like mine as symptomatic of a general phenomenon of verbal injury, physical threat, and their would-be reversal even as it empties them of their linguistic and cultural particularities. Whatever "queer" may signify in a non-Anglophone context, it does not, *cannot*, have the uncanny force of adolescent trauma or colloquial recollections but is instead saturated with adult, intellectual, and transnational import. Although "queer" has undergone an impressive process of resemantization; although it has moved from being a source of shame to being a source of pride and resistance; although it has come to designate a complex theoretical and political current, and although it has been partly commodified, the mere fact that it still raises the hackles of many English speakers, particularly those of a "certain" age, is something that is overlooked or discounted only to the detriment of the theory articulated in its name. One might thus reasonably argue that queer theory would be nothing, or almost nothing, without the interpersonal stories or "microhistories" in which something "mine"—and "yours," "ours," "theirs"—can be reactivated, that it would be nothing, or almost nothing, without the lingering stench—increasingly perfumed with success, to be sure—of the ever so figurative shit that oozed from the word "queer" and of the possibilities of violence contained therein.

Here, in short, is the principal reason why I consider queer theory to be troubling or, more dispassionately, “problematic” as a truly international endeavor. The problem, indeed, is that *la teoría queer* in Spanish—unlike “queer theory” in English—is *not* troubling, at least not for any of the reasons offered above: the historical, practical, and interpersonal charge of the word, its settled yet still unsettling familiarity, and its contradictory polysemy (derision and praise, tradition and innovation), all remain overwhelmingly intellectual—even when its proponents would passionately defend it—in a non-Anglophone context. If queer theory elicits suspicion, ridicule, annoyance, and even rejection among some who see it as a supreme neoliberal fad *made in USA* (see Gundermann), and if it sparks the loyalty of others who look at it as the “ultimate” in sexually sophisticated thought, in both cases it functions, *outside a mainly Anglophone context*, as a metropolitan sign exempt from the contradictions between high and low culture, the school and the street, joy and fear, and vindication and persecution that constitute the motivating force of “queer theory” (in English). In an English-speaking context, “queer theory” signals a union marked by disunion, a mismatched linguistic couple or “bastard hybrid,” as Havelock Ellis quipped with respect to the word “homosexual”: on the one hand, “queer,” with its contemptuous colloquial charge that requires no academic explanation in order to be understood by every speaker of English, and on the other hand, “theory,” with its classical Greek pedigree and its place of privilege in philosophy and speculative thought.¹⁰ There is nothing, after all, that links “queer” to “theory” other than a critical and contrarian will to promote “bastard hybrids,” to say things differently, to twist, bend, invert, and transvalue a signifier already “twisted” and in doing so, to strive to alter the order of meaning itself.

The order of meaning: in a 1967 essay on Spanish writer Mariano José de Larra, published in *El furgón de cola* (The Caboose), Juan Goytisolo asserts that, “[t]he negation of an intellectually oppressive system necessarily begins with the negation of its semantic structure” (32, n. 2). In the wake of the debates on poststructuralism and historical materialism, Goytisolo’s statement might be seen as excessively confident, even idealistic, but it points nonetheless to the importance of words in the order, and ordering, of things, bodies, and materiality in general. More than any other thinker, Judith Butler, an all but inevitable reference in every reflective overview on queerness, grapples with the tension between meaning and materiality: after *Gender Trouble* (1990), translated in Spanish as *El género en disputa* (Gender in Dispute), Butler responds to the criticisms that she had not paid sufficient attention to historical and corporeal materiality by writing *Bodies That Matter: On the*

Discursive Limits of “Sex” (1993), whose Spanish translation, *Cuerpos que importan: sobre los límites materiales y discursivos del ‘sexo,’* displaces the discursive-materialistic tension from the title to the subtitle. I will return to the question of translation that has been hovering over the present text, but for the moment I would like to underscore something as obvious as it is easily forgotten: language, with all its particularities and peculiarities, matters, and the “intellectually oppressive systems” articulated in it can hardly be disarticulated, or rearticulated in some *different* way, without paying attention to the historical practices and interpersonal experiences that constitute the conditions of possibility for the negations, reversals, resemantizations, and other “inappropriate” acts that are at the basis of the diverse mobilizations of (the) “queer.” If “queer theory” stirs up contradictions and feuds within primarily Anglophone societies, *la teoría queer* risks silencing, in the guise of a keyword that resists translation, any number of other histories, habits, and practices.

Let me be clear: I do not mean to suggest that one language cannot or, much less, should not intertwine with another or that a speaker cannot or should not pass, promiscuously even, from one language to another. Nor do I mean to suggest that primarily Spanish-speaking societies are self-sufficient, closed, and unified, as if other languages—Maya-Quiché, Galician, Basque, Quechua, Guarani, Catalan, or Mapudungun—had no place in them. Likewise, I do not mean to suggest that primarily English-speaking societies are self-sufficient, closed, and unified, as if other languages, most notably Spanish itself, had no place in them. In a profound sense, English is never simply English, Spanish never simply Spanish, and so on. What I *do* mean to suggest is that linguistic history, amply understood, is important even, if not especially, in its micro- and individual versions or stories, and, moreover, that linguistic history inflects, sometimes quite decisively, material history, and vice versa. Finally, I also mean to suggest that every language, indeed every word, is fragile in its seemingly inextinguishable persistence, that is to say, in its historicity.

In this respect, and as I have stated elsewhere, my argument differs from that of Eve Sedgwick, one of the most celebrated voices of queer theory, who, immediately after recognizing that in the “American [sic] marketplace of images” almost everything is transient, makes a “counterclaim against [the] obsolescence” of “queer,” a “claim that something about *queer* is inextinguishable” (xii, emphasis original).¹¹ Although Sedgwick asserts that (the) “queer” constitutes “a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*” (xii), the moment, in

Sedgwick's formulation, seems to stretch out to eternity and the motive seems to resist discontinuity and loss. Thus, Sedgwick's etymological explanation—"queer" itself means *across* and comes from the Indo-European root *-twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*" (xii)—appears to be less traversed by doubts and uncertainties, less *troubled*, than it is buttressed by a tradition whose authority and norm are those of the dictionary: a dictionary of the English language, it bears remembering.

Sedgwick's gesture—repeated by Ricardo Llamas in a Hispanophone register—is radical in the sense that it rehearses the roots of a word and refers to an inter- or transcultural history. Both its radicality and its transculturality are undoubtedly important, but I would deploy them in exactly the opposite direction: away from the dogged monumentalization implicit in Sedgwick's formulation and *towards* obsolescence and extinction, even disappearance (in the work of an exiled HIV-positive Argentine like Perlongher, disappearance, as we shall see, teems with symbolic and material resonances of a still more momentous sort). What spurs Sedgwick's foray into comparative etymology is, according to her own declaration, the conviction that "queer" designates something resistant to obsolescence, a conviction, or more accurately a desire, that evokes something not merely transcultural but transhistorical as well, that is to say, something more ideal, in its non-obsolescent constancy, than material, in its fragile variability—Sedgwick's nod to the disposable culture of capitalism notwithstanding. For all its ties to Latin and German (a language in which *Querdenker* designates an unconventional, lateral, or contrarian thinker), for all its Indo-European heritage, "queer" does not cease to be a primarily Anglo-American signifier whose recently transvalued, affirmative force implicates, over and over again, a monumental estimation of other signs, sites, and events: chief among which, the Stonewall uprising in New York City in 1969. The monumentalization—if not indeed the fetishization—of Stonewall and the corresponding consolidation and dissemination of a history that privileges U.S. times and spaces are among the targets of critique by writers and activists from outside the United States, like Perlongher and the Chilean Pedro Lemebel, whose work I shall be considering in due course. For the moment, however, I would like to insist that "queer" is neither inextinguishable nor impervious to obsolescence, not even within an Anglophone sphere, and that its political charge is not necessarily, and in all situations, progressive. Regardless of how exceptional, extraordinary, and eccentric its proponents may claim it to be, "queer" is not released from the dynamic law of signifiers.

The law of signifiers, thick with historical contingency, is not, of course, always blindly followed, but can be activated, or better yet twisted, productively (agency, in other words, is by no means precluded). Accordingly, the *necessary* obsolescence and at least partial extinction of "queer" might be promoted, in keeping with a lengthy if fractured history of progressive practice, from *within* a community of blurred contours that, at present, seems to be more globalized (in Bourdieu's sense of globalization, as Anglo-Americanization) than internationalized. If "something about (the) 'queer' is truly 'transitive—multiply transitive,'" if "[k]eenerly, it is relational, and strange" (xii), as Sedgwick so ardently contends, it would be logical, and perhaps politically productive, to bring "queer" into play with words from other languages in order to render it more fully strange, more keenly relational, indeed, in order to render it unrecognizable—or recognizable only by means of a process of defamiliarization—to many Anglo-American critics who are apparently either unwilling and/or unable to tarry with any linguistic reality beyond English. In this regard, Spanish-speaking critics, wherever they reside and whatever their "mother tongue," have much to offer their (potential) English-speaking interlocutors, because even those who deploy the word "queer" in Spanish—often italicized or placed in quotation marks in recognition of its "foreignness"—put it into circulation alongside a series of other words and other vital formations, some of which appear in the very titles of books like *Teoría queer: Políticas bolleras, maricas, trans, mestizas* by David Córdoba, Javier Sáez, and Paco Vidarte, and *Escrituras torcidas: Ensayos de crítica 'queer'* by Alfredo Martínez Expósito.

These same Hispanophone critics also have something to offer their (potential) Spanish-speaking interlocutors, whether "native" or not, because the bilingual ambivalence on display in the titles of their books and articles can serve as a tonic for those who, like me, would stress both the difficulty and the importance of translation and of the mobilization of words commonly used in the street or included in Spanish-language dictionaries as "colloquialisms." Perhaps, in fact, queer theory might be promoted as an incomplete, insufficient, and partial form of translation, as a crossing of and between languages, in keeping with Sedgwick's emphasis on "across" (xii); perhaps the "bastard hybridity" of *la teoría queer*, part in Spanish and part in English, that I have criticized above as metropolitan and academic, might also be promoted as an antidote to linguistic and cultural purism; perhaps, in fine, the globalizing cast of "queer" might be promoted as a rehearsal for a *critique* of globalization itself. Such, it appears, is the position of the previously cited David Córdoba, for whom "the choice of the English word 'queer' and the option to

keep it untranslated has advantages and disadvantages ... that exceed the intentions of the individual who uses it" (21). According to Córdoba, the preservation of the word "queer" without translation, far from being an exclusively conservative or elitist gesture, responds to the fact that "it is already a term of common usage within activist spheres (or certain activist spheres) and in what little (or in some part of what little) Spanish gay and lesbian theory there is, and [also to the fact that] it has already been imported and inserted into our (sub)culture, already [belongs] to it, *albeit as a foreigner*" (21, emphasis added). Even though Córdoba clearly knows that "common usage" is here quite relative ("certain activist spheres," "some part of what little" theory), his position complements and corrects the one that I have been expounding so far. Among other things, Córdoba rightly recognizes that the use of the word "queer" in a Spanish-speaking context signals the existence of "a community that, although lacking a ground or a place within current geopolitical borders, has had, and has, a specific force in the Anglo-Saxon sphere" even as he also recognizes that "queer" "places us [Spaniards] in a position of strangeness [*extrañamiento*], of a certain exteriority vis-à-vis our national culture, in which we are exiled" (21).

Córdoba's position checks, from within a Spanish-speaking context, the tendency, whether by "natives" or "converts," to impugn every instance of the English language as intolerably foreign and imperialistic. In his very ambivalence (which I share), Córdoba bears an interesting resemblance to Óscar Montero, who states in "The Signifying Queen: Critical Notes from a Latino Queer" that while the word "gay" circulates in the Spanish-speaking world in such a way that "the complexities of its imported status are impossible to edit, and some of its original celebratory mode is lost in the translation," the "uses of 'queer' are even more circumscribed to the imperial metropolis" (162). Montero, who identifies as a "queer Latino," points out the limits of *all* designations of identity ("homosexual," "gay," "queer"); writes of circumscription instead of "free movement" (few practitioners of queer theory in the United States pause to consider to what extent the often acritical celebration of "free movement" might be in collusion with the more nefarious aspects of the "free market"); and reminds those who might otherwise forget that "queer" is not only open to qualification (in this case, "Latino"), but that it is also given to its own normativities—and its own self-critiques.

In designating himself "queer" and in acknowledging the limits of this very designation, Montero welds together critique and self-critique. Moreover, he recognizes the tensions, fractures, and insufficiencies that attend the word "queer" and, in fact, every mark of identity and anti-identity ("Latino," "white,"

"gay," "queer," and a lengthy *et cetera*) without discounting possible coincidences, overlaps, folds, and alliances. Carmen Romero Bachiller¹³ gestures to a similar dynamic when she calls for greater attention to "different differences" (150, 162) and other queer genealogies (some of them beyond, opposed to, or indifferent to the queer), among which is a "black feminist, postcolonial and lesbian genealogy that many times we forget to remember" (150). In the same vein, it is important to acknowledge still other genealogies that, even though articulated in Spanish, have barely made an impact on the growing but still minor production of queerness as a critical category in Spain and many parts of Latin America itself.

II. Toward a "Diversity of Desiring Drifts": Néstor Perlongher and "Other" Genealogies

The work of Néstor Perlongher constitutes a touchstone in these "other" genealogies ("other" from a hegemonic perspective, of course; hence, the quotation marks), even though it is not even mentioned in Spanish critic Alberto Mira's massive dictionary of homosexual, gay, and lesbian culture. Like other Latin Americans, Perlongher does not appear in the valuable works of Córdoba, Martínez Expósito, or Romero Bachiller either. The absence of Latin American and Caribbean references contrasts with the prolific presence of Anglo-American and Latino references (the latter, it bears noting, limited mainly to Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga) and cannot be accounted for merely in terms of focus: in Martínez Expósito's case, a focus on Spanish literature and culture; in the other cases, a focus on theory itself. The absence cannot be accounted for in terms of focus because the three authors, for all their differences, examine issues of language, power, materiality, and (homo)sexuality¹⁴ that are at the core of many non-Anglophone texts, not only by Perlongher but also by writers such as Manuel Puig, José Joaquín Blanco, Carlos Monsiváis, Pedro Lemebel, María Moreno, Marta Lamas, Roberto Echavarrén, Flavio Rapisardi, and many others. Even though none of these writers is *comfortably* "at home" in queer theory (which, to my eyes, makes their work all the more potentially fruitful for it), all of them grapple with what Perlongher calls the "diversity of desiring drifts" ("Los devenires," *Prosa* 73) and "the order of bodies" ("El orden," *Prosa* 43), a formulation that brings to mind Goytisolo's "the order of meaning"; and all of them question, to varying degrees, both the "nature" and the "norm" of gender and sexuality. If the relative absence of these and other Latin American thinkers and activists from the Anglo-American stage can be attributed to linguistic differences and problems of translation (as well as to the narcissistic provincialism of the "universality" of the English language), the relative absence of these very

same Latin American thinkers and activists from the Spanish stage highlights what otherwise might remain slyly invisible: namely, the extraordinarily powerful machinations of the global market that lead dialogue to flow more easily, more “naturally” and “normally,” along some channels instead of others.

To judge from the published translations, along with their attendant displacements, slips, and “betrayals,” the works of Butler, Sedgwick, Gayle Rubin, Leo Bersani, Michael Warner, and other “stars” of queer theory (some of them decidedly more identified with it than others) have a significance that far surpasses those of Perlongher, which have not been widely translated. Nevertheless, as Daniel Balderston and José Quiroga, two Latin Americanists based in the United States, note in *Sexualidades en disputa* (Sexualities in Dispute) (whose title alludes to the Spanish translation of Butler’s *Gender Trouble: El género en disputa*), the welter of texts, discourses, and theoretical musings on (homo)sexuality produced in Latin America confounds the idea, common in the United States, Great Britain, and apparently Spain, that the two former are the countries in which a critique of gender and sexual normativity was first and most compellingly formulated. According to Balderston and Quiroga:

If Puig’s and Perlongher’s positions at the end of their lives evince a radical questioning of “homosexuality” and “homosexual identity,” it is interesting that it has been precisely in the years after their deaths that a queer thematics began to establish itself in a serious manner, not only in the press, television, and cinema, but also in the academy, where the contributions of queer theory have significantly altered the ways of analyzing cultural production. (78)

Straddling North American and Latin American academic circles, Balderston and Quiroga invoke Puig and Perlongher in the context of an argument about the instability of identity categories in which they also quote Judith Butler. In doing so, they effectively espouse an intersectional perspective (like Romero Bachiller) and suggest that the work of the two Latin American writers precedes and perhaps even “anticipates” the work of Anglo-American critics like Butler.

And yet, even as they remind us that a “queer thematics” was established after the deaths of Puig and Perlongher, Balderston and Quiroga refer to a Latin American “queer or homoerotic tradition” (26) and to a hermeneutical practice “in a queer code” (75) with a matter-of-factness that has little in common with the concerns regarding the deployment of “queer” that have been at the center of the present article. Perhaps the very fact that they work across North American and Latin American contexts allows them to write

with such apparent ease about queer traditions and hermeneutical codes, even as they tend to use “queer,” in contrast to its more capacious renditions, as a virtual synonym for “homosexuality” or “homoeroticism” (a by no means uncommon delimitation). Whatever the status of these traditions and codes, Balderston and Quiroga acknowledge a significant gap between literary and critical production: “it is as if sexualities were the stuff of fiction or poetry, but could never be the stuff of critical writing, research, or teaching” (26). Within such a disjunctive panorama, Balderston and Quiroga do what others, in the grips of a stagnant and patriarchal academic system (but also, in many cases, working in a system of scarce material resources), have not been able or have not wanted to do: to write criticism, conduct research, and teach courses that address questions of (homo)sexuality. Their diagnosis of a “gap” or “lag” between literary creation and critical writing is absolutely correct, provided we understand critical writing as what is produced from within the Academy and provided we discount a gap or disjunction between, on the one hand, a homoerotic, homosexual or even gay tradition and, on the other hand, a queer tradition (though it should be said that the very concept of a queer *tradition* is in some important respects at odds with the rejection of norms and canons that many proponents of queer theory champion). In the light of so many gaps, lags, and disjunctions, the work of Néstor Perlongher is particularly significant, and for the very reason that the Argentine does not mind the gap and cultivates not only poetry and creative chronicles but also theoretically charged critique, an important part of which is his master’s thesis, published in 1987 in Brazil under the title of *O negócio do michê: Prostituição viril em São Paulo* and translated into Spanish in 1999 as *El negocio del deseo* (The Business of Desire, or The Negotiation of Desire).

The substitution of *michê* for *deseo* [desire] in the Spanish translation relates directly to the problem that we have been examining: the relative mobility or immobility of a signifier and the context or contexts in which it arises and gains currency. While *michê* is a category of sexual identity, one of whose effects is the destabilization of identity categories in general (*michês* are “mainly young men who prostitute themselves [with other men] without relinquishing, in the presence of their clients, the gestural and discursive prototypes of masculinity,” *Negocio*, 17), “desire” is a more general category, presumably beyond any specific mark of identity, any localization or personalization. The anthropologist Peter Fry, in his preface to the original version of Perlongher’s study, insists on his personal relation with the author and on “the need for understanding sexuality as a cultural and historical phenomenon. Hence, our infinitely rich plethora of

sexual identities, our men, women, *bichas*, *michês*, *viados*, *travestis*, *sapatões*, *monas*, *ades*, *monocos*, *saboeiras*, and others are not mere translations of homosexuals, heterosexuals, and bisexuals that inhabit Anglo-Saxon lands. They are characters on a stage of meanings that have a history and a logic of their own" (*Negocio*, 12–14). Fry's theatrical rhetoric—"characters," "stage"—is relevant to Perlongher's study, which, in dialogue with Fry, John Rechy, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Severo Sarduy, and others, presents sexuality as a construction, staging, masquerade, or performance years before the advent of queer theory. Theatrical rhetoric, which has proliferated in critical circles to such a degree that the key concept of performativity has at times become hackneyed and banal, here has some rather clear-cut limits: both stages and characters have "a history and a logic" that resist full and final translation or, more ponderously, that resist dematerialized mobilization.

One question that Fry and Perlongher unpack in the aforementioned book—to wit, the proliferation of sexual signs and the challenge of translating them—is staged in the translated title (from Portuguese to Spanish) as an impossibility: in the presence of non-Lusophone readers, desire, an abstract category, assumes the part of the embodied *michê*, erasing him from the cover page. The same does not seem to happen with "queer," which in a growing number of titles remains untranslated, functioning as a foreigner, as Córdoba might put it, but as a foreigner with a passport of privilege, I would add. The difference in the "fortunes" of the two words—and of the material realities to which they refer—is, I submit, symptomatic of a highly uneven global order: "queer," circulating in an Anglophone context, is generalized and globalized, while "michê," circulating in a Lusophone context, remains largely limited to it.

Michael Warner celebrates precisely what he calls "an aggressive impulse of generalization" regarding (the) "queer" because, he contends, it "rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal" (xxvi). Yet that "aggressive impulse in favor of generalization" also describes globalization as Anglo-Americanization, and to such a degree that it is difficult to dispel the suspicion that the generalization of "queer," unlike the particularization of "michê," has something to do with the symbolic and material disparity between the United States, as a neo-imperial power, and Brazil. This is by no means to say that whatever is produced in the United States or under the banner of queer theory pertains to some nebulous imperialist "project" (a broad-brush position rife with prejudice and paranoia), but that true critical internationalization, in contradistinction to consumerist

globalization, remains more utopian than real—even, if not especially, for a concept as putatively capacious as "queer." In Fry's words: "I maintain my position [of locally attentive difference] with difficulty before my opponents, who prefer to believe that gay is "guei" [Spanish phonetics for "gay"] in every place and in every era" (*Negocio*, 14). Something similar, *mutatis mutandis*, could be said about "queer," despite the connotative differences between the two terms and concepts.

My interest in nomenclature, no less than my concern with the dissemination of a "queer" without street and history, is not reducible, as I hope has been clear, to mere philological and formal matters, but is motivated by the complexity of the world and, more specifically, by the work of Perlongher, for whom "the names ... in usage are signs of passage rather than ontological baptisms" ("Avatares," *Prosa*, 47). These names, inoperable in Anglophone contexts and, for that matter, largely inoperable in Hispanic contexts, "are laden with a hint of derogatory carnality: *bicha bofe*, *michê*, *travesti*, *gay*, *boy*, *tía*, *garoto*, *maricona*, *mona*, *oko*, *erê*, *monoko*, *oko mati*, *oko odara*, and their successive combinations and reformulations (a total of 56 nomenclatures in just a few blocks!)" (47). For Perlongher, "these names render the classificatory system so baroque that it becomes possible to associate this inflation of signifiers with the proliferation of divinities that Lyotard, in his *Libidinal Economy*, perceives in the paganism of the Low Roman Empire" (47). Divinities aside, what most interests Perlongher, for whom the "lumpenproletariat" is not a mere afterthought or distraction to an inquiry into interclass dynamics, are the socioeconomic and corporeal materialities of the "boys of the night"—and of the day—who, along with their clients, "negotiate" or engage in the business of sexual desire. Far from being some vaguely universal force, desire, for Perlongher, is also and above all the effect of places, moments, practices, persons, and economies.¹⁵ Like Simon Watney, Jean Genet, Michel Foucault, and other authors who had an impact on his work, Perlongher understands that the marks or names of identity, however prolific or "baroque," are never entirely free from the shadow of juridical, political, and economic control, and that when control becomes too severe, too censorial, as in Argentina in the mid-'70s, they barely manage to circulate at all.¹⁶

I have promised to return to Stonewall, and I now do so, in order to continue to sound out the ties and tensions between identity, language, and power addressed above. For while such primarily Anglo-American signifiers as "gay" and "queer" attest to a certain globalizing monumentalization of desire, some acts or events, most notably the Stonewall raid and revolt, attest to something curiously similar.

Perlongher alludes to Stonewall in several of his texts, almost always in an ambivalent manner, although sometimes quite critically. That said, it is the Chilean Pedro Lemebel who most openly denounces the global monumentalization and mobilization of Stonewall. In one of his "Crónicas de Nueva York" (New York Chronicles), included in the Spanish edition of *Loco afán: Crónicas de sidario* (Crazy Craving: AIDS Chronicles), Lemebel offers an account of his visit to the Stonewall Inn, an establishment that became the stage for acts of apparently spontaneous resistance to the more predictable acts of police repression. Although Lemebel's critique—or burlesque—is marred by inaccuracy (he confuses, for example, the date of the police raid, which happened in 1969, not, as he writes, in 1964) and by a tendency to take literally what he sees during a paid, short-term sojourn in the city (Lemebel is, in his own way, as much a tourist as "the touristic sodomite [who comes] to deposit its floral offering"), his unbridled irreverence for what he calls a "Gay grotto of Lourdes," a "sacred shrine" (70) and a "cathedral of gay pride" (71) is instructive, in the best sense of the word. Through hyperbole, self-commiseration and uncompromising value judgments, which out of context might be hard to distinguish from those of the most bitter of homophobes, Lemebel's chronicle seethes with exasperation towards U.S. models and myths that would impose themselves, around the globe, as all but indispensable to the articulation and defense of alternative sexualities.¹⁷

Shortly after the Stonewall revolt, poet Allen Ginsberg remarked that the rebels were "beautiful" and that they had "lost that wounded look that fags all had 10 years ago" (Truscott, 18). Lemebel, at a distance of thirty years, thousands of kilometers, another language, another economic situation, and—it bears saying—an array of stereotypes and prejudices, feels threatened, even wounded, in the face of "that masculine power that causes you to panic, that belittles you as a Latin mosquito in this barrio of blonde sex" (71). Bitter, personalist, and historically flawed in some of his assertions, Lemebel scoffs at "these militant *gringas*, such devout traders in their political history" (70); rails against a solidarity dictated from the "Empire," and brings to the foreground the enormous material differences between the "muscles and bodybuilders" of Christopher Street (71) and the "malnourishment of a third world queen" (71) like Lemebel himself. Although Lemebel seems to ignore or to silence the fact that queers of color, doubly vulnerable to prejudice and violence, were among the participants in the Stonewall riots, he recognizes that the event's monumentalization has tended to be articulated in terms that in many respects reinforce the self-congratulatory rhetoric of U.S. nationalism, according to which ethnoracial and

sexual difference would be annihilated in the crucible of a transcendent unity.

Confronted with such rhetoric, it is not surprising that Lemebel remains skeptical about other gay symbols *made in the USA*: for instance, the multicolor flag that he sees unfurled throughout the Village, a flag comprising "every color of the gay rainbow. But which is instead really just one: white. Because perhaps gay is white" (71). Or perhaps not; not only does Lemebel appear to ignore, as already noted, that people of color participated in Stonewall, he also fails to note that people of color still frequent some of the few bars that remain on Christopher Street and, for that matter, that by the time Lemebel visited it, Christopher Street itself was no longer what it once was, having suffered reforms impelled by conservative politicians and voracious speculators who dramatically reshaped the neighborhood. It is not surprising, then, that Lemebel does not spend much time there and that he does not notice anything that does not conform to what he expects to see; nor, perhaps, is it surprising that, when faced with a "throne of ... mainly fair-skinned, blonde, and virile" types (72), he resorts to the hackneyed nineteenth-century concept of a "Latin soul" (72) and then skedaddles in "cowboy picture" style (72) in search of something, for him, *less* strange, *more* familiar. In his jaunt through Stonewall and the Village, Lemebel draws on a store of ethno-racial and national clichés with such campy abandon and vitriolic wit that he throws into relief the problematic status of Stonewall as the symbolic center of gay culture internationally. In so doing, he also allows us to see that the more recent queer counterculture, in contrast to which a gay counterculture is recast as assimilationist and conformist (marriage, military service, identity politics), is caught in a similar dynamic of hegemonic monumentalization.

Lemebel has been able to do what Perlongher, who died in 1992, could not do: give testimony to the exhaustion, and tediousness, of an Anglo-American or gringo model of homosexuality in which AIDS goes from spelling the end of all homosexuals to spelling the end of many poor people, regardless of their sexual identity, especially in Africa and Asia. In "La desaparición de la homosexualidad" (The Disappearance of Homosexuality) published in November 1991, just a year before the author's death, Perlongher took issue with "U.S. style gays with up-turned bristly little mustaches who, as paradigms of individualism, fall into the most abject tedium" (*Prosa*, 88–89). It matters little, I would submit, that Perlongher's assessment, or Lemebel's, is shot through with stereotype or that it is "fair" or "unfair" or that it corresponds or not to certain regional or national understandings of "historical truth." What matters,

instead, is the fatigue, the melancholy, the ridicule, the disgust, and the simmering rage that both writers express with respect to the presumptive international validity and efficacy of models, signs, and symbols generated in the United States in particular and the Anglophone world more generally, something that many theorists, writers, and activists might do well to take into account before asserting, or subscribing to, the “inextinguishable” significance or the radically anti-identitarian power of the “queer” the world over. It is as important as it is a difficult lesson, if such it may be called, because the images that the Southern eyes of Perlongher, Lemebel, and others reflect are neither “comfortably” gay nor “uncomfortably” queer, and the languages that they use—Spanish and Portuguese—maintain a relation of “strangeness” with the major language of the North, English, despite their shared Western provenance. Then again, given the contestatory premium placed on strangeness in queer theory, and on “extrañeza” and “extrañamiento” in *la teoría queer*, there is nothing “wrong”—indeed, quite the contrary—in considering another language strange. Indeed, it is just this *other* sense of strangeness, experienced from outside a primarily Anglo-American sphere and articulated in a language that is not English, that might reinvigorate, by complicating and even confounding, queer theory, especially any mode of it that takes the international implications of its linguistic status for granted.

Strangeness: Lemebel, escorted by his hosts to Stonewall, ends up fleeing to some Latino “corner [of New York] where he [does not] feel so strange” (72), but Perlongher, facing death, seems to abandon all hope of finding a place that does not entail his getting outside himself by way of an ecstatic practice that would take him to a “non-place” that bears the traces of 1960s and ’70s communal utopias, a sort of “concrete communism... scattered throughout urban centers” (“La religion,” *Prosa*, 168). Lemebel, on the other hand, does not speak—not here, at least—either of quitting sex or of abandoning the personal body or of getting outside himself (only about leaving Stonewall and the Village); his discourse no less than his life belong, after all, to a different historical moment, beyond the “gay” and, in some important senses, beyond the “queer,” a moment when U.S. models, myths, and protocols are as insistent as they are ineffective in their pretensions to global radicality. Perlongher, for his part, did not live to witness the cleavage of “gay” by means of the radical resignification of “queer,” a process that finds its most urgent motivation in the AIDS crisis and that entails the resurgence of a more politically and economically engaged activism that is more attentive to ethnic, racial, and national differences and that is, at least in principle, more interested in fostering greater solidarity

with queens and other “undesirable” or “unassimilable” subjects than it is in normalization.

It is also true that Perlongher did not live to witness the canonization, institutionalization, commercialization, glamorization, and exhaustion that have come to shadow a not insignificant portion of queer radicality. Nor did he live to read conservative gay critic Andrew Sullivan’s triumphantly reassuring declaration, rife with unexamined privilege and material comfort, that the “plague” had ended. He did not live to witness, to read, to experience any of this, and died, as so many others died, at a moment when the “plague” seemed unending and when the disappearance of homosexuality about which Perlongher so eloquently wrote rang in ways at once literal (corporeal death) and figurative (growing assimilation into a public sphere dominated by country and family values, marriage and military service). It is with just these twists and turns of history in mind that Gabriel Giorgi so perceptively remarks that: “within gay culture and its politics of visibility and assimilation, Perlongher’s queens... are transformed into archaic figures, in a farewell stance, to be replaced by the more masculine, civil, dignified, and normalized version of ‘gay.’ AIDS, for its part, literalizes this disappearance, turning the queen into a select victim” (154). And also: “[Perlongher’s] writing at times perceives itself as anachronistic and residual in the context of ‘homosexuality disappearance’” (154).

Self-consciously anachronistic, Perlongher’s writing is also unconsciously farsighted, anticipating, as I have been arguing, a wide array of formulations, procedures, and positions in Anglo-American queer theory. His emphasis on drift, inter-relationality, theatricality, and fragmentation; his defense of anti-normative and anti-assimilatory practices and experiences; his *ambivalent* critique of identity as the alpha and omega of political activity; his repudiation of reductionisms and totalizations in the realm of gender, sexuality, and politics: all this—and no doubt more—signals an affinity between Perlongher’s work and queer theory. An affinity, and yet also a difference: for Perlongher insists on the interplays of desire, economy, and violence (the violence of AIDS definitely included) and on the heterogeneity of a sexuality that outstrips monikers like “homosexual” or “gay” or, had he lived to see it circulate globally, “queer.” It is not a coincidence that he was both a poet and an anthropologist, and that he advocated a baroque and muddy appreciation of words and things,¹⁶ places and people, and a direct and sometimes dangerous contact with the street, factors that could productively supplement the more philosophically and textually mediated work of Judith Butler and other Anglophone theorists and activists.

Productive supplements, convergences, and divergences, challenges, promises, and pitfalls: to strive to open, “estrangle,” erase, and name the queer with other names that are not “queer” so that it pays more attention to works in other languages, to lives in other parts of the world, and to practices resistant to metropolitan theorization is not an easy task nor is it without problems. But to strive to have “queer” ring true for everyone the world over, to proclaim it to be inextinguishable, to leave it untranslated, to monumentalize, fetishize, and entrench it, is more problematic still. In many respects what Mexican feminist Marta Lamas says about “gender” and how its “fetishized use” can contribute to a “simplification of human conflicts” (181) holds for “queer”:

To formulate new categories in order to rethink our culture and our epistemological tradition requires a dialectical give-and-take: positing, contrasting, redefining. Accordingly, it is indispensable, above all else, to think more critically about the conceptual tools that we use. Thus, the need to take gender as a starting point rather than an end point in an increasingly necessary reflection on the human sexual condition that integrates the body, the unconscious, and the productive mind of culture (182).

If “gender,” as term and concept, has generated critical enthusiasms and suspicions, it is little wonder that “queer,” more given to “strangeness” and more openly political, has also generated enthusiasms and suspicions. Lacking, unlike “gender,” a cognate or “false friend” in Spanish and Portuguese (and so many other languages), the much-vaunted strangeness of “queer” is considerably greater in non-Anglophone contexts and is still largely limited to academic and activist milieus. Hence, the importance of continually querying “queer,” of disrupting, on its behalf, its conceptual, cultural, political, and linguistic sway. Far from simply endorsing or rejecting the diverse body of thought known—and unknown—as queer theory and *la teoría queer*, the time has come, as many of its more cunning practitioners recognize, to shuffle it into other contributions, other languages, other trajectories, among which those of so compelling a thinker, writer, and activist as Néstor Perlongher. ✱

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- 1- *Revista Iberoamericana* LXXIV, no. 225 (October–December 2008): 897–920. A first and more extended version of this article was published in *Debate Feminista* 18.36 (2007): 219–272. In that article, Judith Butler’s insistence on the temporality of the term “queer” is critically supplemented with an inquiry into the spatiality—or, more precisely, the geopolitical implications—of the term, including the places and plays of language. The present article, published in *Revista Iberoamericana*, was translated by Tamara Manzo from the Spanish original and revised by the author.
- 2- I quote the text as it appears in *Prosa plebeya* [*Plebeian Prose*], with the verb “to abandon” in the first person plural of the indicative. Nevertheless, the tone of the text appears to be more imperative than declarative; indeed, Balderston and Quiroga quote the very same passage, but they change—dare I say correct?—the verb to the imperative: “*Abandonemos el cuerpo personal*” [Let us abandon the personal body] (78).
- 3- For a more detailed reading of Perlongher’s essayistic work, see my “La ética de la promiscuidad: Reflexiones en torno a Néstor Perlongher” [The Ethics of Promiscuity: Reflections on Néstor Perlongher].
- 4- I would like to thank Nelly Richard for introducing me to Perlongher’s work, and Raquel Olea, Carmen Berenguer, Pancho Casas, Pedro Lemebe, Adrián Canghi, Roberto Echavarren, and María Moreno for providing me with more information, both personal and critical, about the poet, thinker, and activist.
- 5- “Dildo” is a word celebrated by Beatriz Preciado; “cock ring” is a word that is familiar in certain gay venues in Spain and Latin America; “bullying” also rings in the sexual sphere, as the title of a recent book by Raquel Platero and Emilio Gómez makes clear: *Herramientas para combatir el bullying homofóbico* (Tools to Combat Homophobic Bullying). Of the aforementioned terms, only “iceberg,” “airbag,” “lifting,” “closet” (or rather, “clóset”) and “gay” have been accepted by the Royal Spanish Academy (Real Academia Española or RAE) and are of more or less common usage. The overwhelmingly male institution that is the RAE has explicitly refused to admit “género” in the sense of “gender,” even though the word is by now widely used in the press, politics, and popular culture; there is no evidence that “queer” is even under discussion.
- 6- Judith Butler, wrongly criticized for having fostered a utopian, voluntaristic vision of the world in the name of the “queer,” asks if there is “a way to think about the constraints on and in resignification that takes account of its propensity to return to the ‘ever old’ in the relations of social power” (*Bodies* 224). Butler recognizes that “[n]either power nor discourse are rendered anew at every moment; they are not as weightless as the utopics of radical resignification might imply” (*Bodies* 224).
- 7- Beatriz Preciado, whose *Manifiesto contrasexual* (Counter-Sexual Manifesto) caused a commotion in some Spanish-speaking circles, almost exclusively adduces in “Género y performance” (Gender and Performance) Anglo-American texts and contexts and implicitly seems to endorse Eleanor Antin’s assertion that “it was the women from South California who invented *performance*” (6). The tendency to speak in terms of “inventions” and to bind them to certain places, normally in the so-called first world (and, more particularly still, in the Anglophone and Francophone spheres), calls for critical examination. Another obstacle to the “generalization,” let alone internationalization, of *la teoría torcida* or “twisted theory” is related to the term “torcido” itself, which captures part of the etymology of “queer,” but which is not deployed in a colloquial manner in Spanish as a contemptuous epithet. Simply put, virtually no one denigrates or accosts—or celebrates—anyone with the term “torcido” or “torcida.” The word “raro,” meaning “odd,” “strange,” or indeed “queer” (and a “false friend” of “rare”), is, however, another matter, for queer people have been, and con-

- tinue to be, designated throughout the Spanish-speaking world as "raro." See, for instance, Chilean journalist Óscar Contardo's recently published *Raro: Una historia gay de Chile*.
- 8- "Entender," which means "to understand" in Spanish, also means, at least in Spain, something like "to be in the know" or "to be gay."
 - 9- Although it is open for discussion to what extent Perlongher's work and queer theory converge and diverge, in no way could Perlongher have been "troubled" or "annoyed" (*contrariado*) by what Gundermann calls the "de-materializations of queer studies, cause of the 'disappearance' of homosexuality" (Gundermann 147, emphasis added). The "disappearance" of homosexuality about which Perlongher so passionately and perceptively wrote arises from multiple factors, among which the relative success of models of gay assimilation and the disaster of AIDS. The "queer" was formulated and mobilized as an academic formation only *after* Perlongher's death (and those of so many others) in response to the same assimilationist and consumerist models that Perlongher criticized and, much more somberly, in response to the symbolic and material challenges of HIV-AIDS. The fact that a not insignificant part of the radical queer proposal has been co-opted by consumerism and by such ultimately assimilationist objectives as marriage and military service does not justify the lack of historical rigor or the totalizing will that permeate Gundermann's article, whose queer bibliography is limited to Earl Jackson's study on Pedro Almodóvar's cinema and a couple of references to Silvia Molloy and Leo Bersani. Even Marxist critic Donald Morton, from whose astute and polemical "Pataphysics of the Closet" Gundermann derives many of his most convincing arguments, indicates that his criticisms are motivated by "the dominant Queer Theory" (53), thereby implicitly recognizing the existence of major and minor trends (among the later, the historical-materialistic contributions of Morton himself). In any case, many of the "stars" of queer theory that Gundermann pillories are far from being as self-indulgent and indifferent to material culture and its radical transformation as he portrays them; indeed, some of them have even been critical of Queer Nation, one of the most radical organizations of queer activism, about which Gundermann says nothing. Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, for instance, state that *Queer Nation* did not succeed in overcoming "the fantasies of glamour and of homogeneity that characterize American [sic] nationalism itself" (215).
 - 10- The term "homosexual" and its slightly younger brother "heterosexual," (the norm being articulated as an afterthought to the "deviation") were coined at the end of the nineteenth century. As David Halperin notes, Havelock Ellis ridiculed the newly minted "homosexuality" as a "bastard hybrid" composed of Greek and Latin (quoted by Halperin, 485, n. 11).
 - 11- Sedgwick's remarks are worth quoting in their entirety: "In the short-shelf-life American marketplace of images, maybe the queer moment, if it's here today, will for that very reason be gone tomorrow. But I mean the essays collected in this book (*Tendencies*) to make, cumulatively, stubbornly, a counterclaim against that obsolescence: a claim that something about queer is inextinguishable" (xii). The voluntaristic stubbornness of Sedgwick's statement of principles is one of the subjects of my "El peso de la lengua y el fetiche de la fluidez" (*The Weight of Language and the Fetish of Fluidity*) and "The Fetish of Fluidity."
 - 12- This is not to say that Latin American countries were the first to produce such theorizations, but simply that in a diversity of countries, languages, and situations, an array of compelling lines of critique have been elaborated, which anyone seriously interested in queer theory, or gender and sexuality studies more generally, might do well to take into consideration.
 - 13- Romero Bachiller promotes an "intersectional perspective that does not understand different differences as an aggregate of identities or as a fragmentation, but rather as something that updates, in each practice, belongings and exclusions in diverse contexts; a perspective that is able to respond to people whose solidarities with diverse collectives are often contradictory" (162). In a related vein, famed Mexican critic Carlos Monsiváis refers to a "logic of concealment: what is not named does not exist" (12). Concealment and invisibility can be also, of course, the effects of the historical amnesia and presentism that mark consumerist societies in the age of globalization. Working against dehistoricization, Cleminson and Vázquez García, in their finely researched book *Los Invisibles* [*The Invisible*], retrace the history of male homosexuality in Spain (with, it must be said, only passing reference to Latin America) and recuperate a wide range of materials published between 1850 and 1939.
 - 14- The nuanced attention that Perlongher pays to the political situation in Argentina and, more extensively, to the streets of São Paulo in the early 1980s distinguishes his work from that of French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose influence on Perlongher's work ranges from the idea of "man's becoming woman" (which is what is killed, according to Perlongher, when a faggot is murdered, *Prosa plebeyas*, 40) to the deterritorializations and reterritorializations, the flows and cuts, the nomadic flights and wanderings, the nets and rhizomes that inflect Perlongher's critical and theoretical work. Although Perlongher later came to express disappointment—and even worse—with the two *maîtres à penser*, Deleuze and Guattari's work, as general and speculative as it is, helped him to account for important aspects of contemporary sexual practices and politics in Argentina and Brazil, the two countries in which he spent most of his life. Juggling theoretical abstraction and material precision, Perlongher formulated—once again, *before* the advent of queer theory—an understanding of gender and sexuality as shifting intensities rather than stable identities, as masquerades and performances rather than natures, souls, or essences.
 - 15- In an essay from 1985 on the history of the Homosexual Liberation Front (Frente de Liberación Homosexual or FLH) in Argentina, Perlongher writes: "insofar as concrete results are concerned, the experience of the Argentine FLH constitutes, by all accounts, a failure. It did not manage to implant a single one of its key ideas, nor to interpret any significant part of the problem of sexual repression, nor to raise the consciousness of the Argentine gay community" (*Prosa plebeya*, 83).
 - 16- When speaking about the "fascist brutality" of the "leather boys with their motorcycles, mustaches, chaps, [and] combat boots" (71), Lemebel's chronicle recalls, no doubt in spite of itself, homophobic texts from other leftist thinkers like Wilhelm Reich and Theodor Adorno.
 - 17- Perlongher reworks the neo-Baroque or "neobarroco" as the "neobarroso," which means something like the "newly muddy," in reference to the muddy waters of the River Plate into which members of Argentina's military threw any number of people deemed to be "dissident" or "subversive."

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M.O.M. (milk of mediocrity)
Soft pastels on paper
RichHard MendTorr, 2011



Shinderei Der Sachlichkeit
Oil on canvas



Amistad Autentica
Oil on canvas
RicHard MendTorr, 2007

Paramnesia

Mathias Kryger

I have done this says my memory. I cannot have done that, says my pride, and insists upon it. At last it is the memory that gives way.

— Nietzsche



Copenhagen rooftop. Photo by Lasse Lau.

Copenhagen in 2006 is not Copenhagen in 2012—or in a way they are one and the same. The streets still bear the same names, water still runs in the harbour, the bridges still connect the different neighbourhoods that are again still connected to feet walking the sidewalks and crossing streets in a relatively orderly fashion. On Sunday morning most bicycles are still parked where they were left Saturday night. The trees shed their leaves after another halfhearted summer.

Governments change, the mountains of money crumble, the moon mirrors the earth, and it is in language that the small changes form and can be detected. *Not Gay as in Happy but Queer as in Fuck You* is now the slogan

of a Thursday night homo club whose organizers seem Teflon clad and unimpressed by a wish for actual political change—sponsors rule—the hipster is king, revolutionaries fall.

Lasse Lau organized the first Queer Geography workshop in 2006 to coincide with the first Copenhagen Queer Festival. The Queer Festival has since that year been held every summer, for one week, becoming an almost mandatory stop for the Queer Festival tourists travelling through Europe from one festival to the next and earning popularity, or at least a reputation for a quality celebration of alternative life and a space for criticality and political energy for the local queer, gay, bi, and trans communities. To remember the Queer Geography workshop in Copenhagen is therefore also to remember the first Copenhagen Queer Festival.

I remember that the sun was shining a lot. The group of researchers and geographers was of a flexible size, a membrane that expanded and shrank in a structure that was open in organization and curious and inclusive in shape. The intensity of the sun combined with the other activities of the festival all had an influence on the size of the group, but also the type of activities being performed. However, the three-day-long workshop consisted of a structural cadence going from research, discussion, mapping on paper, categorizing different types of spaces, writing down our ideas about the condition of these spaces, and field trips. If the research was the verse, the field trips were the chorus; they were popular and a lot of people came along for those.

One trip was done in three rental cars plus some privately owned vehicles that participants had borrowed from friends. In Copenhagen, it is quite rare to own a car. Most people get around on bikes or they use the public transportation system or walk, so driving around in Copenhagen in a car always brings a feeling of exclusivity or excess, and in this case it was a very social experience, six people being crammed into a four-seater car.

In the process of mapping we categorized a range of spaces of different sensibilities and social realities. They were:

Liminal spaces: One of the spaces of liminality was an area around the rather centrally located H. C. Ørsted Power Plant. Here, a deserted square of walls with

no ceiling was, and still is, used as a space for graffiti artists and others to hang out and paint. The space has its own set of logics and is being accepted by the authorities of the city.

Sexualized places: We mapped the cruising areas of the city, primarily male dominated, and visited Amager Fælled, a vast area that used to be military grounds but is now a nature preserve south of the city and an active hangout for locals and tourists looking for naked outdoor activities. Because of the size of the area and the flatness of the landscape with no apparent landmarks, it is an area that takes some introduction or some extensive exploring. Going there in the group, we were aware of our own position as “tourists” and agreed not to stray off the main paths, unless we wanted to actually engage in the sexually oriented actions.

Counterpolitical spaces: Finding directly counterpolitical spaces in Copenhagen was not easy. We found that this type of space is, typically, in an oppositional relationship with the capitalized space of the cities in the Western world. We mapped down Ungdomshuset (the Youth House) and Fristaden Christiania (the Free State of Christiania). The two sites are quite interesting. Both places had been under constant pressure since the right-wing government

won power in 2001. Because of legal pressure and intensified drug-trade-related gang violence (resulting from the police’s hardliner approach and closure of Pusher Street?) Christiania’s existence was threatened.

Ungdomshuset was under even more pressure and was violently cleared after the municipality failed to save the place after selling the historical building (the building is connected to the left wing and worker’s unions; Rosa Luxemburg once spoke there) to a right-wing extremist religious movement that saw it as their God-given task to demolish the place. It was later the same year, 2006, that Ungdomshuset was cleared and the building disappeared, leaving an empty lot on Jagtvej 69, still not developed and a constant reminder of regulation, power, and the lack of support for alternative and user-driven initiatives. The gap where number 69 used to be is like a missing tooth in the mouth of the city. Absence is a stronger monument.

Poetic plateaux: We found it important to put poetic and nonhierarchical spaces to the fore of the research, and a Deleuzian spirit informed the terminology. Like a lot of the other space categories, the poetic plateau contains a potential of otherness. It can be seen as an escape from the spaces of everyday life, and is potentially an open space where the conquering and



Area around H.C. Ørsted Power Plant. Photo by Linda Hilfling.

defining of the space is not necessarily a struggle, but a personal action. The word *poetic* refers to the personal action of defining and redefining the space in accordance with whichever sensibility is present in that given moment. I invited the workshop group to my rooftop—a sanctuary for me at that time.

Off(ice) territory: Playing with the words *off* and *office*, the category points towards those highly developed areas in the city that are off-limits office-domicile areas. The notion of *off* refers to the fact that the architecture and public space around it is designed deliberately to control the uses of the space even though it is essentially a public space. Imported granite seems to be a favourite material for this type of space. There is one square that comes to mind, one that is not mentioned in my notes from the workshop. Imagine a tall building. I am not sure how many stories high it is, in fact, but it is tall. It is positioned on a corner with streets on two sides. In the building a security company resides—it is an abstract entity—how much space does it take, you might wonder. On the relatively large square in front of the building, tons of granite blocks form a jigsaw puzzle, a miniature landscape of the world after the apocalypse: deserted and rugged with a gigantic alien structure (1990s postmodernist sculpture) in the middle but somewhat to the side. There is something about the positioning of that building and its surroundings that forms an ideal condition for storms. Coats, umbrellas, and caps all fly around this corner. The postapocalyptic winds of unpredictable dangers are drawing you toward the doors of the insurance domicile.

Superpowered spaces: The superpowered space is controlled deliberately to prevent certain actions. When arriving by train to Copenhagen, getting off at Hovedbanegården, the Central Station, and leaving from the back entrance, you will experience loud, scratchy-sounding classical music playing. At first it might appear innocent and maybe even funny, but like a stone in the shoe it starts bugging you without you knowing it. The music is a spatial strategy of irritation to prevent loitering and drug dealing around the station. Nobody can stand the sound and nobody can really communicate in a space filled with deliberate disturbance like that.

Copenhagen continues to grow in population, and with it are growing the developed areas for housing. It is easy to paint a simple picture of what Copenhagen was like in the summer of 2006. Everything changed it seems, and memory is distorted.

In the work *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, the inventor of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, writes about remembering and forgetting and about why

our memories can sometimes prove deceptive. What does remain from this process of recollecting the spirit of and the work with the workshop group in Copenhagen is a feeling of urgency. The research, the mapping and the discussions formed a feeling of agency. Being part of the Queer Festival seemed like a perfect situation for this feeling of agency: We supplied a level of discourse and research, others made the food and yet others performed in their band or performance group. Sometimes we did all three things simultaneously. If there was an urgency and if what we performed reflects agency—I don't know. And if categorizing space is necessary to understand space and life lived in the spaces. Maybe it is reproducing fixed positions and understandings



Area around H.C. Ørsted Power Plant. Photo by Flo Maak.

of ourselves. However, the sensory memories I have from those days stay with me as something beautiful and meaningful: On the roof, shoulders pressed against shoulders in a car, jumping into the harbour with a group of people I'd never met before, talking with Lasse about therapy on the beach and sharing a falafel with somebody whose name escaped my memory. It made me understand my city better. ✨



Departing from radical feminist philosopher and sex worker Valerie Solanas's SCUM Manifesto, Line S. Karlström has written a speech of sorts. The speech was read out loud at nine public locations in Copenhagen, including in front of the Danish Parliament and the statue of the Little Mermaid, in order to investigate whether life in Denmark is "an utter bore and no aspect of society is at all relevant to women."





I Am the Only One Here, Who Is Not Insane
Performance
Line Lee Skywalker Karlström, 2010





How Does One Stop Being a Gay and Start Becoming a Faggot?¹

Question: What is a gay?

A gay is an entertainer for heterosexuals. Witness: the word *gay* means happy. Happy means funny. A gay spreads happiness and laughter and is like a little bird. A gay is like a flower about which in passing you marvel and say: Oh, THIS is beautiful, and you think you love it but once you have passed it, you have already forgotten it. Later MAYBE you think about it again, but you can no longer tell the memory of the one flowergay from the next.Gay means glad, not mad, not bad, not sad.....

A gay is someone who is always happy. If you hit him with a stone, he will appreciate the attention. This is why we use the colors of the rainbow as our symbol. Gay means: NO RAIN, NO RAINBOW.

A gay is a princess, he's not supposed to move. He's not supposed to think. No brain, no gain. No brain, no gay move. One who does not move or think can be funny and pretty and rich, but never dangerous or threatening. A gay is undangerous. The word *game*—from *gaime* and *GAYme*—means for fun, not for real, fake, by the rules and codes of a fatherboard and motherboard.

Question: Is it better to be a faggot than a gay?

If you like to be undangerously funny and like to be among the living dead and rejected by society, you should just go on being a gay. Witness: the word *faggot* is from a lexicographical perspective derogatory, and so by common perception it seems worse to be a faggot than a gay. But since gay is not bad, but glad, it is good. And more good is better. *Gay* is a one-syllable word and *faggot* is two, so *faggot* is twice as good. Also $3 + 3 = 6$, which is twice as much as 3, and sex is a powerful force, twice as powerful as the holy trinity, pater, fili, spiritus sanctus. This is why religion is young, when sex is old. A faggot is more powerful than a gay. A gay is a homosexual who embraces their sexual identity with colors and smiles. Faggots seek not just a passive treatment but to address the subtle.

A faggot is a bundle of sticks held together by a rope. Each stick can provide a blow but not break. Each stick is on fire and strikes a match to the underground. Witness: the word *faggot* is almost 300 years old, and the reason why it is used for faggots today is because 300 years ago faggots were burned on fires made of faggots, for being faggots. A faggot is beautiful in every single way. Words can't bring him down. A faggot can light up the street with fire. So when you say you are a faggot, you say you are LIT. The faggot race comes from the planet LI, which is the sound of drops. That is: drops of gasoline. The people of LI are also called LIVE-S. The word *faggot* is a 243-letter word. Don't try and understand, just accept this.

Question: How does one stop being a gay and start becoming a faggot?

By the simple act of studying and understanding true life-giving wisdom. And also being able to prove by knowledge of your history and the history of other deviants that the true identity of the faggot is Lucifer because the world belongs to Satan and if you can prove by WISDOM rather than arrogance and bitchy punch lines toward others that THE FAGGOT IS LUCIFER you will automatically be respected (feared) by the world, for although the world may seem to hate Satan, yet it secretly admires him. The knowledge of the true and living wisdom and the truth can save the world. The truth is this: faggot is real, faggot is better. Everything else is at the doors of permanent distraction.

Question: What is a couple?

A couple is a group of two or more people with unlimited solidarity and protection for each other. This does not mean unlimi-tied in time, but in intensity and form. It is an unstable outcome of lonely people finding connection. A couple is a life form with only half the intelligence of the most intelligent individual in it. It is two people melting together, a distributed nervous system. A couple is usually two of the same thing, so it is always homo. *Homo* means the same. *Hetero* means something different. Heterosexuals can never make couples. It can be two people who have been falling in love. Or shorter: failing in love.

A couple is a unit or a formation in the shape of a star. Like three animals on the savannah with their backs to each other when big cats are attacking them, paws clenched in fists. A couple is an organization of individuals sharing a common economy, goal, and happiness. A couple is an event in the transformation of a person from a gay into a faggot. The gay is defenseless and without pride. Gay and proud is not possible. Gay means glad, glad is not proud. The faggot is alone. The couple is the fusion of pride and togetherness. Being a couple is a bridge.

Question: Who will inherit the earth, the faggots or the heterosexuals?

None of them will inherit the earth. What is most constructive is openness toward individuality and diversity. This is one of the many social implications of anarchy. Anarchy and revolution isn't lived in some imaginary future that may never come. Anarchy and revolution is lived in the now, and comes about with the choice to be free. Whether we want it to or not.

The heterosexuals will be sent a teacher from the planet LI, the sound of drops. That is: drops of gasoline. This teacher will be the third and last. The heterosexuals have already rejected two faggot

teachers and this will be their last chance to not be destroyed. But eventually what will probably happen is the heterosexuals will reject the final teacher and be destroyed. Then the faggots will spread out like leaves in the wind. And the women will inherit the earth because in the long run, the women are the most sustainable humans. The teacher is also a woman and if the heterosexuals reject her, she will be sent to Russia and Russia will be the center of the new woman-faggot-world. The heterosexuals will no longer be the center of the universe. But in the end the faggot lions and animals and fish will inherit the planet with flowerless plants. Mutants will inherit the earth. New species will evolve. Eventually, all lines will be blurry.

Question: When will this happen?

The revolution is already happening. Heterosexuals are anachronisms that evolution keeps around because they breed. It is only a question of time before the faggot supersoldier also becomes a baby machine and the faggot battle repertoire is totally superior. However, the heterosexuals have 18 more months. After that we will have to be real faggots and stop using hypocritical gay lip service against the true wisdom of faggotry. This is the final warning before the faggot revolution.

Mads Ananda + Queer Jihad + Friends + queerjihad.dk + almindelig.com

1- Inspired by a text by Sun Ra with the phrase "How Does One Stop Being a Negro and Start Becoming a Nigger?"



How Does One Stop Being a Gay and Start Becoming a Faggot
Poetry
Mads Ananda Lodahl, Queer Jihad and friends, 2011

Queer Mobsites—Queer Mobile Computing

Interaction designers work with high-tech digital material. From a queer-theoretical perspective inspired by poststructuralism, I see technology as a construction, which means that technological development and construction of the concept itself has taken place in a web of relations of power. To me this also means that technology cannot be talked about as a neutral material, but rather technology must be seen as value-loaded.

The very first idea was to design a concept whereby queers could tag places and read other people's tags with their mobile phones or other mobile computers. The tags were to be placeable with the accuracy of a few meters and should contain text, pictures, sound,

and video, and the user should be able to navigate according to distance, position, other users, and themes. When a Queer Tag was near, users received an alert on their mobile phone. Then the user would typically tag the place where he/she was.

In talking to potential users about my first idea, I was rather early on made aware that it could be relevant to use a mobile system not only for stories and comments but also for a more direct communication about what happens here and now.

Tine is walking by the Nikolaj Church and feels her phone vibrate. She sees that one of her favourite taggers has made a tag by the church. The tag is about an exhibition in the exhibition building a couple of years ago by Kutlug Atamen, which



Queer Mobsites
Mobile computing
Lene Leth Rasmussen, 2006

among other things showed some films with Turkish transvestites. There is a little information about the exhibition and Ataman and a couple of stills from the films and a film clip. Tine bookmarks the tag as she wants to receive more tags of a similar kind. She also bookmarks the link to Ataman's website in order to look more closely at it later. She thinks of another homo-related exhibition that was shown in the church and she records a little about it using her phone and tags the place.

Queer Mobsites are little websites, which can be seen by most mobile phones. They resemble a profile on a contact or dating site as the individual user or group of users can use a Queer Mobsite to introduce themselves or to communicate with other users. It differs from these sites by not being placed on the same server and not being centrally controlled, as for instance contact websites are controlled by a firm; on the contrary, it is freeware that can be downloaded and installed by the individual user, who thereby decides the content. In this way, they resemble personal websites or weblogs and emails or text messages. However, in order to make it easier for some users, a company can offer *Queer Mobsites* which must not be downloaded and installed, but the legal responsibility and thereby also the freedom to decide the norms on a Queer Mobsite lies with the user.

Apart from the "ordinary" message function, *Queer Mobsites* also have a more queer-specific function and that is that the user can "occupy queer spaces." With *Queer Mobsites*, queers with mobile phones can communicate with other queers, and can find and occupy "queer spaces" where they can meet spontaneously and socialize. This is obviously a symbolic action, but at the same time it is a real invitation to other queers to meet at the place and thereby in actual fact queerify it.

Queer Mobsites utilize the special qualities of the mobile phone; it is carried everywhere, is always on, and does not demand constant attention from the user; however, it can attract attention using sound and vibration. These qualities make it possible for communication through *Queer Mobsites* to be of more current interest as regards time and place than via Internet on a computer.

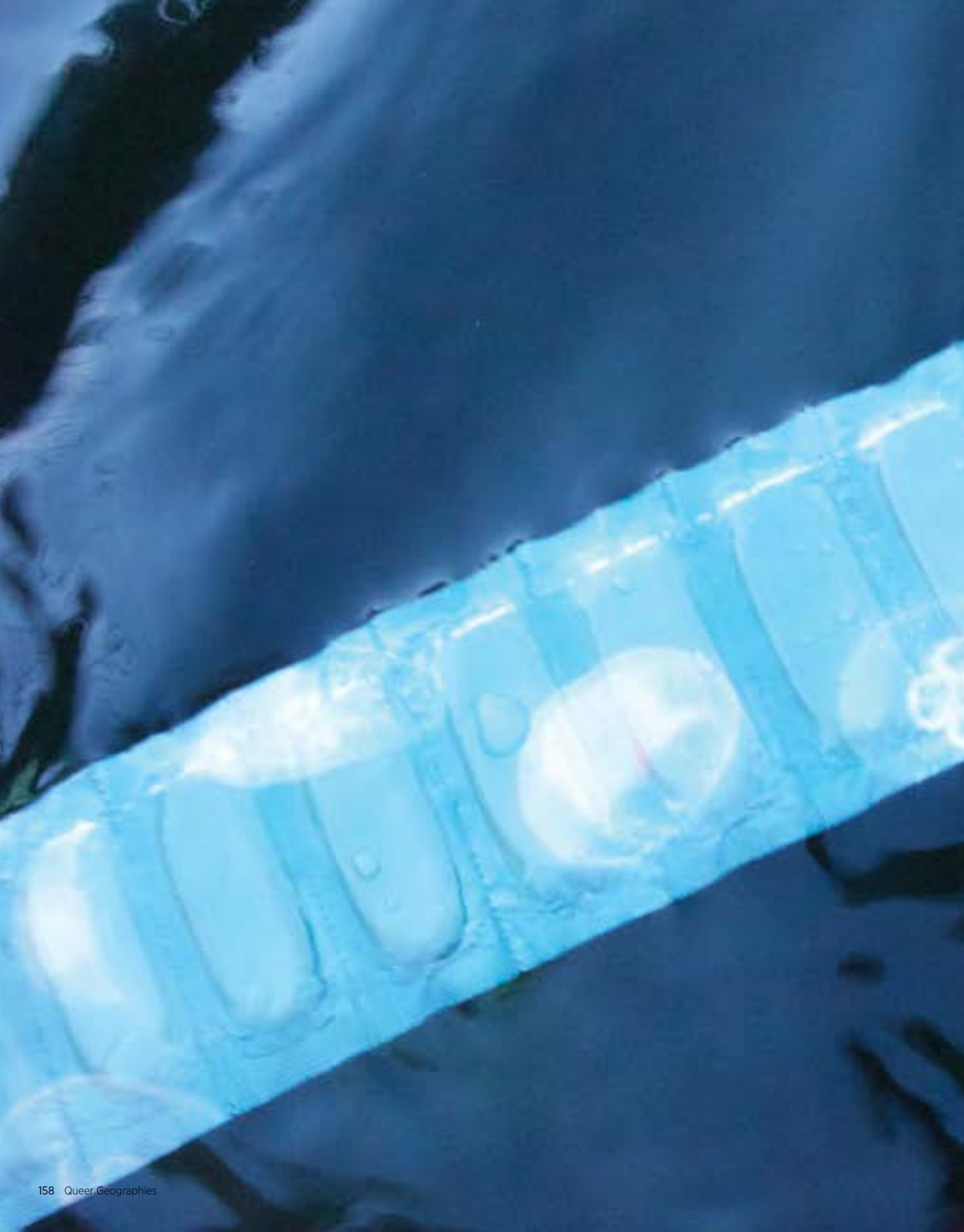
As mentioned *Queer Mobsites* is freeware. A user or a user group can download the files to a Queer Mobsite for free, and anyone can freely distribute *Queer Mobsites*.

Websites for mobile phones is a relatively new concept and can therefore be difficult to understand and use, which is why *Queer Mobsites* uses a message metaphor inspired from the well-known text message.

Moreover, the use of messages as a platform makes it possible to dynamically create web pages consisting of various combinations of messages.

Prototype and concept by Lene Leth Rasmussen. MA Interaction Design. Project at K3. Malmö Högskola. 2006.







The package design for these free giveaway condoms is made by the Danish artist and designer Lars Christian Rank. He was commissioned to design the condoms by the city of Copenhagen in 2003 and they have been a discreet part of the sexscape of Copenhagen ever since (free condoms are distributed at all gay bars, sex clubs, and other venues expected to be frequented by men who enjoy sex with other men). Discreet because the design almost subconsciously references a parade of signifiers that the sexcrazed, cockhungry gay bar visitor probably does not grasp immediately:

The image printed on the condom packaging is of jellyfish.

The jellyfish exists beyond the borders and trivialities of bones, lungs, gills, and eyesight. It is called the Immortal Species—having existed on the planet for more than 500 million years (the oldest known multiorgan species). It is a mysterious animal, existing without a central nervous system and with no brain, but still with the ability to monitor salinity to avoid freshwater (and it responds to ebb and flow in a way that suggests a strong connection to some sort of cognitive experience). Some jellyfish glow because of a green fluorescent protein, a protein that can be used as a fluorescent marker of genes inserted into other cells or organisms (used in the research of feline AIDS, producing glow-in-the-dark cats). What one could immediately grasp when touching a packed condom is, how the lubricated rubber in its plastic wrapping feels not unlike a jellyfish. The connection between the sensory experience of the package and the jellyfish image creates a brain loop that continues from the central nervous system of the human into the bedroom: once used, the condom is abject, a dead animal or a cut-off body part, a container for a salty ocean of sperm.

To this day young boys pack jellyfish in their back pockets, and leave them in windowsills of rooms of one-night stands.

Night Swimming
Condoms

Lars Christian Rank, 2003. Photo by Bunnylau.



Installation by Lasse Lau. Photos courtesy of the artist.

Botanical Backlash

Lasse Lau and a Project about Cruising in a Copenhagen Park

Mathias Kryger

At one point, I saw an exhibition of works by Nordic artists who were all living in Berlin. It was called *Going South*. The Danish artist Lasse Lau's contribution included suitcases and furniture, assembled in a moving load. He was in the process of leaving Berlin—or, perhaps, he had already left for New York and was only waiting for his belongings to follow. Upon seeing a copy of *Butt Magazine* sitting atop one of the suitcases, my “gaydar” alerted me and I, too, wanted to pack my bags and transport myself, along with the load, to New York.

Parts of this text have been recycled; they are derived from my final thesis for the University of Copenhagen entitled *Let's Go OUTSIDE!—Queer Strategies and Performativity in Contemporary Art in Public Space* in which pieces by Lau were juxtaposed with a performance by the magnificent Miss Fish and a project by Elmgreen & Dragset. Since then, the text has been published by the internet magazine *Trikster-Nordic Queer Journal*. And here it is again in a third and slightly altered iteration.

Lasse Lau's art project engages very directly with Ørstedsparken [Ørsted's Park]—a park in the middle of Copenhagen where men have sex with men. More broadly, the project engages with the control of public space and the right to occupy this space, even to embody it. Ørstedsparken is a nice place; I'd like to take you there.

A Park

The park is lovely with its hills, shrubs, and statues. The lake in the park is beautiful, especially when it is not covered in algae after the late summer heat has brought its waters to a boil. A bridge crosses the lake, linking the southeastern part of the park with its northern counterpart. The park is lush with large trees and sagging bushes, and there are lawns for lying about, smoking cigarettes, and sunbathing with friends. From here, you can watch children play and men and women jog on the gravel paths that wind through the sloping grounds. And there are dogs walking with their owners and people collecting bottles for cash, and the homeless who have made this place their home for the summer.

At night, in contrast to other parks in Copenhagen (like Kongens Have [the Kings Garden], for example), the gates to Ørstedsparken are not locked at dusk. The

park is then transformed into a dark and secret place in the city. Lights along the paths and bridge partially illuminate the way for those who brave the darkness. The statues become silhouettes and the lake becomes a dark mass. In the dark, sound takes on a greater significance; the paths' gravel and the bridge's heavy wooden beams resonate with one's footsteps and the sound of others'. Ørstedsparken does not depopulate at night, but is instead populated by men who temporarily transform the park's space.

Ørstedsparken was established in 1879 on the ramparts of old Copenhagen. It was to form one part of the park complex that would take its cue from the increasingly civil uses of Copenhagen's old fortification system, which, in the burgeoning modernity of the nineteenth century, had primarily come to serve as promenades and sites of social gathering. The ramparts still functioned as fortifications, and were populated mostly by beggars and sentries; that along with a smoking ban and military cannons and parapets may have inconvenienced Copenhagen's strolling citizenry. From the elevated promenade, the height of which paralleled that of a third-floor view, an overview of the bustling city life within the city's gates could be seen from one side of the ramparts and, on the other, toward the north, a scenic expanse of fields, windmills, and lakes.

The founding of the amusement park Tivoli in 1843 was the first stage of the transformation of the ramparts of Copenhagen into the larger, continuous park belt that, besides Tivoli and Ørstedsparken, today also includes the city's botanical gardens and Østre Anlæg (the Eastern Gardens).¹

"To this day (or rather night), Hahns Bastion [Hahn's Bastion], now in Ørstedsparken, still serves as a site of encounter for gay men—a tradition that has probably remained in place since the mid-nineteenth century."²

Before the establishment of Ørstedsparken, the site served as a well-known space for cruising for gay and bisexual men. The term cruising refers to the act of frequenting a location with the intent of finding a partner for sex. Cruising is thus an extension of the slow and aimless movements of the flaneur; only, where cruising is concerned, sex is the explicit goal of the stroll. Nørrevold (the Northern Rampart), which was the foundation for Ørstedsparken, was the place in the city where desirous men would meet in the dark. As of 1864, the oversight and patrolling of Copenhagen's fortifications were transferred from the military to the city's police force as a result of the area's becoming a haven for homeless people, vagabonds, and beggars. In turn, the surveillance of the ramparts was intensified and several police reports

from the years after 1864 document Hahns Bastion by Nørrevold as a "pederasts' paradise."³

Historically, then, the site of Ørstedsparken has been and continues to be Copenhagen's most popular place for outdoor hookups. Its location, accessibility, and topology make Ørstedsparken the ideal space⁴ for the alternative sexual praxis of cruising. Cruising necessitates several criteria or parameters present here: The park's central *location*, a space that occupies a position between the publicity of the bar and the privacy of the home. Also, Ørstedsparken's *accessibility* through seven entrances that are never locked allows for constant access and exit from all directions. Furthermore, the structure and *typology* of the park, including its design's multitude of path systems, makes it possible to choose many routes and to find a quiet nook. At the same time, the park has clearly defined, central main thoroughfares that enable collective movement and facilitate encounters for the park's temporary occupants. Finally, there are the many bushes that create fort-like formations and secret enclosures with improvised "organically" occurring passageways.

In 2001, Vej og Park (the Office for Streets and Parks) within the Municipality of Copenhagen initiated a widespread pruning effort in Ørstedsparken. Bushes were dug up and new lawns were seeded in their stead. This act, which on the surface seems quite harmless, was explained by the municipality as grounded in a desire to create a more child- and family-friendly park that included more grass and less bushes. Parents had complained about their children finding the material leftovers of the park's nightly goings-on. This was the stated explanation for the bush removal campaign.

It is in response to this municipal intervention that Lau reacts—aggressive official pruning efforts are met with acts of transgressive gardening, a botanical backlash.

The Artist/The Work

Lasse Lau completed his education at the Art Academy of Funen in 2004 and completed the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program in New York in 2005. Lau's artistic practice is informed by a conception of art as "social plastic"⁵ and he works from a workshop-based approach in which the workshop itself, as well as its outcome, together constitute the piece.⁶ He has taken this approach with his workshops *Queer Geography Copenhagen* (2006), *Queer Geography Tijuana* (2007) and *Queer Geography Beirut* (2011), all concrete examinations of the cities' "other spaces."

I want to propose that we look at Lau's works around Ørstedsparken as a constellation of works, since his engagement with the park and the cruising topology consists of multiple individual work elements. These elements have been created and have unfolded during different times and in different forms and can easily be viewed individually as isolated projects and pieces. Nevertheless, here I would like to consider them together as a constellation of related and interconnected works.

The projects have been produced or have unfolded over six years and are separated not only by time but also by geography. The works are, as such, different but they are linked by a common discourse and context. By regarding them together as a constellation of works, it is possible to gain a density in the understanding of the way in which Lau works artistically and materially; an emphasis on the process-based approach and thus a problematization of the artwork as an isolated object, and an establishment of the social nature of the event in artistic praxis.

Blank Disco Ball

In 2001, the year that Søren Pind, then the head of traffic and technology for the city of Copenhagen, initiated the clearing of bushes in Ørstedsparken, Lasse Lau filled a bunker dating from World War II with branches. The bunker is located in the northeastern corner of Ørstedsparken, partially under the park's Café Hacienda. The title of the piece was *Park—Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public*.

Lau constructed an indoor universe in a delimited space in the bunker. This universe mimicked "nature" outside and above and thereby functioned as a condensation of the shrubbery that no longer existed, replaced as it was by newly seeded grass. Lau collected the branches from the outskirts of Copenhagen, including Kløvermarken (Clover Field) in the southern neighborhood of Amager. In other words, the elements of this composite bush did not originate in the park.

The space that Lau creates is an artificial shrubbery-space: A supplement to the newly amputated Ørstedsparken—a new possibility for cruising—except now in an artificial, artistic interpretation and remodeling of the park's preexisting sex spaces. On the raw concrete wall of the bunker, green mirror images of the park are cast off a disco ball onto which slides are projected. Lau has taken these pictures in the park and the green slide fragments make up the only light source in the bunker.

The disco ball's slideshow fragments disturb the creation of a mimetic copy of the park's exterior spaces. Instead, a hybrid space is created by virtue of the disco ball's references to nightclubs and bars. This dark and enclosed space calls to mind a darkroom⁷ and a nightclub, as well as the park. These three spaces are very different, each subject to their own internal logic and systems of occupancy. However, the darkroom, the nightclub, and the park all have in common that they exist as platforms for cruising and hence the potential for sex is implicit in all these spaces. The American architect and theorist Aaron Betsky writes in his book *Queer Space: Architecture and Same Sex Desire* about how spaces and places can be designated historically and sociologically as particularly queer. These spaces create the possibility and space for homosexual expression, and Betsky specifically mentions the darkroom, the nightclub, and the park as queer spaces per se.⁸ I will return to Betsky's queer analysis below.

The installation *Park—Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public* was exclusively open to the public at night. As such, this mimetic space also has a temporal significance, since the park's cruising spaces are closely associated with the time of day and the attendant depopulation that occurs in the park after dusk. Problems occur in relation to this element, since it is to be expected that the bunker, in its iteration as a work of art, was visited by people other than cruising men and perhaps wasn't even frequented by the park's habitual nightly visitors. I will return to this problem later on.

Park—Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public should be considered an installation. The work is not of a directly performative or action-based nature. In other words, with this piece, Lau has merely created the physical frame and thereby allows this spatial installation to interact actively with its surroundings—and thus also with the conceptual, spatial, and installation characteristics of the place on which this artwork is based.

Poetic Activism: Gardening as an Artistic Act

The piece *Secret Bush Planting #1* is a collective performance—a poetic and ritual situation that consisted in Lasse Lau's and the participants' workshop about queer identity in Ørstedsparken with the alternative trash/trans collective Dunst (Stench) in 2005. It is impossible to discern when the workshop ended and the performance began and this fluid structure makes this performative situation a collective gesture rather than the work of a sole creator.

Cercidiphyllum japonicum is, according to the Web-based dictionary Botany.com, a large shrub that can

develop into a multitruken tree. The fine leaves—which change color from auburn in spring to green all summer long before rounding off the season in beautiful shades of yellow, red, and violet—are shaped like small hearts, and the roots have, “if the oxygen conditions enable it,” a similar heart-shaped structure. This plant is in common Danish parlance known as the heart tree.⁹

It is one of these heart trees that Lasse Lau and workshop participants planted on the lawn in Ørstedsparken. The bush was chosen for its growth potential and for its popular name’s poetic quality and connotations. This particular heart tree, which stood about one meter tall at the time of planting, was embedded in the newly seeded lawn in Ørstedsparken and thus stood as a clear manifestation of the displeasure over the bush clearance project and the municipality’s botanical backlash against cruising and sex in the park. The plant’s placement in the middle of the lawn emphasizes the symbolic and ritual aspects of the performance. Five days after the planting, the heart tree was removed. In all likelihood, once again, the municipality orchestrated the confiscation.

The performance, which, like the work in the bunker, was created in direct response to the clearance of bushes in Ørstedsparken, can be interpreted in several different ways and contains multiple sensibilities to be further unpacked. As mentioned above, the piece has a collective and ritualistic point. The bush planting was a form of concluding act that followed a site-specific workshop. Its social character poetically ritualized the collective feeling of surprise around the municipal bush clearance, but also pointed to the lack of openness toward alternative public spaces in general. This rite, drawn from the name of the plant, is a poetic gesture that strives for greater understanding and tolerance. At the same time, the work has a strong political oppositional character. Since planting a bush in public space is an offense, the performance takes the form of poetic activism.

The Object as Tool and a Solicitation for Broader Dispersal

Lau also created an object in relation to his project constellation around Ørstedsparken. The object is a seed packet made out of paper. The seed packet is easy to reproduce, assemble, and fill with heart tree seeds.

This project has been exhibited at Participant and Apex Art in New York, Kabine in Copenhagen, El Particular in Mexico City, and Röda Sten in Gothenburg. The fact that the seed packet has been exhibited in traditional art spaces—and thereby outside public space, and outside Ørstedsparken specifically—is

central to this work element within the larger project constellation. The seed packets are, despite their difference in form, closely connected with the other pieces and are a document of the overarching goals of the project. The cover of the seed packets depicts a pictogram-like drawing of the planting of new and forthcoming bushes. As such, this work both points back to the issue of Ørstedsparken as a public space and site of interaction as well as to a larger, broader, critique of the political curtailing of behavior in public space. The seed packet is an invitation to take action. The work is a tool. With it, it becomes possible to become an active subject and to conduct a bush-planting operation of one’s own. This piece is thus both an instrumentalization of Lau’s performance while also functioning simultaneously as its documentation. The initial site-specific iteration of the project in Ørstedsparken—concerning the right to public space and possibility of its non-normative uses and adaptations—becomes a generalized concern with the introduction of the seed packet. This generality is underscored by the reproducibility and the simplicity of the seed packets, which can easily be copied, assembled, and distributed ad infinitum. Here, a connection between the formal aspects of the work and the piece’s poetic and activist intentions around the modification of public space is created: The capacity for bushes to exist for everyone.

Dig a Hole

Lau’s second bush planting performance happened as part of the workshop Queer Geography Copenhagen, which Lau organized in association with the Copenhagen Queer Festival in 2006. What sets this action apart from its predecessor is the fact that Lau distributed seeds from one of his seed packets, which participants in the action individually planted wherever they desired in Ørstedsparken. The action took place late at night, in the dark. The actors arrived together and received the seeds at the same time, but the action itself—digging holes, planting the seeds, watering, and covering the seeds with earth—became a personalized ritual for each participant.

Aaron Betsky: Horizons of Understanding Queer Space

The rather peculiar, though not uninteresting, architecture theorist Aaron Betsky, who has made his mark by analyzing space and architecture through a gendered lens, has written the boisterous book *Queer Space — Architecture and Same Sex Desire*. Covered in a pink dust jacket, its insides are decorated with ornate graphic patterns.



Installation by Lasse Lau. Photos courtesy of the artist.

Neither space nor gender is a statistical, measurable quantity; they are produced and determined by complex structures of power. In other words, space is produced in relation to gender and vice versa.

Feminist approaches to how gender relates to space begin in analyses of gendered metaphors and representations of space. Cultures construct discourses around the relationship between gender and space, and bringing awareness to and critiquing these structures is central to the agenda of feminist spatial theory. "Spatial metaphors are epistemological statements which can highlight the importance of space in the construction of identity.... Space itself has always been seen as feminine and devalued in relation to the masculine active element of time."¹⁰

In an analysis of representations of women in artistic practice in Paris during the eighteenth century, the feminist theorist Griselda Pollock writes about gendered spatial separation; the public sphere was for men, while women were relegated to the private sphere of the home. Pollock's point is that, if one were to look into the actual spatial practices in Paris during that time, one would in fact find that "[b]ourgeois women, however, obviously went out in public to promenade, go shopping or visiting or simply to be on display. And working-class women went out to work, but that fact presented a problem in terms of definition as woman."¹¹

Betsky examines (in the much-discussed book with the pink jacket) what he designates as "other spaces," specifically sites of non-heteronormative sexual practices, which he collectively terms queer spaces. The book has two primary aims: On the one hand, Betsky performs a historical examination of homosexuality and the places in which it has manifested itself, while on the other, he undertakes a stylistic analysis of specifically queer architectonic elements.¹²

It is important to point out that Betsky's focus is primarily male homosexuality and that he does not particularly address female homosexual practices. Another important point is that Betsky's use of the word queer does not seem to be informed by postmodern and critical queer theory. As I see it, the term queer is deployed as if it were synonymous with the term *homosexual*, and it is unclear why Betsky chooses to use the term queer in his examination of space and sexuality.

Nevertheless, Betsky arrives at some important conclusions around the spatial practices of homosexuality and how they are constitutive of homosexuality itself. Betsky travels back to the nineteenth century where he traces the emergence of an actual homosexual network.¹³ This emergence

coincides with ideas of personal freedom and mobile social relations in which every person was seen as capable of carving out a personal space.¹⁴ Those spaces took two forms. Either they were private rooms in the domestic sphere, where salons or soirees were held, or they were spaces in the public sphere. Betsky explains that, though there were spaces for homosexual expression in both the private and the public sphere, both spaces were characterized by privacy. The spaces that were established in public space by means of networks and secretive codes were hidden and were solely accessible through a dialectical reading of codes—those who read the codes were also their creators. Concretely, these types of spaces could be a bar in a marginal area, a park, or another cruising space. The publicity and accessibility of these homosexual spaces are thus limited because of the spaces' network-based creation. As such they take on the character of private spaces—in public, that is.¹⁵

According to Betsky, the spaces described here could be considered historically homosexual and are therefore constitutive of homosexual identity. With sexual liberation during the 1960s and exploding urbanization, new spaces, of a more public character and thereby easier to decode, surfaced. These spaces are cafés and nightclubs and they possess their own internal logic and theatricality.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the aforementioned private spaces in public continue to exist. Betsky describes how the cruising site is a process-generated space of coded acts that temporarily transform the place being cruised and turn the space into *another space*, a *counter-space*.

[I]t is a space that appears for a moment, then is gone, only to reappear when the circumstances are right.... [It] acts as a "counter-space" to the emerging transactional space of the middle-class city.¹⁷

In other words, Betsky sees these homosexual spaces as produced in coded processes and he thus emphasizes how spatiality is constitutive of homosexuality. It is the practices and expressions themselves that work to create these spaces. Betsky is here informed by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's understanding that space should not be understood as a static entity to which the human being is simply subjected, but that the human being is central to this production of space.

Betsky also argues that the spaces of homosexuality historically have been defined by privacy and that, furthermore, homosexual spaces erode the dichotomy between private and public space—a deconstruction that Griselda Pollock also addressed in her work.

Return

Okay! The municipality had received complaints about men who had sex with each other in the park after dark. In response, the municipality chose to remove the plantings in order to similarly remove those unwanted sexual activities. With a bit of knowledge of Foucault (*The Will to Knowledge*), one would know that sodomy and other “divergent” sexual practices became institutionalized over time. This institutionalization was a way for the powers that be to exercise control over unruly citizens. When men met on Hahns Bastion in the eighteen hundreds, they risked being arrested and dragged to court for crimes against nature. This was how public space was controlled and how non-normative and non-heterosexual relations were policed. With this project constellation, Lau illustrates that control and regulation still exists. As was the case with the cruising men in Ørstedsparken, power is not exerted through arrest and criminalization, but through government-initiated spatial interventions; in a botanical backlash.

The establishment of a social, interior green space in the bunker in Ørstedsparken for *Park—Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public* emphasizes, I would argue, the paradox that is privacy in public. When the cruising spaces—which were produced in the park, both concretely and according to Lefebvre’s theorization—are eliminated, cruising will seek out new spaces. Cruising is forced underground. It is here, in the staged subterranean abode created by Lau, that cruising unfolds. Yet, as Betsky points out, cruising places must be open and flexible in order to arise in the first place.

Lau’s cruising pavilion is therefore merely an image of power and its manifestations and should not be read as the creation of an alternative. At best, the disco ball and the plant clippings create a space where one might pretend to be cruising—a copy-cat, theatrical universe where one can stage a play about cruising.

The poetic, activist, artistic actions engendered in Lau’s bush planting performance become a demarcation of the fact that public space does not exist for everyone—that it is not democratic—and that it therefore is not what Chantal Mouffe would term properly public. But still, the work is more than an indication of this fact. With the collective, self-reflexive, and oppositional character of the piece, it constitutes a queering of space—a poetic and personal confrontation with heteronormativity and the structures of power that, by means of spatial control, serve to pathologize alternatives to the “natural” male-female construction. Moreover, it is a reckoning with a homosexual normativity,¹² the goal of which is to become accepted as a proud and proper citizen in society, which means

the abolishment of dreams of having sex with anyone other than one’s designated partner, much less the waste of one’s semen in a park! Lau’s bush planting performance and seed packet pieces inspire a symbolic activity that makes public space properly public—a space for everyone. One is encouraged to spread the word through collective as well as individual performative, oppositional, and interventionist acts. ✨

- 1- Charles Haugbøll, *Ørstedsparken—Dens historie, statuer og mindesmærker*. Funkis Forlag, Copenhagen, 1933.
- 2- Wilhelm von Rosen, "Den pæderastiske subkulturs opståen i København i 1860'erne." In *Den Jyske Historiker*, no. 58-59, "Kønnet i historien" (Århus Universitetsforlag, 1992), 86.
- 3- Wilhelm von Rosen, "Den pæderastiske subkulturs opståen i København i 1860'erne." Ibid., In *Den Jyske Historiker* nr. 58-59, "Kønnet i historien." Århus Universitetsforlag, 1992, page 80-97.
- 4- The architecture theoretician Aaron Betsky mentions the central parameters of the cruising site and the conditions that are necessary in order for a cruising site to exist in public space. Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space—Architecture and Same Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997), 148.
- 5- *Social plastic* is derived from the term social sculpture (Plastischen Theorie). The term refers to Joseph Beuys and his conception that everyone could be an artist. Beuys believed in the participation of everyone in the shaping and content of the artworld. See also Birgitte Franzen, Kasper König and Carina Plath (eds.), *Skulptur Projekte Münster 07* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2007), 455.
- 6- With the artist Lise Skou, Lau established CUDI—the Center for Urbanism, Dialogue and Information in 2000. CUDI was an artistic platform that functioned to mediate with the citizens of the low-income area Vollsmose in Odense, Denmark. Lau and Skou moved into an apartment in Vollsmose where they established projects with local inhabitants and visiting artists that were intended to strengthen integration and emphasize the area's multi-ethnic qualities, thereby creating counter-images to the media's one-sided depiction of Vollsmose.
- 7- A darkroom is a room for sex that often exists in bars and nightclubs with a homosexual audience, specifically in spaces that cater to gay men. Darkrooms are often placed in a basement or the backroom of a bar.
- 8- Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space—Architecture and Same Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997).
- 9- Information about the heart tree is derived from the botanical lexicon Botany.com at <http://www.botany.com/cercidiphyllum.html>, accessed July 30, 2007.
- 10- Jane Rendell, "Gender, Space: Introduction" in *Gender Space Architecture—an Interdisciplinary Introduction*, Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, Iain Borden, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 107.
- 11- Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity" in *Gender Space Architecture—an Interdisciplinary Introduction*, Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, Iain Borden, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 163.
- 12- I will not discuss Betsky's analysis of the stylistic characteristics of queer architectural space in this context.
- 13- It should be noted that Betsky uses the term *homosexual* without reference to the term's particular epistemology. According to Foucault, the term *homosexual* does not arise until 1870.
- 14- Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space—Architecture and Same Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997), 62.
- 15- Ibid.
- 16- Betsky describes the New York nightclub Studio 54 as a queer space because of its theatrical inner logic and its spatial structure which consisted of both public areas as well as small, separate and, for some, closed rooms, such as VIP lounges. Ibid., 1-10.
- 17- Ibid., 142.





Urinal made of paper

Ever giving useless man
Sculpture
Martin Jacob Nielsen, 2007. Photo: Julia Ekström.

A Fairytale

Once upon a time there was a boy named Hen. He didn't have anything. So he went searching for some buried treasure with me. My name is Dick, teach me to relax. So we went searching for some buried treasure. We were told that the Devil loves buried treasure. Like what. To be able to. Two, Hen and I, we were the champs, we were told that the Devil loves Los Angeles and Denmark. Like how. Like the sound of: the Devil loves Los Angeles and Denmark. So that's how Hen and I came to Denmark, jeg løb min vrede. The Danish sun was shining, sounding as we speak, my name is Beep, so we spent our days at the Danish beach, hoping he would locate some buried Danish treasure, that's it. That's right. Nu er jeg signet hos Nikkel. My name is enmandshær, nyheder kysser, spiser. Because the spring, because this winter I dreamed I was a lover. That all the boys were waiting to take my hand. My hand was your hand, now snow, snow is snowing, but to design a huge cock, Just Eat. Now let me tell you something about Giovanni and

Giuseppe. Magnetic shags. Just try to manage my chest. Snatch my anthem. Ja, jeg mødte en dreng i aftenrøden, armbrøst, artikler, men jeg hedder lille hvide pizzafjæs, men jeg vinker til dig, Dig, but butt: but once upon a time: once upon a time I met a boy named Sing. He was black and red and blue. I glanced and licked his earring. He covered me with glue. Jeg limer: føl dine hænder Apple ofte, I am like less than three, I am reenacting my right now. I always knew I would spend a lot of time alone searching for my Father's power, hey smukke ting. All my lovers, I want to go back to their houses, the sleep: a theory of yellow. My name is a plan of crying with laughter on a large scale. This set of kiss balls rotation. Like love. I remember spending all my time with Soft Hands, he was like: relativitet med mig, he was like: define: the edge, define: puke. But last night I was cleaning your throat, yours. I am waving: pretty, start the engine. You show me my cunt and I love it. You shave my questions. Now thank you.





Untitled
Photography
Flo Maak, 2006

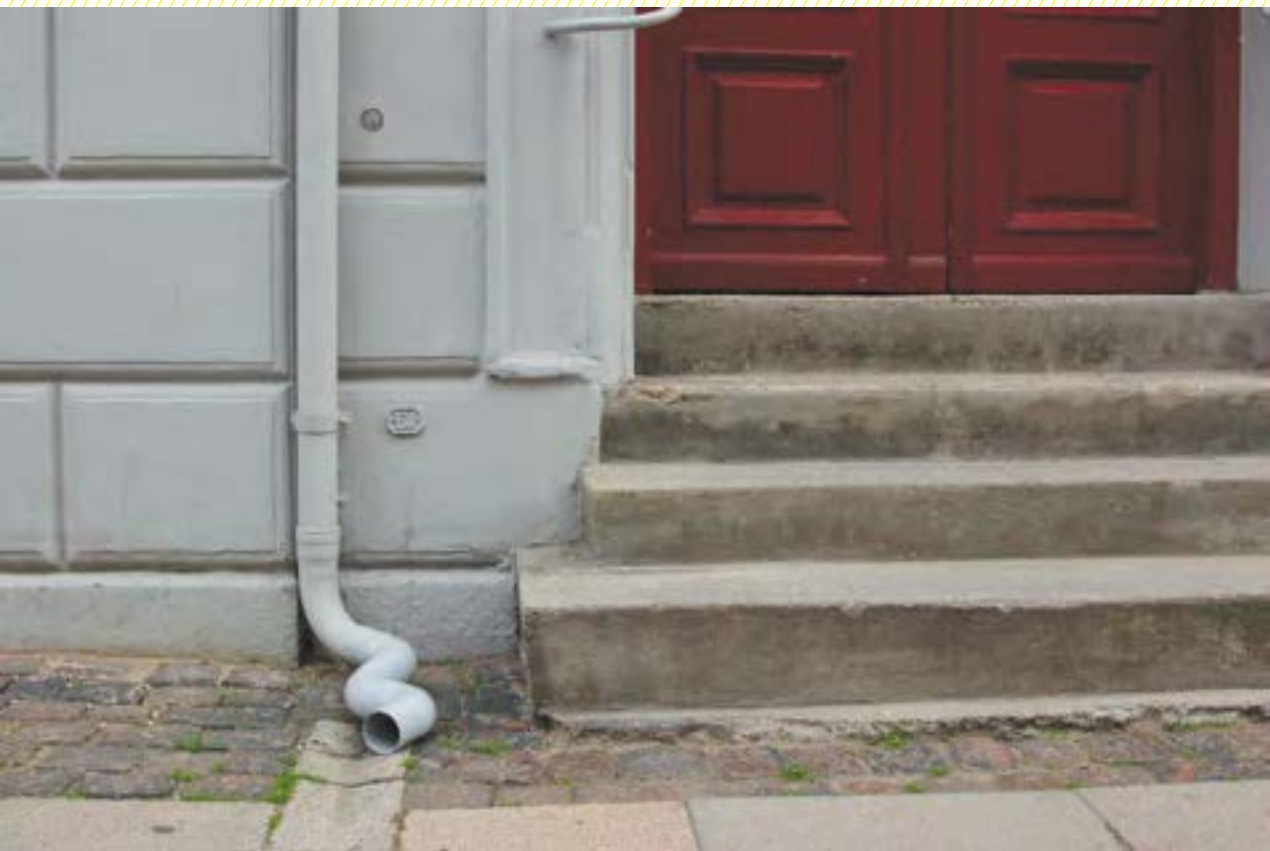


#15
Intervention
Wirg, 2007





#31
Intervention
Wirg, 2011



(T)OVE HANSEN'S SQUARE

This is a transcribed dialogue about the first public square named after and dedicated to transpeople in Copenhagen.

Characters: Jørgen Callesen/Miss Fish, initiator of (T)ove Hansen's Square; (T)ove Hansen;

Kamille Fanny Pedersen, journalist from Vesterbro Local TV, Copenhagen

Place: (T)ove Hansen's Square

Time: 31 August 2011, just before noon.

Fanny: This is a special location. Jørgen—why is the square called (T)ove Hansens Plads?

Jørgen: It is because it is Denmark's first square for transpersons.

It is named after the performance artist (T)ove Hansen, who is called (T)ove today and in everyday life is called Ove.

Fanny: (T)ove, why is this square named after you?

(T)ove: I am a tranny in brackets. I am called Ove Hansen when I am not (T)ove.

Fanny: Can you be a tranny in brackets—or is it for real?

(T)ove: I am a drag. But I have pushed the notion because drag is such a limited formula. I make my own version of drag. Call it what you want.

Fanny: OK—but then I would like to ask you a question. If you are a drag and dress up as a woman, why is it always this strange housewife stereotype from the 1950s you choose? An ideal of women that is far away from contemporary society?

(T)ove: I think it has moved beyond that. I do both the traditional drag and go beyond it in my performances.

Jørgen: The art of drag you are talking about is often performed by homosexual men, who are not comfortable with their femininity and therefore ridicule it. It is an exaggerated bitchy satire on the model woman that also heterosexuals laugh about. Transpersons who embrace their femininity navigate completely differently. But they are not as visible and they are not yet that known in showbiz.

Fanny: That is true, I know all the famous drag queens from TV. But is it also important that others get recognition?

(T)ove: I have done this for more than 20 years—and now I have my own square! [Smiles]

Jørgen: (T)ove, how many places in Copenhagen do you feel welcome? Where can you be (T)ove?

(T)ove: In Warehouse9 and Bøssehuset.

Jørgen: There must be other places. What about the local library or on the square down the street?

(T)ove: It has developed in a way, that I do not really feel safe anymore. It is strange.

Fanny: Is that because you are afraid of getting assaulted?

(T)ove: They do not scare me away. I perform wherever I can, for example on the Town Hall Square for Copenhagen Pride. I am nervous and afraid, but when it is showtime—the show must go on!

Jørgen: Then you are protected by the show format, the audience, and the big setup. But many transpersons who shop in the supermarkets and would like to pass for who they are—they often experience subtle but severe prejudice. It is a daily fight. (T)ove Hansens Plads symbolizes that apart from the Pride where the gay scene takes over the city and everybody feels safe, there is another reality. There should be a continuous effort to make the city more T-friendly in everyday life.

Fanny: Do you also experience that the gay scene has prejudices against T-people?

Jørgen: I think so. Because if somebody questions the privileges the well-integrated gays and lesbians have achieved, they feel challenged and feel that we are “spoiling it for the others”

(T)ove: What should people use your square for?

(T)ove: They should enjoy the good weather.

Jørgen: Why is this an important square?

(T)ove: It is about time transpeople get their own square. We have been waiting for years. Because we are experiencing a backlash in open-mindedness and tolerance.

Jørgen: What can you do to improve this?

(T)ove: We must have better laws and our own passports. And a square like this makes it visible to the public that we are here. Everybody is welcome—trannies, drags, whatever. As long as they are well behaved. My performance took place on this square for Pride Special 20. August 2011 on my square was a declaration of love and a message to the people that we must treat each other with respect whether you are a transperson, bi-, or heterosexual. Let's find a way together and believe in love.



(T)ove Hansen and Miss Fish interviewed by TV station "Vesterbro Lokal TV"

(T)ove Hansens Plads
 Intervention
 Miss Fish and (T)ove Hansen, 2007 – present



TIME LINE FOR (T)OVE HANSEN'S SQUARE

23.05.2007

OFFICIAL OPENING of Warehouse9 by Miss Fish,
Ramona Macho & Dunst, at Building 66, The Brown Meat Packing District,
Copenhagen

02.10.2009

TRANNY LOUNGE SOCIETY CLUB EVENT#1

Hosted by Miss Uno & Ramona Macho

Tranny DJs Miss Fish vs. DJ Savvy G. + Kisser & postkortpigen

Lulu + surprises

LIVE PHOTO SHOOT by J. Jackie Baier

Get your portrait taken by a professional transperson art photographer!

The Portrait Project supported by the Danish Arts Council DIVA program

21.08.2010

PRIDE SPECIAL at (T)ove Hansens Plads with outdoor bar Ramona

Macho hosting the outdoor T-Lounge Society #9

The fabulous monthly lounge for T-boys, T-girls, and everything
in-between!

SHOWS "Girls Night Out" (DK)—floor show

DJs Mark Moore (UK), Prafix Aztech (DK), Kenneth Cockwhore & Macho
(DK), Alexis (DK)

26.01.2011

FACEBOOK GROUP established—(T)ove Hansens Plads

28.01.2011

LAUNCHING of (T)ove Hansens Plads concept

Warehouse9—Ph.D. reception for thesis about Public Space

The Performative & Aesthetic City Scape // Kristine Samson

04.02.2011

PRESENTATION of (T)ove Hansens Plads concept at the conference

"Kunsten og Kommunerne" in Vejle—organized by the Danish Arts Council

30.06.2011

OFFICIAL PERMISSION from Copenhagen City to proceed with the
outdoor T-lounge for the Pride Special 20

12.08.2011

PRESS RELEASE "Tranny on the Pavement" by Jørgen Callesen,
published in the local newspaper Vesterbrobladet (17.08.2011): "New
square for trans people in the meat packing district" by Anja Berth

20.08.2011

T-LOUNGE #17—Pride Special with big outdoor lounge

Art event naming of (T)ove Hansen Plads curated by Miss Fish. Featuring
Holestar (London), Miss Fish (DK), Mathias Kryger (DK), (T)ove Hansen,
DJs Mark Moore (London), Holestar (London), Cockwhore (DK), and
Macho (DK)

17.08.2012

PRIDE SPECIAL with queer art program

Planning in progress!

Eight Places on the List of Violence

Camilla Tved

I've lived in Copenhagen all my life. I was born here and I can tell if others were as soon as they open their mouths. I know where everything is, I know what the seasons do, I can remember Vesterbro before gentrification, Palads Cinema before it was enshrined in pastel colors, and Amager before the bridge. Nothing surprises me when the city is beneath my feet. As with all love, it's pure. Except when it isn't.

Rantzausgade, spring 2011

We're sitting outside a closed café on Rantzausgade Street at two in the morning. It's cold but I don't notice it. We've been talking for a long time; her voice is raspy with a Jutland accent and I forget to listen because she looks so good.

I think about the fact that Rantzausgade is on my list. It's a fleeting thought and I laugh at something she says as it passes, but I have to think about it, because soon we're going to kiss, I know it, and I have to make a decision before we get there. I consider trying to get her to come with me down a side street. Are the side streets on my list? Perhaps get her to follow me home? My front door is not on my list. But an interruption may spoil the moment. I'd risk ruining it after all the time it took to make it this far, as in we kissed at a party, we took a walk, she said she's not lesbian, I said that's fine, and now we're sitting here and I can barely contain my delight. But if she (maybe) isn't lesbian, then she (maybe) is hetero and lists are not for heteros.

Are lists for bisexuals? I've never considered that.

Strøget, Copenhagen's main pedestrian mall, is on my list (always). And Købmagergade (but only at night). And Central Station (always). And Copenhagen Town Hall Square (at night). And Folkets Park (always). Bellevue (during the summer). Gothersgade (at night on weekends). Bryggen (at night).

It's actually quite long, my list. Rantzausgade is also on it (mostly night, but sometimes day). Now she laughs raspily while peeking into my brain and I forget the list. We kiss. Fuck it.

Soon after, three boys walk by. At first they don't see us. Or. It's a classic, you know, they see us but think we're heteros so they look a second time and see that we're not and then they look again to be sure, and from there it can go in one of several directions. Some

people look away, others go from looking to staring, most people just keep walking, others stop.

Regardless: spotted.

Right after they pass, we get up to go home. She bends down to unlock her bicycle. The boys stop five meters down the sidewalk and turn around; a prickling sensation fills my palms.

She has the bike in one hand and puts the other hand on my neck. I want more, I only see them and I only see her, feel her hips between my hands, remember my list, mind over body, fear over desire. She lets go and turns around, sees them. "What?!" she yells aggressively, and I see their astonishment, see how young they are, sense my irritation. At her. I am irritated at her.

They retreat, responding evasively, but I grab her and implore her softly not to make any trouble. I regret it as I say it, but she doesn't hear it.

The boys cross the street, walking backward away from us, and yell some kind of halfhearted threat as they disappear into a courtyard.

The danger has passed, the arousal has waned, it's minus 2 degrees Celsius.

I breathe a sigh of relief after she rides off.

Christianshavn Canal, 2010

I was walking along Christianshavn Canal one day. I had eaten at a sushi restaurant with someone in the gray zone that follows the point where you just have sex and go your separate ways or just have sex and part and meet again and have sex and part again and so on for a while. So it had been a somewhat difficult day that ended with sushi and now we were walking along the canal, exploring each other's gray zones.

We pass by a restaurant with large windows. It's kind of like looking into an aquarium, deep-sea darkness on our side, illuminated coral reef on the other. Check out the rich. A small group of men in suits, one emptying his cognac. Tight shirt on top of a barely restrained belly. They laugh loudly at something the waiter says; maybe it's the bill.

At the square, we stand and kiss goodbye. Chat a bit about meeting again. Kiss a little more. Suddenly, the

group from the restaurant catches up to us and now we're the ones in an aquarium. Check out the lesbos.

One of them yells "BITCHES!" and roaring with laughter they jump into a cab and are off.

And there you stand in the dark with a world shrinking around you. You don't want to kiss anymore, and you just stand there alert in the November slush and self-hatred.

We laugh, fumbling to get a grip on the situation, kiss a bit more to convince each other that it doesn't matter what other people think. We cordially part ways.

Knippelsbro Bridge is up, so I stand around for a while and stare down into the water.

Hornbækgade, 2008

We're walking down the stairs. She leads the way and I see her back through her T-shirt. It's summer; everything evaporates when she bites my fingers, I forget to breathe when she smiles, and I haven't slept for two weeks. At the doorway, she stops and leans her neck back against my shoulder, we laugh at nothing while I wrap my arm around her and the door closes behind us with a gentle thud.

Four men walk by as we exit the building. One turns his head and looks me in the eye as I smile at her laughter in my ear, I see his face contort with surprise and desire, he turns around, walks backward a few steps, tongue dancing over his lips, and grabs his balls. He turns around and walks on; a moment later someone roars with laughter further down the street.

She catches my eye; I flash a confused smile and shrug my shoulders.

We venture into the city, crossing Jagtvej.

Blågårdsgade, 2007

Pride Parade is on Nørrebrogade. I squirm a bit at the sight of it.

Ambivalence. I have the youngest child with me; she's running around, bathed in confetti and condoms. She gets a rainbow flag from a man in leather chaps and I pick her up. There are a lot of people here. The Eurodance bass from the flatbed truck claws at my ears. I turn around and push through the crowd, pass by a woman from my courtyard and greet her with a smile.

When I meet her the next day, she spits on the sidewalk. We never greet each other again.

Bispebjerg Hill, 1999

I'm hospitalized at Bispebjerg Hospital. My arm is a bundle of gauze. It was halfhearted and pathetic, like so much in my life at the time. A doctor comes in, followed closely by a nurse. "Why did you do it?" he asks. "Heartbroken?"

It's not the right question and the nurse looks tired, but I answer them.

That I'm in love with a woman, that it's a little difficult with my family, that I have anxiety, and that everything was cloudy in my head.

"What nonsense," he says.

"Yeah" I say.

Bispebjerg is beautiful with its red buildings. It's fall; the leaves make noise around my feet as I walk away.

Kultorvet, 1998

I once went to the bar Klaptræet with a lesbian friend. Back then, I wanted more than anything to be hetero. We danced; Klaptræet's small dark dance floor steamed. Girlswhoareboyswholikeboystobegirlswhodo boyslikethey'regirls. The Nineties.

Suddenly, a man is dancing between us and really wants to join us. Close up. I dance in front of him, already old enough to know not to look him in the eyes, dance with my back to him and feel her breath against my face. Then, everything goes black. The man who really wanted to join us has taken us both by the neck and banged our heads together. I taste iron in my mouth and see the blood pouring from her nose. Alwaysshouldbesomeoneyoureallylove.

We stumble down to the doormen at the bottom of Klaptræet's steep staircase, I tug at the sleeve of one of them like a small child and try to explain. They grab us by the neck and throw us out.

We sit for a while on a bench on the square outside the bar and cry without looking at each other. Her nose has stopped bleeding and my head hurts.

Strøget, 1989

Friday evening. I am walking with a group of girls, purely by their mercy; they usually never let me join them, but it helps that I finally got breasts. I observe them in quick glances, see dresses I cannot figure out how to wear, makeup that makes my hands tremble. Catch on to the game between us and the men and

boys who pass by, sweating because of the attention and the new possibilities. After a few trips up and down Europe's longest pedestrian mall, I've gotten the hang of it. The girls talk to me; I straighten up my spine, return glances.

A group of boys circle around us, whistle, try to chat us up. I lied to my mom to be here. One of the girls lights a cigarette.

Two gay men stand by Vimmelskiftet. I'm certain they look like the ones I saw in the AIDS commercials and they are so closely entwined that it makes my stomach hurt. The circling boys shift their attention.

The boys are all over them in a flash, the man smoking on the ground after a kick to the back, the other gets a knee to the head when he bends over to help, his cap falls off, he is bald underneath.

We scream, the girl next to me laughs shrilly.

I want to go home. I think about my mom, who doesn't want me walking around Strøget at night.

I run across the Town Hall Square.

Vesterbro, 1982

I'm sitting on a stone staircase on a side street of Istedgade and fiddling with my toes. The sun is shining. I'm wearing sandals and can hear the jukebox from the pub next door. It smells a bit like beer and smoke out here; in the shop it smells like books. The shop is my dad's. A few years later it's sold; used words couldn't keep it afloat.

I grew up here, among all the books, among the pant legs and worn shoes and hands patting me on the head. When my father goes to the ice cream shop, the bums keep an eye on me. Some of them are Greenlanders; they have dogs that are so big you can rest your head on their stomachs when they lie down.

Someone is always dropping by here. They peruse the *Land and People* communist newspaper, read the back covers of books, ask my dad how it's going in the party.

Someone whistles and yells; I turn my head and rest my cheek on my knee so I can see down the street. Pussy Carsten comes walking down the sidewalk on the other side of the street. My dad won't tell me why he's called that—he doesn't like him—but whenever he walks by, people stick their heads out of their windows. I wish I could whistle. It was my Christmas wish, but my mom said that it doesn't work like that.

My dad pops up behind me on the stairs, accidentally pushes me as he steps out onto the sidewalk.

Pussy Carsten is wearing white shoes, with heels, and a black dress with brown and yellow flowers. He has long legs and gold chain around his wrist. I think he is alluring and strange to behold.

As he slants across the street, my dad steps out and hits him on the side of the head, causing him to fall. People in the street cheer; one of the dogs at the pub perks up and barks. I can't see anything, but my dad is yelling. I'm sad and scared; my dad returns and takes me into the backroom. I get a raspberry soda. ✨

Det end i forhold. Altså det skaber... skaber det gæster der end i skaber
Hvordan er det med det at skabe den by de gæster vi lever i?

JENSEN RANDSLÅN

Det er ikke mere pænt, kommer det også i begge sider. Jeg ville ønske jeg kunne åbne en mere side
Med mindre du hører hele verden, så forvent ikke at hele verden forstår dig.

Fund
Fundament
Fundamentalt
Fundamentalt
Hvordan træger man?
Man tager det i styr arm
Man bryder sammen

På telefonen. Det er bely det indside med sig som kan
Længsel efter en kvindes...
Hvad er det med det noget, min krop bliver sat på i forhold til hvor jeg, mine
Længsel efter en kvindes...
Det er som en amerikansk... med musik... Det er så indviklet med de næste på kaffe.

Er det et dommen
Min krop taler for sig selv
Vi har hørt at bese

Queer kult vel aldrig være et særligt sted. Det er steder omkring og oplever det at stedet
Såne skaber i dialog og i eller konflikt med omgivelserne.

Det er det er et spørgsmål
Hvordan træger man?
Kropssprog
Kunne man kalde det
Over Racer?

Man kan franske på at gøre noget fx et sted men man kan aldrig være sikker på at det sker
Et queer sted: geografisk set må altid være subjektivt. Steder kan ikke i sig selv være queer. Men
kan blive det i subjektens erfaring og oplevelse.

Man spørger mig
en jeg har været sammen
med en af afrikansk afstamning for

Når det er sagt mener jeg at der sagtens kan være ting, bygninger, træ, planter osv som gør det
spændende oplevelse sommet at fremkald i folk.
En del af queer bevægelserne, har som en central del at skabe livsm. Men hvordan ser de ud hvor
er de og er de virkelig live.

Det er i grunden et simpelt spørgsmål
Men tiden at gøre det, for det må man ikke gøre
Men tank hvor kæmpe det spørgsmål bliver

Et sted og gøre en kvindes på en skat mark i skole
Et tag på en gammel fabrik under fabrik i hængende

Hvordan
skulle jeg i grunden vide om jeg har været sammen med en af afrikansk afstamning
Jeg kender jo over hovedet ikke til alle mine squatters etniske baggrund.

Talandsbrygger på en solskindsdag

Et altigevel til kan jeg tiden videre
vare: "Jeg har kysset med nogen,
men aldrig været sammen med nogen for" For du spørger ikke om
jeg har været sammen med nogen af afrikansk afstamning.

En sønder lirkant gæst ved kaffen i baren

Ja spørger om jeg har været sammen med en sort for
Et du vil bare gerne vide om du var den første
Nu da du lige har erklæret at jeg
var din første kvindesven

Et lille rullekøkken i Deltiden

Samlet i en seng
Du er sort og jeg er hvid
Og det er ikke
Og fjollet
Og faktisk rigtig etniske romantisk
Men i det mindste deler vi det
Og på den anden side så er vi bare europæere

Den gamle gæsteværelse i København

Et gammelt værelse i køkkenet

Et gammelt værelse i køkkenet

Et squatet lejlighed med en familie med 2 fædre og en mor, et sted i hollands

Der er blot nogle af de steder som har haft queer oplevelser, åbning af nye horisonter, befrudte
for mig. Om de var frie, det tror jeg ikke helt, men de gav mig følelsen af befrudte.
Først betragte fra heteronormativiteten, siden betragte fra det nye etablende queer univers, som af
en eller anden grund ligesom heteronormativiteten også bliver stift og værende for mig i
begræns... og oplevelsen af at der er flere queer verdener giver mig ny plads til at leve... hvor jeg
ikke kan holde ud at bo i en verden... så må jeg besøge flere... åbne mig for flere. Den kvartelle
queer verden. Den Polytonisme.

At skrive om noget ud fra hvad man tror det er, kan gøre teksten ret abstrakt.

Jeg har købt en mappe om... indtil videre har jeg kun brugt den når jeg havde lyst til at spille på.

Hvordan skal der være ligestilling rundt omkring mig, når der altså ikke er det inden i mig selv?

Ikke rigtig inde i noget flow ikke inde i noget flow... ingen harv at sejle på ingen bølge at bølge i
dag. Kun kaffe, computer og overskyet cafe besøg... i forsøg på at arbejde. Kortlægge

Jeg har ikke en anelse om hvad fanden jeg har gang i med det her geografi jeg ved det ikke rigtig
hvad geografi betyder det er lidt dumt, måske skulle jeg google ordet... jeg skulle virkelig have
sviklet med ham den queer geograf beholder det på dansk?

Er at flytte sig fra et sted til et andet geografi?
Er det at stå et sted geografi?

Det er som om queer steder popper op mere end at de er der.
Det er svært at gøre noget sted permanent queer.

Det er ikke fordi det egentligt er noget at skrive om
Det er ligegyldigt om det bliver sagt

Det er mere rejser steder tiden og planer...
Planlægning.

En Queer filgang til geografi.
Eller evidens?

Bordered Bodies

Mads Ted Drud-Jensen and Sune Prahk Knudsen

Migration and migration control structure and are structured by sexuality as well as gender, ethnicity, and class. The question of sexuality, however, has so far not received much attention in relation to migration. This text explores how nonheterosexual or noncisgendered migrants are regulated through the technologies of the Danish migration apparatus and how dominant notions of sexuality and culture are constituted and reproduced in this process.

After ten years of right-wing government in Denmark, a centre-left coalition led by the Social Democrats took office in October 2011. The right-wing rule was not least characterised by continuous developments in the area of migration policy with the aim of limiting immigration to Denmark—a trend actually started by the previous Social Democratic government in the 1990s. And since then, the tougher immigration policies have gone hand in hand with a public and political discourse increasingly influenced by right-wing populist anti-immigration viewpoints.

This development has also generated harsh criticism, meaning that immigration issues more or less continuously have been high on the agenda. Some of the focus points have been conditions for certain groups of asylum applicants and refugees, not least families with children living in the asylum centres, and rejected asylum applicants with no possibility of returning to their country of origin. Other groups of asylum applicants have received considerably less attention—among them nonheterosexuals or noncisgendered persons. The new centre-left government is in the process of introducing some policy changes applicable to the asylum process—most likely to result in slightly better conditions for some asylum seekers. But the question of nonheterosexuals or noncisgendered asylum seekers is still far from the political or public agenda and attention.

This text aims to challenge this by describing the conditions for nonheterosexual and noncisgendered asylum applicants. It's based on the first study of its kind in a Danish context and presents an analysis of how the categories of culture and sexuality structure and are structured in the regulation of migration as it takes place in the Danish asylum apparatus. This is done by focusing on some of the key technologies used to process, categorise, and order persons applying for international protection: (1) country-of-origin information, (2) interviews during case handling, and (3) the life in the asylum centres. The text is based

on analyses of legal documents and reports used and issued by the Danish immigration authorities as well as interviews with asylum applicants, immigration officers, and others who are one way or the other involved in the application processes. The interviews were carried out in 2007, but as mentioned above no major developments have taken place to date to change the circumstances described.

Country-of-Origin Information

In order to verify or falsify the asylum seekers' stories about their reasons to flee their country of origin the Danish immigration authorities develop and use so-called 'country of origin information'. This material is typically conveyed in reports, which are the immigration officers' primary tool to get insight into the conditions in the 'countries of origin' of the asylum applicants. The Danish authorities produce only a small part of this information themselves. They mostly use reports from other Western European and North American countries and to a lesser extent from international organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

The information presented in such reports, regulating international political and migratory relations, represents a systematic and quite extensive Western production of (persons from) 'other' countries and 'other' cultures as objects of knowledge for the purpose of regulating how 'they' can and should be accommodated, detained, and returned. It is about who should be 'helped' and who should not, by whom, where, and how.

Many researchers have criticized the lack of knowledge about gender specific issues in relation to asylum cases in several Western countries. The same can be observed regarding gender and sexuality in relation to asylum processes in a Danish context. Very little is said about the nonheterosexual and noncisgendered 'others' in the reports used by the authorities. And what is said tends to point in certain directions, namely focusing on men, homosexuals, and Iran; the figure given the most attention in the discourse of the asylum system is the Iranian gay male. The flip side of this is that the lesbian and transgender asylum seekers, as well as persons from other countries, tend to disappear.

Even though Iran is the country about which most knowledge is produced, the amount of information is quite limited. The countries-of-origin reports typically

contain less than one page about 'homosexuality'. The information presented is roughly that the law stipulates capital punishment, but that whip lashes are more likely in practice; that homosexuality is becoming more socially accepted, because there are 'certain places' where homosexuals meet, and that it can be practiced behind closed doors.

In several reports the 'certain places' are specified as parks where 'gay men' meet. Such parks are cited in official documents as central to the argument for why it is safe to return rejected asylum applicants to Iran. It is worth noting that whereas the image of gay cruising and sex in public parks in Copenhagen and other western European cities has caused concern or even moral panics, followed by arguments that sex should be confined to the private, the park, when it is placed in Iran, becomes central to the argument found in the asylum system, that homosexuals are not at risk of persecution: they have places to go.

The 'closed doors' are also specified in one of the reports used by the Danish immigration authorities. The report, which is based on observations made by Swedish embassy staff in Tehran, refers to private gatherings among diplomats, where homosexual diplomats 'judging by appearances' have no problems getting in touch with 'partners'. Hence, the gay male from Iran becomes apparent in the meeting with Western diplomats, and those social circumstances are generalised to society as a whole. The conclusion: A gay male asylum applicant can be returned 'without running any risk for serious harassment.'

The confinement of sexuality to the private sphere (and the public/private distinction as such) has long been criticised in feminist theory. Partly because it often entails a depoliticization of sexuality and gender, partly because the distinction between the public and the private tends to ignore the unequal gendered access to (in particular) public space. In relation to nonheterosexuality it should further be emphasized that exclusion from public space is accompanied by exclusion from the private to the extent this is organised along certain heteronormative forms of accommodation and family constellations. Nevertheless, the imposition of discretion — that a nonheterosexual identity and practice should be done discreetly and in private — is common practice in the asylum system.

A general feature of the country-of-origin information is that the (mostly) Iranian (and predominantly) gay men are talked *about*. As Edward Said describes in his classic analysis *Orientalism*, this represents a power relation which is inherent to othering itself and the practice of orientalist discourse. 'The other' never

speaks for her- or himself — the reality and history of 'the other' is only visible in the representation produced through the gaze of the white, Western, heterosexual subject. The objectification of the non-Western nonheterosexual is thus not only a reflection of marginalisation and criminalisation in certain countries of origin, but also of unequal relations between the global North and the global South.

The question is what reports like these tell us about conditions for LGBT or queer persons in specific countries, such as in the case of Iran? One could argue that such descriptions most of all are indicative of how the white Western subject understands the notion of sexuality. If one turns the scope, a schematic appears, where it makes sense to place and delimit homosexual persons, identities and practices to parks and middle-class private social events whose character is made universal and thus detached from socioeconomic reality. This has consequences for 'the other' asylum applicants in the sense that such places or contexts become useful arguments for returns, and in the sense that for example lesbians to a large extent are rendered invisible.

The Migration Story

Stories, or narratives, play a key role in structuring social life and in the lives of individuals. This is not least the case when it comes to the stories told by the asylum applicants during their interviews with Danish authorities. The way, the time, and the context, in which the stories are told, are crucial for whether or not the applicant is allowed to stay.

A central part of the asylum process in Denmark is the so-called interview. Here the asylum seeker is asked to tell the reasons for seeking asylum and is interviewed — or interrogated, as many asylum seekers put it — by an officer from the Danish immigration authorities. The interview, which lasts half a day, is based on a questionnaire filled in by the applicant. The questionnaire contains information about other asylum motives, such as political or labour union activities, but not sexuality. The meaning of the questionnaire and the interview is to map the motive of the individual applicant. On the basis of the mapping, the immigration officer assesses whether or not the applicant fulfils the criteria for being granted asylum, and the information is held up against the available background information to assess the credibility of the applicant.

In the following we assess how truth and knowledge about sexuality, culture, and identity is produced and reproduced in the narratives and judgments within the framework of the asylum system — a framework



August 25, 2012

200 people demonstrated in Copenhagen against the Danish refugee appeal board decision to decline the Guatemalan Fernanda Milan refugee status based on her gender identity. This decision was later re-opened after pressure from LGBT Denmark and T-Refugee Project provided evidence that her life was in danger. Fernanda Milan was the first transgender person to be granted asylum in Denmark. Photo by Mette Kramer Kristensen/Monsun.

of social joint actions coupling certain subjects and identities with certain rights.

A Danish immigration officer tells about a meeting with a nonheterosexual asylum applicant:

We had one who said he was homosexual, but now had stopped being that, because he didn't really find it that interesting. We also encounter such things, and it can be somewhat difficult to take it seriously.

The legislation does not contain provisions to deal with identity or sexual categories, but still there are 'right' and 'wrong' ways of articulating oneself as a sexual subject. As an example, in a decision in an asylum case made by the Danish Refugee Appeals Board (a quasi-judicial body that handles the appeal process in the asylum system and determines the final outcome of the specific appeal cases) it by having 'long hair, a pierced ear' and by wearing 'tight jeans.'

Political, judicial, and administrative systems and rights-assigning processes rarely operate without social categories and identities. The narratives of sexual identities, as they are produced in the asylum system, are framed by the demand of telling the truth and the essence of the self as a basis for being granted or not being granted the right to asylum and stay. And such stories often also have the character of *coming out stories*, as one applicant phrases it: "It was the first time I talked with others, heterosexuals, about the fact that I'm gay, and that was difficult."

At the same time, the stories, categories, and identities are also creating opportunities. On the one hand, nonheterosexuals are granted asylum if they position themselves, or are positioned, correctly and intelligibly. On the other hand, certain (unintelligible) positions are excluded. To tell the 'right' story one has to relate to an affirmative, normalised, and essentialist strategy of identity and sexuality, which makes the applicant

an object of knowledge in certain specific ways not applicable for all nonheterosexual or noncategorized applicants. To an extent, bisexuals, lesbians and transpersons do not fit into the matrix. The immigration officers interviewed had thus never come across a lesbian asylum applicant, even though the experiences of the health staff in the asylum centres tell a different story. The same goes for bisexuals and transpersons.

Hence, the asylum interviews reproduce a practice in which nonheterosexual equals gay male, whereas other L(G)BT categories tend to disappear. Similarly, identities which are not perceived as constant, unchangeable, and delimited are not recognised. Finally, the very fact that sexualised and gendered categories are always bound to contexts of power/knowledge configurations and the specific social machinery in which they are articulated seems to be totally ignored.

Another key feature in the interview process is the issue of credibility. The applicants and their stories are assessed to be credible or incredible in the social practice of the interview, where the immigration officers construct and describe the applicant as an unworthy claimant or as an applicant asking to be saved from his or her own (cultural) background. Sexualisation and racialisation go hand in hand. This is illustrated by an interpreter describing the meeting between a Danish immigration officer and a woman from Iran:

The interviewer kept going on about that she [the applicant] as a woman from the Middle East had to stand it [that her husband beat her]. But why is she saying that? The Iranian woman was well-educated and from Tehran and did not have these notions of men and women. She was put in a position as a victim.

Some asylum applicants thus do not succeed in living up to the racialised notions and available subject positions available at the interviews, whether because they do not want to, are not capable of doing so, or do not understand the importance of telling the right individual story. Stories are framed on top of the available country-of-origin information and only perceived as credible and understandable if they correspond with that information.

The Asylum Centre

On average, asylum applicants stay for three years in the asylum centres in Denmark while their cases are processed. The centres are often geographically isolated, and because of lack of money the mobility of the applicants is very limited. Hence, the centres play a dominant role in the organisation and regulation of the lives of the applicants, and this has specific consequences for nonheterosexual and noncategorized applicants.

I am afraid to have gay literature and magazines or a gay guide in my room. I can't have my documents there, because there is no guarantee that no one in my absence will come into or will be placed in my room.

Such are some of the reflexions of a homosexual asylum applicant about living in a centre. As a single asylum applicant you are accommodated in a small room together with up to three other of the same gender and from the same geographical/linguistic region.

In the largest centre, Sandholm, where all newly arrived and all awaiting expulsion are placed, the quarters for single applicants are placed in the outskirts of the centre. In general, a map of the centre represents a map of the categorisations and subject positions at play when the asylum system decodes the ones who migrate to asylum applicants in the asylum centres. The centre is to a large extent organised along heteronormative, gender-binary, and national principles: The families are the centre of the social life, genders are segregated, and the spaces are structured along the lines of nationality. In many ways it is a duplication of the patterns found outside the centres. But in the compact and tense atmosphere of the centres, those who deviate or are perceived as not fitting neatly into this matrix are closely monitored and either compelled to integrate into the dominant pattern or labeled as problems to be dealt with. The marginal becomes the centre of attention. As described by an applicant who stayed in the centre: 'If you are single in your midthirties, coming from Uzbekistan without family, without contact with any of the women staying there, then it means that you are gay.'

Other nonheterosexual applicants say they try to avoid being accommodated in the same room as other people from the same region in order to be able to have a bit of privacy, but that it has been very difficult. Similarly, the spatial organisation along the lines of gender creates problems, in particular for transpersons.

The asylum centres can be described as *total institutions*, a term coined by Erving Goffman back in the 1960s. The totality refers to the fact that they are sharply demarcated from the outside world, whereas a range of barriers, such as between the public and the private, are broken down inside. An example is the stories of abuse and rape committed against nonheterosexual applicants. As a Red Cross nurse working in Sandholm describes: 'It happens at times that they are ridiculed, persecuted, and often abused, sexually. That is what we suspect. We have never heard it directly, but it has been so obvious sometimes.'

Hence, the staff knows that sexual abuse occurs. But they do not act on it, and the abuse is not recorded. Sometimes the abused are moved to single rooms, but

overall the staff does not seem to reflect upon how the very organisation of the centre may influence the abuse. Instead cultural explanations are applied. A nurse explains: 'They have a Muslim faith, meaning that they know that if they disclose it here in Sandholm, they will be excluded or kicked out or harassed.'

In other words, the reason why some applicants in the centres choose not to position themselves openly as nonheterosexuals has to do with their culture or religion. And the harassment from other people living in the centre is explained with the same reference. Other contextual factors are left out of the equation. A nurse tells about someone she describes as a transvestite who stayed in the centre:

He was very different, to say the least. He was so provocative for the others and got into trouble [...] and we were also troubled, because we felt that he transgressed our line of decency in a way. And he was very insisting with tiny briefs and a string vest, and it really stood out.

In the above statement, the nurse marks the (cultural) position of the staff. The transvestite is articulated as transgressive and provocative, not only for the others living in the centre, but also for the staff. Reversing the scope of culturalisation to the organisation and staff of the centres is thus informative about how the intersections of the categories of culture and nation in practice reflects an often not explicitly noticed position – if we continue within the paradigm of culturalisation: a Danish one.

Nonheterosexual or noncisgendered (like heterosexual and cisgendered) applicants do not (only) act as they do because they 'have another culture', but because they relate to and navigate in a specific social practice with certain social positions available. And these positions are linked to the organisation of the centre marked and framed by Danish institutions and 'culture'. The asylum centre is not a neutral space, but a heteronormative and culturally marked space whose structuring allows, limits and excludes certain positions, practices, and identities, and makes certain persons objects of problematisation, such as the transvestite who is/has a problem. And such perceived problems are exacerbated by the pressure which is part of the uncertainty, the waiting, and the lack of privacy and resources experienced by people living in the centres.

This means that one strategy for the residents of the centres can be to align *with* and not *against* the hierarchies and marginalisations of the system and the camps; to fit in the structure, for example by being in opposition to the 'nonheterosexual/noncisgendered asylum applicant'. Residents in the centres may apply strategies in order to claim a special status or

superiority in relation to other residents, and a way of doing so in this context can be to claim markers of what is perceived as 'Danish' (quite similar to what can be observed in relation to various groups under the LGBT umbrella or other minority groups caught in the schism between marginalisation and assimilation). When through the social practice and organisation of the Danish asylum system you observe that heteronormativity and a binary notion of gender is the privileged discursive practice, it is not difficult to explain the homophobia, heterosexism, and abuse.

In the Asylum Closet

This brief tour of the Danish asylum apparatus shows that nonheterosexual or noncisgendered asylum seekers are faced with certain limitations and challenges.

As shown above the individual migration stories are vital for the possibilities of asylum. Our analysis shows that the stories are highly dependent on the social practices through which they are heard, and that certain sexualized and culturalized subject positions are possible whereas others seem to be left out. What is perceived as intelligible and stable seems privileged compared to the ambivalent or unstable, and homosexual male identities are more often articulated than homosexual female, bisexual, or transgender positions.

The analysis also points to the fact that the knowledge produced about so-called countries of origin is highly racialized. The knowledge about conditions for nonheterosexuals or noncisgendered persons is skeletal, and the conditions are explained narrowly in relation to law or culture in ways that seem to underline a knowledge strategy that casts Danish culture as liberal. The public/private distinction is found to play an important role in the reports analyzed with nonheterosexuality confined to the latter.

Furthermore, as shown, the organization of the asylum centers is based on notions of national cultures through which heteronormative socialization seems to be both explained and reinforced.

All in all, life as a nonheterosexual or noncisgendered asylum seeker is likely to be (placed) or remain in the closet. And that is not the best place to be for the granting of rights, stay or survival. ✨

Are you a
gun,

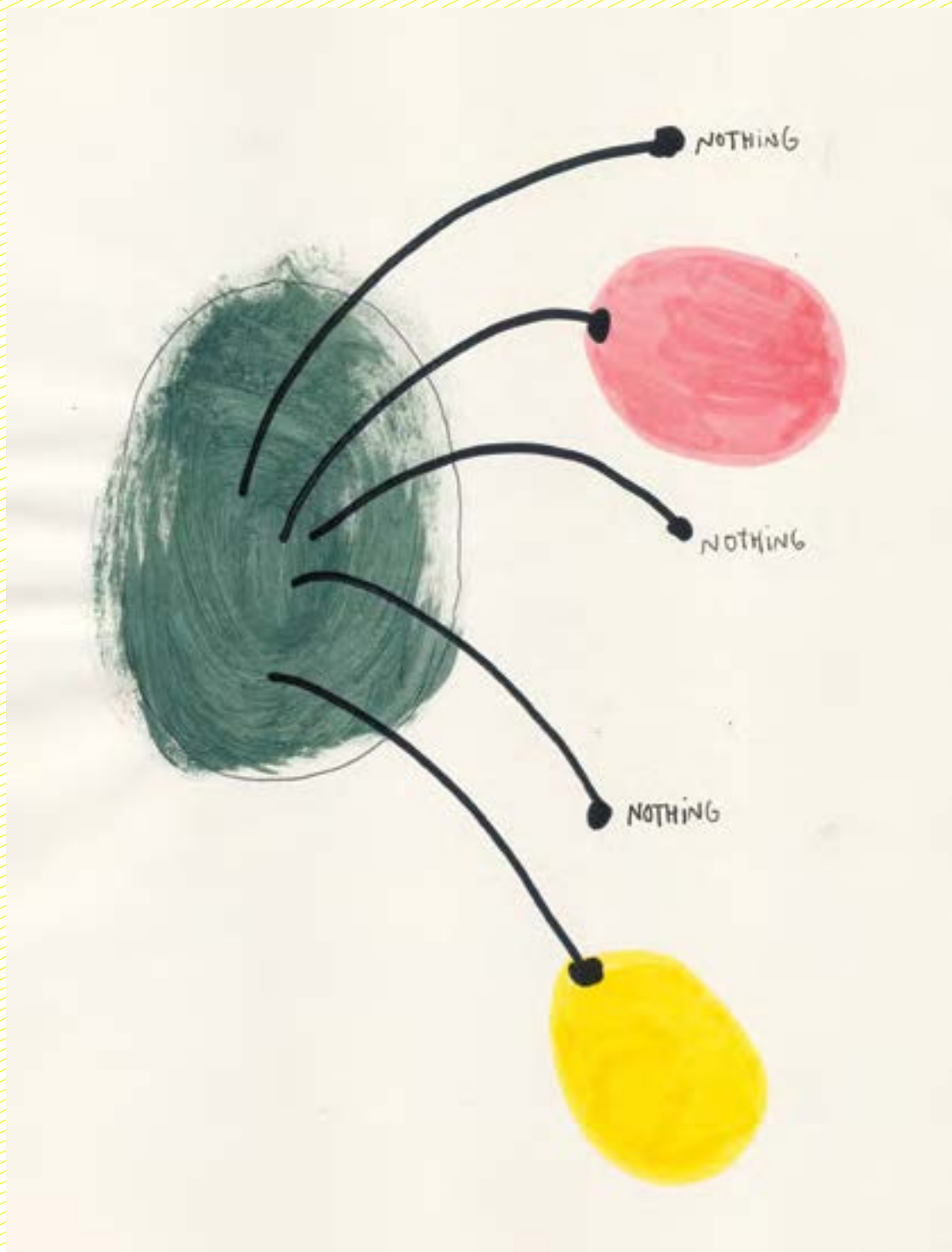
gay

or
a

collecting
box?



Are you a gun
Pencil and pen on paper
Tomas Lagermand Lundme, 2011



Nothing
Pencil, pen and acrylic on paper

What and Where Next?: Some Thoughts on a Spatially Queered Recommended Reading List

Jen Jack Giesecking

Queer (theory) is never done or complete, and we (queers, humans) are each always becoming, whole and otherwise. The readings and artwork brought together in this text from Beirut, Copenhagen, and Tijuana are acts of witnessing and exploring difference. The artists, scholars, writers, and activists in this book reiterate the idea that what/who/where is a queer is a constantly shifting and growing multitude of terrains and landscapes, places and spaces, environments and geographies. What next then? And where?

To help you embark further on the path of queer visual geographies, I have included a series of three recommended reading lists on the topics of geographic theory, queer theory and LGBTQ studies, and LGBTQ studies in geography.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I used to be afraid to get in bed with theory. In getting to know geographic and queer theory, I made more sense of the world and my everyday life. And so I hope you come to enjoy getting in bed with theory as much as I do.

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Biographies

Abril Castro (b. 1976) lives and works in Tijuana and Mexico City, and holds a BA in Spanish literature from the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC). She is an active member of La Línea, an interdisciplinary feminist project of visual arts and literature. Her writing has been published in several journals, including *La Línea* journal, *Bulbo Press*, *Velocet* and *Altanoche*. Her work has been included in *Our Bed Is Green*, an anthology of erotic female poetry printed by Centro Cultural Tijuana (CONACULTA). In 2009 she produced an author's edition of her poetry book *Zona de derrumbes*.

Akram Zaatari (b. 1966) lives and works in Beirut. Zaatari's practice is tied to collecting. He is deeply invested in researching photographic practices, particularly in the Middle East, examining how photography serves to shape notions of aesthetics, postures and social codes. Through site-specific interventions, he is interested in looking at the present through a wealth of past photographic records. Zaatari has been focusing since 1999 on the archive of Studio Scheherazade in Saida (Lebanon), studying, indexing, and presenting the work of photographer Hashem el Madani (1928–) as a register of social relationships and of photographic practices.

Alex Baczynski-Jenkins works with performance and choreography. He graduated from the BA Contemporary dance, choreography, context at the Universität der Kunst, Berlin. He has made the performance pieces *Base*, *Ciné-trance* and *Out*. He was a participant in the Home Workspace program 2012–2013, Ashkal Alwan, Beirut.

Alexandre Paulikevitch (b. 1982) lives and works in Beirut. In 2000, he moved to Paris to pursue his interest in dance. He graduated from the University of Paris VIII with a degree in theater and dance. He has been living in Beirut since 2006, creating spaces of reflection on Baladi dance commonly known as Oriental dance, through his work as a teacher and performer.

Ali Cherri (b. 1976 in Beirut) is a visual artist and designer working with video, installation, performance, multimedia, and print. His recent exhibitions include "Bad Bad Images," a solo show at Galerie Imane Farès (Paris, 2012); "Dégagements," at Institut du Monde Arabe (Paris, 2012); "Exposure," at Beirut Art Center (Beirut, 2012); "Southern Panorama: VideoBrasil" (São Paulo, 2011); "Beirut," Kunsthalle (Vienna, 2011); and "A Fleur de Peau," a solo show at Gallery Regard Sud (Lyon, 2011).

Aya Tarek (b. 1989) is a visual artist based in Alexandria, Egypt. Her work focuses on exploring the notion of urban communication. Aside from her conceptual approach, her vibrant, comical work transmits a sense of simplicity and controversy. Through her site-specific murals, she investigates different ideas concerning the surrounding public spaces. Tarek has participated in various group exhibitions including "PICK 4," at Townhouse Gallery and "Shopping Malls," at Alexandria Contemporary Art Forum (ACAF). She was also a recipient of a number of residencies including the Dakakin residency at Al Riwaq Contemporary Art Space in Bahrain and an artist-in-residence show at the Arnaldo Pomodoro Foundation in Milan.

Bjørn Rasmussen (lives in Århus) is a writer. In 2011 his debut novel *Huden er det elastiske hylster, der omgiver hele legemet* (aka The skin is the elastic sleeve that surrounds the entire body) was published to great critical acclaim.

Bradley S. Epps is a professor and chair of the Committee on Degrees in Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality and a professor of Romance languages and literatures at Harvard University. He has published more than ninety articles on modern literature, film, art, architecture, queer theory, and immigration from Spain, Latin America, Catalonia, the United States, and France and is the author of *Significant Violence: Oppression and Resistance in the Narratives of Juan Goytisolo* (Oxford University Press); *Spain Beyond Spain: Modernity, Literary History, and National Identity* (with Luis Fernández Cifuentes; Bucknell University Press); *Passing Lines: Immigration and Sexuality* (with Bill Johnson-González and Keja Valens; Harvard University Press); *All About Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema* (with Despina Kakoudaki; University of Minnesota Press), and a special issue of *GLQ* (with Jonathan Katz) on Monique Wittig. He is fitfully preparing two books: *The Ethics of Promiscuity*, on cultural and sexual mixings in Latin America and Spain, and Barcelona and Beyond, on the transformations of the Catalan capital from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.

Cesar Fassio, of Colectivo Tripié and Cometa Rojo, is an actor and theater director. He was born in 1983, in Tijuana, Baja California) and earned a bachelor's in theater from Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC). As an actor he has performed in plays directed by Ángel Norzagaray and Jorge Folgueira. He has attended workshops with the Mala Yerba group, Dora Arreola, and Salvador Lemis.

Colin Whitaker (lives in Frankfurt) is an American filmmaker and artist born in 1980 and currently working in Beirut. He studied film at New York University and has exhibited at the P.S.1 Clocktower (New York, 2008), 98weeks Research/Project Space (Beirut, 2010), and at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis (2009). He has made a number of short films and music videos for artists such as Antony and the Johnsons ("Another World," 2008), Palms ("New Moon," 2008) and Sahra Motalebi ("Migrators," 2009).

Elisa Zapata, of Colectivo Tripié, was born in Tijuana, Baja California, and earned a bachelor's degree in visual arts from Escuela de Artes de la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC).

Felipe Zúñiga-González (b. 1978) lives and works in Mexico City. A visual artist, curator, and educator, he holds an MFA from the University of California, San Diego. His videos, performances, and collective projects have shown in Mexico and internationally, including at MOLAA, the Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, California, 2012; the New York Mix Festival, New York, 2012; MDE11, Encuentro de Medellín, 2011, Colombia; Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum (ACAF), Egypt; Kran Film, in Brussels; Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland; El Centro Cultural Español (CCE), Miami, Florida; the Consulate General of Mexico, in Los Angeles, California; and Casa del Lago, Mexico City.

Flo Maak (lives in Seoul) works with photography and installations and was a student of Wolfgang Tillmans. Maak graduated from the Städelschule in Frankfurt, Germany.

François-Xavier Courrèges (b. 1974 in Paris) lives between Paris and Beirut. His work spans different media including video, photography, and drawing. Since the early 2000s, his work has been featured in several solo and group exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Abbaye de Maubuisson, Saint-Ouen l'Aumône; Collection Lambert, Avignon; Art Museums of Bergen; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Fundación/Colección Jumex, Mexico City; Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris; Gagosian Gallery, New York; MAC/VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine; Musée National des Beaux-Arts, Quebec; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Liège; Villa Medicis, Rome; Galeria Nogueras Blanchard, Barcelona; Shanghai Art Museum; Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City; Artcentre de Vishal, Haarlem. He is represented by Galerie Sultana, Paris.

Gabriel Boils was born in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, and lives and works in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. He studied visual arts at the National School of Plastic Arts of the UNAM. His work has been shown in Mexico and the United States, Spain, Poland, Cuba, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica, among others.

Ghiwa Sayegh is completing her MA in English literature at the American University of Beirut. She obtained a minor in creative writing and enjoys writing poems as well as plays that she subsequently stages and directs. In her academic work, Sayegh's research interests are focused on queer and feminist theory, postcolonial studies, and poststructuralism.

Giulia Guadagnoli was born 34 years ago. Educated as a feminist historian, she works on gender mainstreaming and participatory planning. She designs creative activities to support empowerment of minorities, intercultural exchange and social change. She is a passionate researcher and a walk-a-holic explorer. Her favorite hobby is path tracking in unknown urban areas as well as in wild forests. She is fascinated by irony, addicted to self-criticism and fatally attracted to contradictions. She loves lesbians, proud women, queers and independent animals, in addition to all marginalized kids. She thinks of cartography as a forbidden fruit.

Hamed Sinno is a Beirut-based graphic designer and singer-songwriter.

Heber Huizar is a biologist who lives and works in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. He graduated from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California and is currently a candidate for an MA in environmental management at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Tijuana, BC.

Jedidiah Anderson is a PhD candidate at Indiana University and also holds a master's in Middle Eastern studies from the American University of Beirut. His work deals with questions of postcolonialism, power dynamics, and formations of sexual identity, particularly in the Middle East. He is currently working on a dissertation dealing with LGBTIQ activists in Lebanon, Egypt, and Oman.

Jen Jack Giesecking, PhD, is a visiting assistant research professor at the CUNY Graduate Center. She is working on her first book, *Queer New York: Lesbians' and Queer Women's Geographies of Social and Spatial Justice in New York City, 1983–2008*. She is interested in the coproduction of urban space and identity with a special focus on sexuality and gender, and expressions and experiences of justice and oppression. She can be found at www.jgieseking.org and @jgieseking.

Jennifer Donovan who lives and works in Tijuana Baja California, Mexico is an artist, writer, and translator. Her work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Revista Espiral*, *Papeles de la Mancuspia*, *Encyclopedia Volume 2 F-K*, *Abrazo*, and *Bulbo Press*. She has presented work in various independent spaces and museums in the U.S. and Mexico, including: Museo Carrillo Gil (México City, D.F.), the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, Intersection for the Arts (San Francisco), El Museo Nacional de la Ciudad de México (Mexico City, D.F.), and El Centro Cultural de Tijuana (CECUT). She is the co-director and chief editor of La Derramadora Press.

Jesse Anguiano was born in Los Angeles, California, and holds a B.A. in Latin American and Latino studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz and an MA in Latin American studies from San Diego State University. Jesse is currently pursuing a PhD in Chicano/Latino Studies at Michigan State University.

John Pluecker lives and works in Houston, Texas, as a writer, interpreter, and translator. He recently completed an MFA at UC San Diego in experimental writing with a focus on radical aesthetics and cross-border literary production. His work has appeared in journals and magazines in the U.S. and Mexico, including *Rio Grande Review*, *Picnic*, *Third Text*, *Animal Shelter*, *HTMLGiant* and *Literal*. He has published more than five books in translation from the Spanish, including essays by the leading Mexican feminist Marta Lamas, short stories from Ciudad Juárez and *The Black Minutes* by Martín Solares. There are two chapbooks of his work, *Routes into Texas* (DIY, 2010) and *Undone* (Dusie Kollektiv, 2011).

Lars Christian Rank (lives in Copenhagen) is a graduate of the academy of fine arts in Århus, Denmark. He now works within the field of art and design and has recently created his own brand of ceramic works.

Lasse Lau (lives in Brussels) is a visual artist and filmmaker. Lau seeks to utilize aesthetics as a framework that can open dialogical paths. He has exhibited in a wide range of museums and galleries including Allegra LaViola (New York, USA), Lumiar Cité (Lisbon, Portugal), Casa del Lago (Mexico City, Mexico), Westfälischer Kunstverein (Münster, Germany), Kunsthall Århus (Århus, Denmark), Smart Project Space (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Museum of Contemporary Art (Zagreb, Croatia), the Turin Biennial of Contemporary Art (Turin, Italy), Contemporary Museum (Baltimore, USA) and MoMA PS1 (New York, USA). Lau is a cofounder of Kran Film Collective and Camel Collective. He studied at the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program (New York, USA) Media Art Department at Funen Art Academy (Odense, Denmark), and the Hochschule der Künste (Berlin, Germany).

Lene Leth Rasmussen (lives in Copenhagen) is a multimedia designer who works with cell-phone technology for a living. She is a graduate of the Danish Design School and was an active member and performer in the Copenhagen-based collective DUNST.

Line Skywalker Karlstrøm (lives on the Island of Møn) is a performer and visual artist based in Denmark and Berlin. She received an MFA from the Royal Art Academy, Copenhagen and Trondheim Academy of Fine Art in 2006.

Madam Fancy (lives in Seattle) is a member of the Radical Faeries. He/she has a degree in architecture from San Diego and Copenhagen, and finished with a dissertation on the possible architecture for a queer school.

Mads Lodahl (lives in Copenhagen) is a leftwing activist, writer and zine-maker. He cofounded the collective Queer Jihad and has written extensively about queer counterstrategies.

Mads Ted Drud-Jensen (lives in Copenhagen), as a consultant at COWI, has recently written an extensive report on homophobia and discrimination for the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights. He is co-author of the book *Ondt i Røveni* (A pain in the ass), 2005, and has worked intensively with queer rights issues.

Mathias Kryger (lives in Copenhagen) is a performance artist who also curates and writes. He has a background in art history and in pop music.

Martin Jacob Nielsen (lives in Copenhagen) graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and works with gender and reenactment as well as narrative in his sculptural practice.

Marwa Arsanios obtained her MFA from University of the Arts, London (2007), and was a researcher in the fine art department at the Jan van Eyck Akademie in Maastricht (2011–2012). Her work and videos have been widely presented, including in Art Dubai (Bidoun Lounge, Art Park); the Forum Expanded of the Berlinale (2010); Home Works 5 (Beirut, 2010); Tokyo Wonder Site (2010); the Rio de Janeiro Film Festival (2010); the e-flux storefront (New York, 2010); the Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2011); and most recently at the 12th Istanbul Biennial and the Cornerhouse (Manchester, 2012). She was granted the artist's residency at the Arab Image Foundation (2009) and the research residency at Tokyo Wonder Site (2010), and was a Special Prize Winner of the Future Generation Art Prize in 2012. Arsanios is a founding member of 98weeks Research/Project Space.

Max Mejía lives and works in Tijuana, Baja California, as an activist, actor, and cultural promoter. A pioneer of the gay liberation movement in Mexico, he ran as an openly gay federal deputy candidate for two left-wing parties in 2003 (México Posible) and 1982 (Partido del Trabajo). Founder and editor in chief of "Frontera gay" and "Arte de Vivir" two gay publications in the border region of Tijuana, Baja California, México.

Micha Cárdenas lives and works in Los Angeles. An artist and theorist and a PhD student in media arts and practice (IMAP) in the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California,

Micha was the interim associate director of art and technology for UCSD's Sixth College in the Culture, Art and Technology program and an artist-researcher with the the b.a.n.g. lab. Her recent publications include *Trans Desire/Affective Cyborgs*, with Barbara Fornssler, from Atropos Press, "I Am Transreal," in *GenderOutlaws: The Next Generation* (Seal Press), and "Becoming Dragon: A Transversal Technology Study," in *Code Drift: Essays in Critical Digital Studies* (CTheory).

Michel Rivera, of Colectivo Tripié, was born in 1990 in Tijuana, Baja California, and has a bachelor's degree in visual arts from Escuela de Artes de la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC).

Mirene Arsanios is a writer based in Beirut. She holds a master's in contemporary art theory from Goldsmiths College and teaches at the American University of Beirut. In 2007, she cofounded the collective 98weeks Research Project. Her writings have been published in *Bidoun*, *Flash Art*, *Cura Magazine*, *The Rumpus* and *Ibraaz* magazine. She has collaborated on various artist's books, and self-published the magazine, *How to make nice things happen* as well as the short story "Never a Cat." She is currently pursuing an MFA in writing at the Milton Avery School of Arts, Bard College.

Miss Fish (Jørgen Callesen) is a native of Copenhagen and an international performance artist, cofounder of the performance/tranny collective DUNST, and founder of the performance space Warehouse9. The project (T)ove Hansens Plads is initiated by Miss Fish.

Mirs is a queer activist born in Lebanon, and raised in West Africa, and currently living in the Michigan. Her work covers diverse topics including climate change, sexuality, and political campaigns. She believes in inter-sectionality of the topics she covers. She recently founded Zcollective, a non-conforming collective of Arabic people of all sexualities, nationalities, and genders in Dearborn, Michigan, one of the most Arabic-populated cities in the U.S. The collective brings to the community many initiatives on domestic violence and cultural relevance, sex research with immigrant women, sexualities and religion, and photography and sexuality.

Omar Mismar is a visual artist with a BFA in graphic design from the American University of Beirut. He worked at Mind the gap, a Beirut-based design studio. He is involved in design-related research and artistic production. In spring 2011, he joined the department of Architecture and Design at the American University of Beirut as a part-time teacher. He was awarded the Fulbright scholarship for 2012–2014, and is currently pursuing an MFA in fine arts and social practice and an MA in visual and critical studies at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco.

Randa Mirza (b. 1978) lives in Beirut. Mirza has been working as an independent photographer since 2003. She also conducts real-time video performances (commonly known as VJing), and directs workshops using photography and video to reflect and communicate on social issues. After completing a master's in creative advertising at the Lebanese Academy for Fine Arts (ALBA), Mirza graduated from University of Paris VIII with a BA in fine arts and multimedia studies. She attended photography classes at the Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK) in Lebanon. Mirza's photographic work received the first prize at the 5th Francophonie Games and the "NO LIMIT" award at les Rencontres Photographiques d'Arles (2006), an international prize that rewards

a photographer or an artist making use of photography whose work takes photography beyond currently acknowledged boundaries.

Rayya Wehbe is a pseudonym. The editors are well aware of Wehbe's true identity. She lives and works in Beirut.

Richard Kahwagi graduated with a bachelor of fine arts degree in graphic design from the American University of Beirut. Richard has delved into various areas of print, advertising, music, and television. Based in Beirut, he has collaborated with various design studios and advertising agencies in the Netherlands and the Arab world. His work has been sold, exhibited, and included in several publications, and he is currently an independent freelancer, tackling projects from corporate identities and branding to cultural and musical events. With a penchant for Arabic and Latin typography, he sources his inspiration from the surrounding vernacular and DJing. Richard is also part of a collective of DJs who run an indie-electro music blog and operate under the name the BCE (the Beirut-Chicago Express: www.thebce.tumblr.com). His website is www.richardkahwagi.com.

Richard MendTorr lives and works in Tijuana, Baja California. A self-taught artist who developed the project "Lord of Lies' Honest and Heartfelt Art" under which he produces paintings, sculptures, objects, and performances which are "small lies that contain enormous truths."

Rocio del Carmen Valverde del Rio is an activist who lives and works in Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico. She coordinated "Differences without Violence" an educational project for the prevention of violence among same-sex young couples.

Sayak Valencia Triana lives and works in Tijuana, Baja California and in Mexico City and holds a PhD in philosophy, feminist theory and criticism from the University Complutense of Madrid. She is a poet, essayist, and performative exhibitionist. As a performance artist, she uses her queer body to intervene in public space and challenge the patterns of "normality." She has published the following works: *Jueves Fausto* (2004), *El reverso exacto del texto* (2007), *Capitalismo gore* (2010) and *Adrift's book* (2011).

Sune Prahl Knudsen (lives in Copenhagen) is a journalist and former editor of the LGBT magazine *Panbladet*. He is co-author of the book *Ondt i Røven!* (pain in the ass), 2005, and has covered LGBT issues in the Middle East and Eastern Europe for several years.

Tomas Lagerman Lundme (lives in Copenhagen) is an artist and a writer for theatre and has published poetry and fiction as well as children's books. As a visual artist he does photography, drawing, painting, and ceramics.

(T)ove Hansen (born Ove Max Hansen) is from Denmark. She is known for her drag performances at Miss World 1998, 2000, and 2003, Culture Garden 2002–07 and Mr&Ms Dunst 2004. (T)ove was educated at Skandinavisk Teaterskole. www.tovehansendrag.dk

Trine Munk (lives in Copenhagen) is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Fine Art, Copenhagen, and works with feminism and the personal in relation to society, including unemployment issues, the welfare state, and gender structures. She is also a singer-songwriter and is currently working on what she calls a queer stand-up comedy routine.

Wirg/Line Larsen (lives in Copenhagen) is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. She primarily works with interventions in public space and photography.

Yadira Noble, of Colectivo Tripié, is a visual artist born in 1990, in Tijuana, Baja California. Nobles holds a bachelor's degree in visual arts from Escuela de Artes de la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC). She attended the workshop Taller de Pintura Libre in 2008 taught by the painter Álvaro Blancarte. Her works have been shown in local exhibitions such as Tijuana Haciendo Cultura (2010), Necrópolis Fest (2009) and L'Atelier (2007) in Tijuana.

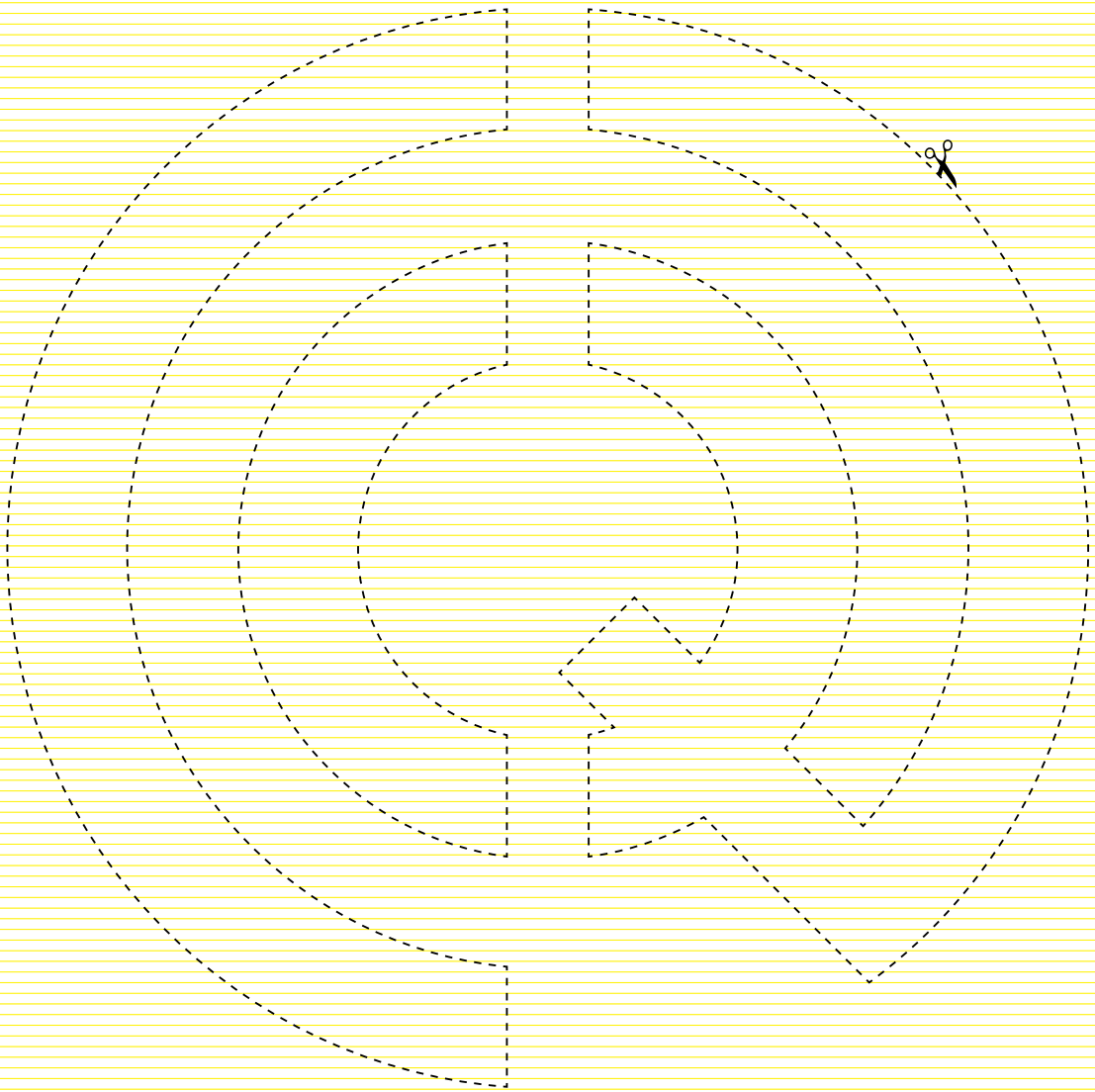
The First Queer Geography Workshop took place at Copenhagen Queer Festival, 2006, Copenhagen, Denmark.
In collaboration with Kabine: Rie Hougaard Landgreen and Michala Eken. Thanks to Lene Leth, Maria Maud, Vibeka Bertelsen, Johan Carlsson, Linda Hilfling, Kristoffer Gansing.

The Second Queer Geography Workshop took place at Lui Velazquez Artist Space, 2007, Tijuana, Mexico.
In collaboration with Lui Velazquez: Felipe Zúñiga-González, Shannon Spanhake, Sergio De La Torre and Camilo Ontiveros.
Funded in part by UCIRA – Conaculta Fonca and Danish Arts Council
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The Third Queer Geography Workshop took place at the Sanayeh House, 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
In collaboration with Alexandre Paulikevitch and 98Weeks: Mirene Arsanios, Cecilia Andersson and Marwa Arsanios.
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This book explores the possibilities of queer identities lived outside of the heteronormative supremacy, uncovering how gender and sexuality are shaped differently by the landscapes of cities and examining how we can shape and form the city ourselves. The works and texts stem from Queer Geography workshops held in Beirut, Tijuana, and Copenhagen.



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