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Sexual Desires, Rights and Regulation

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Sexual desires, rights and regulation

Andil Gosine

Sex has been at the heart of the Caribbean experience at least from the moment of colonial encounter. (It may have well been at the heart of the pre-colonial Caribbean experience too, but we don't yet seem to know enough to confidently make this claim). Anxieties and fears about the sexual proclivities of the region's Indigenous peoples, and later, the African and Indian migrants brought in to labour the land, haunted the imaginations of colonialism's agents. European colonizers feared that the sexual desires of these Others, as well as their desires *for* Others, would result in interracial sex and reproduction and ultimately threaten notions of white racial purity. Regulation of sexual desires and practices was therefore a key component of processes of colonization, and forcefully institutionalized through laws governing family structure, partnerships, prostitution and sex. In the aftermath of official European retreat from much of the region, this determined disciplining of sex was not relaxed. Instead, post-independence reforms often further restricted sexual diversity and liberty, and the regulation of sexuality proliferated as new national and regional forms of governmentality developed across the Caribbean.

A critically important workshop on Caribbean Feminism in Toronto in 2006 led myself, Tracy Robinson and others present to focus on the absence of a broad and sustained discussion about sexualities, sexual rights and their relationship to local and global political transformations as reflected in Caribbean scholarship. Although Caribbean feminists like M. Jacqui Alexander (*Pedagogies of Crossing*), Gloria Wekker (*The Politics of Passion*) and Kamala Kempadoo (*Sexing the Caribbean*), among others, had shaped theoretical frameworks to engage the kind of critical reflection, research and political action we believed were needed on questions of sexual rights, cultures and citizenship in the region, little advance was being made in research and governance institutions and, it sometimes seemed, even in the organization of political action on the

ground. From that moment, Ms. Robinson and I began to plot a way to bring together scholars and rights activists from the region to have preliminary conversations which, we hoped, would be catalysts for collaboration, research and political work. When we reached out to various institutional actors for support in organizing such an event, we were cautioned by many that the issue was too controversial for funders to consider supporting, and some urged us to "make it about HIV and AIDS"; *then*, they said, funding would flow. We refused this route, insistent that our concerns included but certainly stretched beyond health panics about HIV and AIDS. In late 2007, UNIFEM stepped up to the plate, and with the assistance of the UWI Cave Hill Law Faculty, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and some researchers' commitments of their own research funds, a two-day workshop materialized, focusing on the theme "Sexualities in Conversation: Rights and Regulation in the Anglo-Caribbean"; it was held on February 15 and 16, 2008, in Bridgetown. Exchanges at that workshop would lead to this proposal for a special "Sexualities" edition of this journal, which was warmly received and supported by its Board.

The essays collected in this volume provide an indication of some of the activities, insights and questions disturbing the often quiet compliance with the heteronormative models of citizenship and social organization that were introduced at and have been institutionalized since the beginning of colonization of the Caribbean region. Contributors from English-, Dutch-, Spanish- and French-speaking parts of the region turn their attention to a number of events and issues in the collection. Yasmin Tambiah recalls Alexander's seminal examination of sexual citizenship in Trinidad, and uncovers new insights into how postcolonial states use law to refine sexual norms in their constitution of nation. Some scholars provide glimpses into the complex sexual cultures of Caribbean communities, such as David Murray's examination of Barbados' "nebulous queens", and Dwaine Plaza and Amar Wahab's ethnography of queer-identified Caribbean immigrants in Canada. Four contributors—Tara Atluri, Tanya Saunders, Robert Carr and Anthony Lewis—reveal how nationalist struggles about sexuality inhabit and are negotiated in forms of Caribbean popular culture, and two activists—Colin Robinson and Akim Ade Larcher—weigh in on controversial transnational campaigns targeting one form claimed to be particularly productive of homophobia, Jamaican dancehall. Vanessa Agard-Jones and Rinaldo Walcott trouble disaporic claims for sexual rights being made on behalf of Caribbean people, from outside the region, while Jasbir Puar revisits her previous fieldwork in Trinidad, and many of the questions outlined in this volume, to consider how certain queer subjectivities may be induced through tropes of nationalism. Finally, Gloria Wekker shares her frank and compelling insights about some of the core matters underlying all these discussions: pleasure, desire, happiness, love.

Throughout the volume, authors face and engage multiple tensions that surround the production of sexual identity and the regulation of sexual practices, and critically consider some longstanding, but problematic claims about these processes in the contemporary Caribbean. Although the original call for papers was broadly defined, all contributions published here share a strong focus on transnational circuits of exchange. Many of them consider how "local" struggles for sexual rights and "local" ideas about

liberty and personhood in the Caribbean interact with, inform and are also informed by Euro-American-centred concepts of identity. As gay activists, Robinson and Larcher, for example, share some important political commitments but hold quite different attitudes toward the engagement of North American and European gay activists in Caribbean struggles; whereas Larcher sees promise in deepening international collaboration, Robinson warns against what Walcott refers to herein as their "white queer homonormative racism". Agard-Jones, too, is similarly suspicious of some forms of transnational activism in French Caribbean territories. Murray's study of Barbados queens offers us perhaps the most telling truth about the Caribbean's sexual cultures and modes of sexual regulation. Contesting dominant depictions of the region as a uniformly homophobic space, or as one that merely takes cues from outside in negotiating sexual cultures, he concludes that Barbados' 'sexscape' "is neither an illustration of a 'creolized', 'hybrid' culture, nor is it a 'pluralistic' compendium of multiple, discrete cultures", but rather "illustrate[s] the ongoing tension between differentially located and produced subjectivities and values, which are pieced together in myriad, contextually shifting ways." We must foreground this complexity if we are to deepen current knowledge and analysis of Caribbean sexualities.

Numerous shifts have taken place since the seeds of this special edition were planted, illustrating the complexity of Caribbean sexualities and their attendant politics and activisms: For example, in the short period of time that has passed since the Caribbean Feminism workshop of 2006, a number of actions by activists working from within and outside the Caribbean, and publication of several scholarly and fictional collections (e.g. *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Gay and Lesbian Writing* [2008], *Sex, Power and Taboo* [2009] and *Sexuality Social Exclusion and Human Rights* [2009]), have multiplied conversations about Caribbean sexualities, and fostered hope that a better understanding of the region's complex sexual history and contemporary sexual cultures will emerge along with, perhaps, a greater security of sexual rights and citizenship. Although punitive laws governing homosexuality continue to exist in most of the region, more calls are being made to repeal these and other measures restrictive of sexual liberty. Earlier this year (2009), for example, St. Lucia's Constitutional Review Commission heard from three health and rights advocates making the case for law reforms protecting sexual minorities. Although their testimony has been repeatedly televised and published, there has apparently been little public outcry to protest such proposed changes. When Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Gender Affairs declared her government would not entertain discussions about sexual rights, a coalition of activists formed the Coalition Advocating for the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation (CAISO) which has since organized a range of activities demanding the repeal of anti-sodomy legislation. As evidenced by the positive media coverage the group has received—including very supportive editorials from several newspapers—significant headway is being made. In Guyana, the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) is pursuing a range of activities—a film festival, legal strategies, health initiatives—toward the safety and security of marginalized sexual subjects.

Regionally too, there is compelling evidence of a political shift. At its 39th General Assembly, held this past July in Honduras, the Organization of American States approved its second resolution on "Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" which

included a motion “to condemn acts of violence and related human rights violations committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity”. Such positive developments are, however, accompanied by active and well-funded organized resistance to these efforts—such as those by the North American-based Christian Legal Fellowship. Nonetheless, claims for the regard and observation of sexual rights as human rights are clearly on the table in most Caribbean states, with an increasing boldness and authority that had perhaps not previously been seen. There are too many other developments to list here, but suffice it to say that change is afoot throughout the Caribbean in relation to sexualities, sexual rights and citizenship. The need for ongoing critical analysis and research into these changes is more important than ever.

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Bajan Queens, Nebulous Scenes: Sexual Diversity in Barbados

David A.B. Murray

Abstract

This article has three objectives: 1) to provide a brief and partial overview of the complex socio-sexual terrain of Barbados, primarily from the perspective of Barbadian (Bajan) "queens" (effeminate homosexual men, some of whom dress and act like women), such documentation being necessary given the paucity of social science research that currently exists on same-gender sexuality in the Caribbean; 2) to analyze how and why a particular sexual subject position—the queen—appears to occupy a marginally acceptable and relatively visible position in Bajan public culture while normatively gendered "gay"-identified individuals are denigrated and absent in this domain; and 3) to analyze how and why Bajan sexual subjects like "gays" and "queens" do not mirror Euro-American sexual subjectivities and their relationships to hegemonic socio-sexual values. Particularly relevant in the Bajan sexscape are racialized intersections of gender and class structured through discourses of respect and reputation.

Introduction[1]

One does not have to look far these days to find a position on sexual alterity in the Caribbean. For once, popular culture and academia are, for the most part, in agreement on this topic: The Caribbean is generally depicted as a region whose peoples are not tolerant of homosexuality (Reddock 2004). Men are socialized to think of any form of effeminacy or "soft" behavior as weak and deplorable—accusations of "battyman," chi-chi man, buller, macoume, or anti-man are considered to be the worst insults possible (Chevannes 2001, Crichlow 2004, Dann 1987, Lewis 2003, Murray 2002). Certain genres of Caribbean music are gaining an international reputation for being aggressively homophobic (Gutzmore 2004, Mohammed 2004). Caribbean social and political organization has been identified as heteronormative and patriarchal (Alexander 1997, Kempadoo 2004). To sum up, it appears that any expression of sexuality outside patriarchal heterosexuality is uniformly unwelcome.

On the other hand, the long-term and widespread presence of sexual diversity in the Caribbean is increasingly well documented and analyzed (i.e. Glave 2008, Kempadoo 2004, Murray 2002, Padilla 2007, Wekker 2006). From my first visit to Barbados in 1998 until my most recent one in 2009, I have readily found evidence of this diversity: A few days after arriving in Barbados for the first time, my friend Joyce[2], a heterosexual woman in her 60s who owns a rumshop and lives in Brockton[3], a working-class section of Bridgetown, introduced me to her dressmaker, Cynthia, who lived in her own small home a few blocks away and later told me that "us queens have been here forever, darling." At that time, based on Cynthia's appearance and self-description as "always thinking of myself as a lady," I assumed that "queen" was a local term equivalent to the popular Euro-American sexual term (male to female) "transgender." Cynthia was well known on her street, and neighbors would often drop by or shout hello through her open window as they passed by during our chats.

On a subsequent visit in 2002, I began to see references in the local newspapers to a group named "United Gays and Lesbians Against AIDS in Barbados" (UGLAAB). I met and interviewed the founder and President at that time, Darcy Dear, who described how he had owned and managed a bar in Brockton for "queens, gays and lesbians" that had been in existence for at least 20 years. Due to increasing challenges and problems

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[2] I met and became friends with Joyce while I was living in Washington DC and dating her brother, whom she visited regularly.

[3] Brockton is a fictitious name. In addition, all but two names in this article are also pseudonyms. Because of their public visibility and leadership positions within UGLAAB, I could not disguise Didi and Darcy's identities. They consented to having their real names used in this research.

brought about through the HIV epidemic she[4] had felt compelled to start up UGLAAB, which was dedicated to supporting people with HIV/AIDS and educating Bajans (Barbadians) about the virus. Throughout our conversations, Darcy would interchangeably refer to himself as gay or a queen, which confused me at the time based on my understandings of these terms derived through my experiences as a white, North American, gay-identified male. In North America, "gay" and "transgendered" communities are popularly thought of as distinct groups based on their different sexual and gendered orientations (Valentine 2007). At that time, I thought that Darcy's usage of these terms indicated the possibility of at least two or more queer communities existing in Barbados, transgender and gay/lesbian, and that perhaps she was telling me how she felt comfortable in both groups.

During that same visit, one afternoon I was walking down Broad Street, one of the main commercial avenues in Bridgetown, and as I passed by one of the high-end jewelry stores I saw behind the counter a person whom I assumed to be male judging from his outfit—a suit and tie—but the suit was bright red, the tie an iridescent blue, and a multicolored silk scarf was artfully arranged in the breast pocket. Furthermore, this "male" was clearly wearing makeup. Through Darcy, I found out that this was Didi, another self-identified "queen" who later told me she was "well-known to everyone" because she and two other queens did weekly drag shows at hotels and bars around the island, and she was also the multiple award-winning flag bearer of a Kadooment band (street band) for the annual Cropover Festival, Barbados' equivalent of Carnival. Didi became the president of UGLAAB in 2003, and was often quoted in newspaper articles discussing HIV and gay-related issues.

However, it would be wrong to assume that these queens' visibility in working-class neighborhoods, commercial streets, hotels, media, and support groups translates to a social environment celebrating sexual diversity. As I will discuss in more detail below, discrimination and harassment, ranging from being denied housing to verbal epithets and physical violence, are part of everyday life for many queens, and many feel that life in Barbados has become more difficult for them over the past 20–25 years. Indeed, as I have written elsewhere, recent local media coverage of most issues pertaining to sexual diversity (in Barbados or abroad) has been, for the most part, negative and critical (Murray 2006). Nevertheless, the presence of queens, some of whom refer to themselves as gay, in the public culture of Barbados was notable and certainly renders problematic the above depictions of uniform regional homophobia.

This Bajan "sexscape" (to coin a term from Appadurai [1996]) was also notable for the almost complete absence or invisibility of what I would have labeled "gay men" (again, based on my North American experiences and understanding of this term) in public, activist, and/or community leadership domains. In other words, I became curious about

[4] Throughout this article I will use alternating gendered pronouns and adjectives (he/she, his/her) when discussing the queens as a means to more accurately represent their own shifting gendered and sexual self-descriptions between "gay" and "queen." As I elaborate below, terms like "gay" and "transgendered" are problematic as sexual descriptors due to their hegemonic Euro-American origins, which, when applied to the queens' narratives, do not comfortably embody these gendered/sexual subjectivities.

the absence of self-identified gay men—based on my Euro-American definition of "gay" as gender normative males with same sex desires—in Bajan public culture. While I met many self-identified gays and lesbians who attended the UGLAAB meetings, Darcy's bar in Brockton, and semi-private parties around the island, most were discreet and carefully managed their bodies, clothing styles, and language in ways that conformed with gendered and hetero-normative standards in public domains such as the street, workplace and/or school. While Darcy and Didi were quasi-regular figures in the newspapers and were often identified as representatives of Barbados' "gay" community, not once did I see a photo or name of a gender normative gay man or lesbian woman. While the occasional letter to the editor, column, or caller on a radio talk show would support gay and lesbian rights, they would do so anonymously, clarify their sexual orientation as heterosexual, or avoid any reference to their own sexual orientation.

Thus it appeared that queer activism in Barbados was facing a challenge that was directly inverse to that of queer communities in North America: While the latter have made significant progress in achieving lesbian and gay rights and becoming acceptable/accepted in public domains, transgendered people are still struggling to be accepted as equals within both the wider society and the queer community. In Barbados, it *appears* that transgendered individuals have achieved greater public acceptance, or at the very least are more publicly visible, and they are at the forefront of queer community organization and activism whereas lesbians and gays appear to be the problematic group who are less socially acceptable and visible and are not well-integrated into the queer community of Barbados. Thus, the obvious question would appear to be how and why this situation has come to exist in Barbados. How and why is it that transgendered people are visible and relatively socially accepted in public culture while gays and lesbians remain relatively invisible and problematic?

But what if I am asking the wrong question, or at least setting up the question with a series of problematic assumptions? What if my definitions of "gay" and "transgender" are not synonymous with the Bajans who describe themselves as "gay" and "queen"? What if Bajan sexual diversity or the Bajan "sexscape" is organized in ways that partially overlap or are co-constitutive with hegemonic queer Euro-American discourses of identity, community, and activism, while its practices and identities are refracted through other discursive socio-cultural, political, and economic influences generated locally and transnationally? In the rest of this article, I pursue this possibility, arguing that while sexual diversity in Barbados is immersed in, partially productive of, and produced through contemporary Euro-American gendered and sexual politics and identities (which are produced and circulated through mobile bodies of tourists, workers, lovers and relatives, communications technologies, and liberal democratic political and economic policies), this diversity is simultaneously produced through and in relation to local and regional gendered and sexual identity politics. Such politics requires us to acknowledge the ongoing influence of a colonized past, and its attendant classed, racialized, and cultural dynamics that produce unstable, unpredictable, multiple possibilities of sexual subjectivities. I argue that this sexscape is neither an illustration of a "creolized" or "hybrid" culture, nor is it reflective of a "pluralistic" compendium of multiple, discrete cultures, since both of these theoretical approaches risk oversimplification, as noted by

Slocum and Thomas in their excellent historical review of Caribbean anthropology, These approaches tend either to emphasize separate, unintegrated cultural communities existing alongside each other (pluralism), implying an incompatible and dysfunctional socio-cultural system, or they emphasize how Caribbean societies have produced a singular culture that seamlessly blends together the influences of their diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, thus often obscuring ongoing significant cultural, class, and racial hierarchies (Slocum and Thomas 2003; see also Palmie 2006).

Rather, I suggest that the queens' understandings of themselves, their controversial visibility, and the relative invisibility of gays and lesbians reflect subjectivities and positionalities that reflect an ongoing tension between differentially located and produced subjectivities and values. The latter are pieced together in myriad, contextually shifting ways by individuals who are marginalized by virtue of their non-heteronormative desires and identifications, resulting in contextually produced, potentially multiple subject positions (albeit within limits imposed through economic, racial, gendered and other social structures of inequality). This argument is influenced by Tom Boellstorff's notion of "dubbing culture" to explain the formation of contemporary Indonesian "lesbi and gay" subjectivities (2003). Dubbing culture challenges the "global gay" argument which posits that "traditional" sexual cultures, mostly located in the developing world, are adopting Euro-American gender-normative gay and lesbian sexual identities. Boellstorff's analysis emphasizes how Indonesians have learned about these identifications primarily through the international media, but have reworked them as they adopt them for themselves. The "dub" concept is taken from the filmic process whereby a film's original soundtrack is replaced by a version in another language, resulting in a juxtaposition where speech and gesture never fully match: "the seams show" (2003:236). Gay and lesbi Indonesians are thus engaged in a process of bricolage that cannot be fully defined or conceptualized in terms of traditional origins, as neither the origins nor their outcomes are ever fully stable. While Boellstorff focuses on how dubbing culture can be productively applied to thinking through the influence of Western sexual subject positions in non-Western places, the Barbadian sexscape differs in one crucial sense—it has never not been Western. In fact, as many have noted, it may be considered to be part of a region that is the crucible of "Western modernity" as we know it today (Abdur-Rahman 2006; Kempadoo 2004; Slocum and Thomas 2003). Furthermore, as Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman argues, we cannot understand modern Western epistemologies of sexuality without acknowledging their co-formation with racial theories supporting coercive regimes of race-based social stratification deployed throughout colonial empires (2006, 223). In other words, the homosexual and the heterosexual, and their deeply gendered characteristics, were and are defined by and through whiteness, blackness, and the various ethno-racial categories in between. Thus a person like myself, who is identified as a "middle-class gay white academic male" living in present day Toronto, is embedded in a socio-historical process that results in deeply different positions of privilege and power, but which process does not render him any more or less "authentic" in his sexual subjectivity than a person who defines her/himself interchangeably as a "queen" and "gay" in a working-class neighborhood of Afro-Caribbean people in the Caribbean.

My objectives in the remainder of this article are thus threefold: 1) to provide a brief (and of course only partial)[5] description of the complex socio-sexual terrain of Barbados, primarily from the perspective of Bajan "queens"; such documentation is necessary given the paucity of social science research that currently exists on diverse sexualities in the Caribbean (Kempadoo 2004:44, Reddock 2004) and indeed throughout the African-American diaspora (Ferguson 2007); 2) to analyze how and why a particular sexual subject position—the queen—appears to occupy a relatively accepted and visible position in Bajan public culture while gay-identified individuals are apparently invisible; 3) to analyze how and why Bajan sexual subjects like gays and queens do not mirror Euro-American sexual subjectivities and their relationships to hegemonic socio-sexual values. Particularly relevant in the Bajan sexscape are racialized intersections of gender and class structured through discourses of respect and reputation.

"Almost Every Neighborhood Had a Queen"

This quote comes from Cherry, one of the members of the drag show troupe who performed in hotels and bars around the island. In my interviews with Cherry and other self identified queens, I would ask if they remembered seeing or hearing about individuals similar to themselves when growing up. Cherry, who is in her mid-30s, told me that she grew up in a number of "middle class" neighborhoods around Bridgetown with her mother who worked in the government and her father who was a school teacher, and that there was always a queen to be found wherever she lived: "When I was in private school, there was a queen who used to make all the kids' clothes." Divine, another member of the drag show troupe, didn't remember seeing any queens in her self-described "upper middle class" neighborhood, but remembered hearing people talk about "men that dress up" whom they'd call "chi-chi or bullers," and then seeing them every year during Cropover:

> They had their own Tuk band, and I remember everyone in the crowd talking about "the buller band," waiting for them to come down the street with their costumes, makeup and feathers…I was terrified of them but also fascinated by them. Drag queens were fierce then; you could not look at them too hard or they would stab you.

Darcy and Didi also remembered the queens in Cropover parades during their childhood, but Darcy, who is now in his 60s, remembered an even bigger event that attracted a great deal of attention, the "Queen of the Bees" pageant. This annual affair was held at different venues, ranging from the Globe Theater (a movie cinema located near the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Bridgetown) to its most memorable site, the National Stadium, where Darcy told me, "thousands of people, both gay and straight" attended. Other older queens (mostly in their 50s and older), as well as older heterosexual

[5] It should be noted that although women were present in many of the venues I visited such as UGLAAB, Darcy's bar, and of course in the neighborhood of Brockton, the majority of my interviewees were "male-bodied," which means that this analysis of sexual diversity in Barbados reflects a gendered perspective, albeit one that is different from hegemonic heterosexual masculine narratives. Lesbian or female same sex desires and relationships were clearly evident and should be further investigated as their subjectivities, relationships, and organization would contribute to more fully representing the complexity of Bajan sexscapes.

Barbadians, ranging from university professors to residents of Brockton, also remembered hearing or reading about the pageant, and many noted that it was the type of event that members from all levels of society attended. As Darcy put it, this was "an event to be seen at," and everyone attending, from the queens to the straight people, dressed up in their best clothes for an evening of entertainment and socializing.[6] Darcy said the pageant reached its peak in the 1970s but went into decline once the AIDS epidemic hit the island in the mid-1980s along with the rise in popularity of fundamentalist Christian churches.

Mr. Lovelace, an older self-identified gay man in his 70s, also remembered the pageants, but in his neighborhood, near Eagle Hall, he preferred to attend regular semi-private parties for men which were held in a rented room in a private building or in the yard behind someone's house. These parties were attended by mostly married men "who had a grand time with each other," according to Mr. Lovelace, indicating that there was a separate spectrum of less public social events for more gender normative men who desired men. "Everybody (in the neighborhood) knew what was happening at those parties", he added, "but no one fussed."
Most of the queens spoke of a mother or grandmother who "knew and understood" who and what they were when they were growing up: Divine said that her mother and aunt would "kill for me" if anyone threatened or harassed her, and some queens noted that their fathers, stepfathers or male relatives were also supportive, but also cautioned them "to be careful out there" (Gigi). However, Darcy told me that over the years she had sheltered young queens who had been thrown out of their homes by their families, once again indicating that there was uneven acceptance of non-normatively gendered individuals in communities around Barbados. Darcy said the older queens would look out for and protect the younger ones "coming up," and would give them advice and provide them with a roof over their heads as well as other forms of material and economic support if necessary.

In Brockton, the working-class neighborhood where Darcy's bar had been in operation for at least 20 years, I was informed that most people (male and female) had their best clothes made by queens, and that some queens ran rumshops, which were frequented mostly by heterosexual men, while others operated small convenience stores out of a room at the front of their home. Joyce, who grew up in Brockton, said that everyone knew the queens, and that while the children would often make jokes about them to each other they would never dare directly taunt a queen: "They were fierce and got respect." Many of the queens' tales of yesteryear also included memories of being verbally harassed as youngsters: name-calling, such as buller, chi-chi, girlie, in school yards and on the street, was a common occurrence, but most added that this was not accompanied by the threat of physical violence. Gigi, a younger queen in his 20s, said he was never "bashed" growing up, although he would "talk back hard" and confront his harassers. Fierceness through "talking hard" or fighting back and "getting respect" were qualities of the queens repeated by other interviewees which I eventually understood to be indicative of a particular calculus through which gendered and sexual diversity was organized and evaluated in these working-class communities. Cherry summarized it most succinctly:

[6] Interestingly, one informant told me that the pageant was organized by a heterosexual married woman.

> There were a lot of people who were very, very tolerant, but, once again, what they were looking for is how you carry yourself; if you are common…you will be treated that way. If you carry yourself in a certain way, the respect you will be carrying; you would get the respect of your peers, so it's a trade off.

What emerges from Cherry's comments are "classic" Caribbean social referents of respectability and reputation negotiated in and through local public and semi-private domains such as the street, yard, shop, and holiday celebrations. Cherry notes how a queen would earn respect from her peers through the way she "carried" herself, which encompasses not just bodily comportment but also behavior toward and treatment of fellow community members. Yet equally important was the queens' reputation for being fierce and standing up to anyone who confronted her, so that respect was also derived from having a fierce reputation.

As noted in the numerous debates over the organization, arrangement, and salience of respect and reputation as a primary organizational structure of Caribbean socio-cultural life, it is deeply problematic to assume that either one can be achieved by or applied to only one class, race, age group or gender (Freeman 2007, 5–6; Slocum and Thomas 2003, 556; Thomas 2004, 5–6 Whitehead 1997, 422–423)[7]. Chevannes' research on the role of the street in the socialization of poor, urban Jamaican males emphasizes how the street is interpreted to be the primary site where reputation is learned; it is a male space where "toughness" is learned and it is the site of (hetero) sexual initiation (2003). Stories of growing up in Brockton conveyed similar elements of toughness on the street, where boys who didn't act in an appropriately masculine way were insulted and harassed; but I think it is notable that these stories also included memories of queens walking the streets, running shops, and participating in public celebrations in which they interacted, confronted, worked, and partied with fellow community members. Through a combination of "respectable" behaviors (running a business, looking after family members, treating neighbors courteously, not flaunting their private relationships in public, not being a gossip) and having a reputation for talking "hard" (see Abrahams 1983) or fighting back if they were challenged or insulted, these queens were engaged in and practiced a set of values, an ethos or calculus of worth that other members of these working-class communities shared, which transcended or at the very least repositioned gendered and sexual desires so that they were not the only or primary features through which an individual was identified and evaluated. I will return to this point below, but suffice to say at this point that from the queens' stories of life in Afro-Barbadian communities up to the mid-1980s, a picture emerges of gendered and sexual diversity that was visible and at the very least acknowledged, if not unequivocally accepted in everyday life.

Queens and/are Gays

As noted above, most queens felt that they were more accepted "back then." This opinion emerged through the memories of queens in their 50s or older, such as Darcy and

[7] [7] See Wilson 1973 for one of the first descriptions of this dynamic in the Caribbean.

Cynthia, and in younger queens like Divine, Didi, Cherry (all in their 30s) and Gigi (26) who would remember stories and experiences of older queens from their childhoods and compare them with their lives today. Explanations abounded as to why attitudes had changed, but the most common factors noted were the rise of the HIV/AIDS epidemic throughout the 1980s, the increased popularity of fundamentalist churches (Pentecostal, Wesleyan, Evangelical, 7th Day Adventist), and the increasing popularity of Jamaican music, specifically dance hall in the 1990s, with its aggressively hetero-masculine, misogynist, and homophobic lyrics. Darcy had to close her shop in the late 1980s and leave the island for a few years as her friends started to "drop off" from AIDS and rumors spread that AIDS could be caught from that shop. When she returned in 1999 she took over the bar which had been run for many years by a gay couple who had both died from AIDS. Darcy said the bar became a refuge for queens, gays, and lesbians who were now forced into hiding because of people's fear and ignorance of the virus. This discrimination against and suffering of her friends and patrons motivated him to organize UGLAAB and hold an official public launch in National Heroes Square (located in downtown Bridgetown) on World Aids Day in 2001. Although there was some controversy around the launch, Darcy maintained that the group was welcomed by the Minister of Health and the Director of the newly formed National HIV/AIDS Commission.

Many of the queens felt that an additional problem today was lack of support and mutual respect between gays and queens, but there were diverse explanations as to what the divisions were based on and why this was so: Some, like Gigi, identified malicious gossip as a reason why he couldn't trust his fellow gays: "when you see it comes to that mouth, and that red carpet unrolls and they speak with that big trumpet of a mouth, they can destroy you, you know?" He felt that other gays were jealous of him because of his success in the fashion design business at a young age. Gigi also felt that a lot of men who were bisexual or "on the down-low", (keeping their desire for and sexual relationships with other men a secret from family and workmates) "don't want any gays around them because we are openly gay people who feel comfortable with our sexuality." Gigi's comment introduced a distinction between being openly gay and other categories of bisexual or down-low men, which I did not hear mentioned in the stories of yesteryear, although there was often mention of the need to be discreet. Other queens such as Didi and Cherry emphasized the lack of mutual support between themselves and gays, and felt that they were the ones doing most of the work supporting and defending the community against hostile public opinion.

What I found interesting and confusing in these discussions were the various ways in which individuals would employ various combinations of gendered and sexual identity terminologies to describe themselves and the sexscape of contemporary Barbados. As noted above, the range of terminologies and divisions through which gendered and sexual desires were identified, organized, and compared seems to have proliferated in the talk about contemporary Bajan socio-sexual life in the Barbados of yesteryear. One of my first interviews was with Cherry, whose descriptions of problems faced by gendered and sexual minorities in contemporary Barbados were, to me at that time, articulate and easy to comprehend:

> Cherry: A lot of the gay people have lost respect in themselves…because of the way they carry themselves.
>
> D: Are they rude to you?
>
> C: Ya, ya, ya. Some of them are rude, bombastic, uneducated; there is a whole list of negativities that some of them carry and they carry them with glee.
>
> D: So, like, why have gay guys become more disrespectful to themselves and to others?
>
> C: I think lots of gay men have seen that queens have actually been more accepted than gay men…I think that lots of queens here can do things and go places and get away with stuff that a gay man would get a bit of a tongue-lashing for.
>
> D: If people found out he was gay?
>
> C: Ya. (We) are totally out there, we have nothing to hide, our life is an open book. But you've got somebody now who is in the closet, got the family, the kids and all that stuff and they've got a lot to lose…so they avoid many things, and you find they actually avoid queens.
>
> D: That's kind of sad.
>
> C: Yes, that is sad, because wherever we go we don't just push queens, we push gay people first, and we take it to a deeper level.

Throughout most of our interviews Cherry maintained a relatively clear distinction between queens and gays, and I found her descriptions of the two groups relatively easy to comprehend as they reflected my understandings of the transgendered/gay divide in North American mainstream queer culture. Cherry described herself as transgendered and in the process of transitioning from male to female, so that her body was "coming into balance" with her mind in which she'd always known she was a girl. Growing up she said she never thought of herself as being gay, although some people considered her to be that.

On the other hand, Divine never referred to herself as transgendered, using the term "queen" instead, but like Cherry, said she had grown up feeling that she was a girl trapped in a boy's body, and had always dreamed of being "a living black Barbie." Yet a few minutes after telling me this standard (according to my perception) transgendered line, Divine described how, when she was 17, the pastor at her Pentecostal church had tried to cure her of her sickness by telling her that God would punish her by giving her AIDS, which she found strange as "I never told him I was gay." She went on to discuss how, "as a gay person you face so many obstacles…so it is important to find a path to

spiritual enlightenment." Divine's array of sexual identity terms in our conversations confused me, as I assumed that a transgender person would not describe herself as gay since the latter term, according to my Euro-American definition, refers to mutually desiring normatively gendered males which Divine didn't by virtue of her gender transformative appearance and self-description. Later, I asked if she preferred men or women sexually, thinking that if she desired women then the gay self-appellation could make sense (i.e. if she thought of herself as a woman who desired other women, then her sexuality would be gay). Divine laughed when she heard this question, and responded, "honey, I'm just like you. It's all about men." When I asked if this meant I was a queen, she replied, "Yes, you're a queen, I'm a drag queen, aren't we all the same? …You're just wearing men's clothes." Other queens also alternated between describing themselves as a queen or gay, often introducing various sub-categories, ranging from "butch" queens (males who wear men's clothing styles and often acted masculine in public) to "posh" queens (males who have well-paying jobs and/or had money and dressed in expensive, trendy men's fashions, who may or may not be effeminate in their mannerisms) to "thugs" (males whose dress-styles and mannerisms emulate popular rap and dance hall singers) who were described by Gigi as just another type of "C class" queen, meaning that while they were rude, aggressive, and common in their behavior, they were still, in the end, queens.

This "code-switching" of terms in some Bajan queens' conversations does not necessarily indicate a scenario in which new, "foreign" terminologies like gay and transgender have entered local lexicons and are rubbing up against and possibly replacing local distinctive terms like queen (see Altman 2001). While I am quite sure that sexual identity terms like gay were not created in Brockton, many have been in circulation there and throughout Barbados since at least the early to mid-1980s.[8] It is problematic to be still considering such terms foreign when they have been part of the local lexicon for over 20 years and possibly longer. However, instead of framing the argument in terms of local vs. foreign sexual terminologies (which carries more than a whiff of the problematic rubric of "authentic vs. corrupted" culture debates), I think it is more productive to foreground the ways in which these socio-sexual and gendered identifications overlap and abut, but never fully collapse into each other, and thus convey, as David Valentine has suggested, alternative ways of thinking through and organizing bodies and their desires (2007). Valentine's ethnographic work amongst individuals in New York City who are labeled transgender by LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered) and queer activists and community support groups revealed that many (but not all) individuals who are working-class, Latino and/or African American often make claims similar to those of the Bajan queens i.e. "I've been gay all my life, been a woman all my life." (2007:3). Valentine draws attention to transgender as a term "with a history and a politics," and charts its rise in popularity in the USA, focusing on how it reflects a particular separation and configuration of gender and sexuality developed primarily by and for white, middle-class

[8] This statement is based on my archival research of *The Nation*, one of Barbados' two daily newspapers. I conducted a content analysis of the *Nation* since its inception in 1973 for references to homosexuality. I read every issue of the *Nation* published from September 1 to December 31 in the years 1974, 1984, 1994 and 2004. While a couple of 1974 issues referred to "homosexuals," the term "gay" first appeared in 1984 in reference to a gay man named as a judge in a New York.

homosexual men, which works to exclude others who don't conform to this division. Valentine argues that these exclusions often operate in terms of race and class where overt (read: performatively effeminate) homosexuality is not compatible with white middle-class status and employment (2007, 43). Therefore, since the 1970s, homosexuality has been defined primarily upon the premise that gender and sexuality exist as two distinct, experiential categories. Male homosexuality has been defined primarily in terms of sexual orientation; in terms of gender, male homosexuals are normative masculine male-bodied individuals who are no different from their heterosexual counterparts except for what they do in the bedroom (2007, 61–63). "Gay" has thus come to represent a gender normative sexual orientation; if an anatomically male individual desires another male but thinks of himself or acts like a woman, then he is no longer gay but transgender; in essence, his gendered desires trump his sexual ones in terms of placement in this (arbitrary) dual structure of gender and sexuality.

In his work with African American and Latina sex workers, Valentine describes the complex terminological terrain they employ to describe themselves and others which, at times, resonates strongly with the queens' descriptions of themselves and the Bajan scene. Perhaps most important in relation to the Bajan queens' conversations, Valentine asks us to think about what it would mean "to talk about butch queens, butches, fem queens, women, transsexual women and butch queens up in drags as all, simply, 'gay'"? (2007:84). In other words, when a male-bodied individual discusses how living and/or performing as a woman does *not* preclude her from being gay (where gay indexes erotic desire by and for someone who is male bodied) we should be attempting to make sense of their subjectivity from a position that does not assume that bodies, desires, and identifications can only be understood through conceptually distinct categories of gender and sexuality (see also Kempadoo 2004:27–28). At the same time, we cannot dismiss completely the Euro-American gender-sexuality framework and its attendant terminologies which are utilized in some of the narratives such as Cherry's.

When queens like Darcy, Divine, and Didi appear to be comfortable using "gay" and "queen" interchangeably for any male-bodied individual who desires another male-bodied individual, they are organizing bodies and their desires in ways that, at the very least, trouble Western mainstream LGBT categories that are presupposed upon a particular arrangement of distinctions between gender and sexuality: If male-bodied individuals who desire other male bodied individual—running the gamut from those who dress and act like women to those who dress and act like heteronormative men—are all labeled gay, then it would seem that sexual object desire operates as the categorical imperative. However, if this same range of individuals also labels themselves as queens, a term that implies effeminate or feminine behavioral and sartorial characteristics, then it would seem that what we (using a Euro-American framework) call gender is operating as the categorical imperative. There is simply no way that gender and sexuality can be completely and separately distinguished in these formulations; yet I am not convinced we can fully abandon them as analytical frameworks as they do help us to understand how desire, bodies, and behaviors are not reducible to simple dualities constructed through biological determinism (cf. Butler, 1990, 1993). At the very least, many of the Bajan

queens acknowledge the sexual and gendered heterogeneity of their own and other's desires and identities.[9]

This deep entanglement of gender and sexuality in some of the queens' descriptions of themselves and the people they know may also help to explain the absence of gay-identified individuals in more public contexts like the media, community and activist leadership roles. As noted at the beginning of this article, Bajan queens are socially visible not only through the obvious fact that by virtue of their dress and comportment they stand out in everyday contexts such as the street, bar or workplace, but also through the fact that some, such as Didi and Darcy, have been identified as spokespersons for the gay community through their leadership in UGLAAB (United *Gays and Lesbians* Against Aids in Barbados [my emphasis]), or in media articles where they are asked about gay life in Barbados and/or identified as a gay person. For example, in a two-page interview with Didi in the daily newspaper *The Nation*, the headline reads "Didi the Daring Diva"; to the right of it, in bold text, is a caption reading, "Didi never had any doubt about his sexual orientation: 'I knew I was gay from the time I was born,'" which accompanies a couple of photographs of Didi in her Kadooment band costume and wearing well-tailored pants and a shiny shirt with a colorful scarf wrapped around the collar (Henry and Hall 2004). Another article titled "The Kings of Queens" reviewed Didi and her fellow drag queens' performance at a bar in Holetown where the author writes that she "indulged in artistic depravity once again with the three queens of drama" (Lovely 2005:18). Thus, in public discourses such as the media's, queens are the only visible representatives of any gay community or identity, leaving other, more gender-normative homosexual identities unmarked, or in some cases, marked as underground, down-low, and/or dangerous in terms of their potential threat as carriers of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases into the heterosexual population. In other words, the public circulation of gay is synonymous with queen, so that the latter category operates as the default public representation of homosexuality. While this may not be a problem for queens like Divine and Darcy, gender-normative male individuals who identify as gay (and do not necessarily identify as a queen) may seek to avoid any public disclosure of their identity because of the fear of being assumed to be effeminate like the queens, and/or fear of being harassed by those who have come to associate gay with disease and duplicity[10].

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[9] See Roderick Ferguson's description of "black rural sissies" in rural Georgia in the 1970s (2007) for a similar description of gendered heterogeneity.

[10] The perceptions, experiences and opinions of gender-normative gay-identified Bajan males require further analysis that is beyond the scope of this article but it should be noted here that most of the gay-identified men I knew did not explicitly state that they feared being identified as a queen. However, I discovered that certain characteristics of the (effeminate) queen represent taboo behaviors which these men try to distance themselves from as much as possible: Dwight, a self-identified gay man who was "undercover" (his term for signaling that he was not out about his sexuality at work or to his family), would often comment on my inappropriate clothing choices, saying that he was embarrassed to be seen with me wearing such tight shirts and short shorts. This would always surprise me, as in my opinion, I was wearing conservative clothing according to my gay white middle-class cultural norms (i.e. a loose-fitting cotton T-shirt and baggy shorts that ended just above my knees). Robert, who also identified as gay, told me to "stop breaking" my wrists one day when we were having lunch at Chefette, a local fast food chain. He felt that I was flopping my hands around too much as I talked which was drawing suspicious looks from people at surrounding tables. Thus for these self-identified gay males, the management of gendered performativity,

Bread and Two Faggots

While the queens' terminologies and descriptions of the sexscape in Barbados were varied and complex, one theme found in most discussions of self and society was that of respectable vs. common or "bombastic" behavior. As discussed earlier, when the queens and Brockton residents talked about the past, they would emphasize how the queens of yesteryear were fierce and earned respect from everyone in their neighborhood through a combination of reputational and respectable practices. The importance of being respected and acting in a way that is not perceived to be common or rude continued to occupy a central theme in the queens' narratives of their lives in the present day, but it also operated as another means to divide homosexuals (and sometimes the entire population of Barbados) into different categories. Gigi was particularly articulate on this issue: As I noted earlier, it was Gigi who divided gay people into three categories, A, B, and C class:

> Gigi: You call the A class person [someone] who already have it made, have a good income, nice job, they've got a house, and are mostly older. And persons in the B class are persons who are on that path, who want to make themselves someone, who are working very hard, working their ass off. They are trying to succeed in life and they don't depend on no one or any person. But C class now is the ones who are just, like, want to drag you down, pull you down. They are commoners. We call them bread and two faggots.
>
> D: What does that mean, bread and two faggots?
>
> Gigi: Fishcakes, you know we call fishcakes bread and two. There is two fishcakes in a salt-bread, yes? So they call them bread and two, that is what they're worth.
>
> D: So bread and two faggots is, like, the lowest low?
>
> Gigi: Ya, the lowest low, a dollar-fifty.
>
> D: Wow, that's cheap!
>
> Gigi: Yes, very cheap (laughter).

Not surprisingly, Gigi described himself as a B class on the way to A class individual. Gigi worked in an international credit card call centre in Bridgetown, and thus had a regular income. He also taught fashion modeling classes, and was paid to organize the occasional fashion show for his designer friends. While acknowledging he was not a

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particularly in relation to clothing styles and physical movements that might be interpreted to be effeminate, occupied a central role in the construction of a socio-sexual identity, and while not stated explicitly, the (effeminate) queens such as Didi and Darcy likely operated as a sort of foil against which both gender normative masculinity and homosexuality were evaluated.

posh queen (another term for the "A" class), he clearly admired and aspired to be like this group.

While other queens were not quite as fine-grained in their analysis of queer classes, there would be consistent references to other queens or gays whose behavior was inappropriate and reflected poorly on the community as a whole. Darcy spoke about how she wanted to make her bar look nice so that it would be known as a "respectable place" where gays and lesbians could enjoy themselves and other people would see that they were not "low-life". He also noted that the bar attracted men from "all different levels of society," from Brockton to the wealthier suburbs in the hills around Bridgetown. When I asked her to elaborate on these different kinds of men, he responded, "There are different circles of gays here, different levels, but society is a state of mind: You can have a bigger house, car, job but in the end you come here (the bar) to meet boys." I interpreted this comment to convey a slightly different position from Gigi on stratification amongst gays and queens in Barbados: Whereas Gigi's divisions created the impression of separate and distinct classes that did not interact with each other (especially the "A" class), Darcy's description acknowledged class distinctions but simultaneously emphasized their (temporary) transcendence through similar desires which placed them outside any heteronormative classed structure.

Two points emerge from these descriptions of gay/queen "classes": First, that status, often described in terms of socio-economic difference, but also in terms of comportment and interpersonal social skills, is an important structuring principle of difference within queer networks in Barbados, which is not particularly surprising, as there is much discussion in research on Barbadian society of the important ways in which class structures and separates i.e. in terms of a small elite white landowner and business class, a now growing Afro-Caribbean middle class of educators, civil servants and entrepreneurs, and a still significant Afro-Caribbean working class who continue to struggle to make ends meet, (Beckles 1990, Barrow and Greene 1979, Freeman 2007). The second point is to reiterate the importance of respectability as a dynamic social ethos which simultaneously creates, reinscribes, and transcends gendered, classed, and sexual divisions in Barbados (Freeman 2007, 5). In the queens' statements we witness tension between an idealized vision of an egalitarian unified community (whether that is amongst queens, gays, heterosexuals and/or all Bajans) premised upon mutual respect of and for all fellow citizens, and their perceived reality of a community riven with stress, envy, and resentment due to gendered, sexual and socio-economic differences, which therefore requires each individual to be prepared to be fierce and to "look out for herself" or to at least distance himself from others who insult, attack, and deride.

Conclusion

I began this article by asking: what if Bajan sexual diversity or the Bajan "sexscape" is organized in ways that partially overlap or are co-constitutive with hegemonic queer Euro-American discourses of identity, community, and activism, but whose sexual practices and identities are refracted through other discursive socio-cultural, political and economic influences generated locally and transnationally? Based on the analysis of life narratives of individuals who identify themselves as gay, queen, transgender or some

combination of these terms, I have argued that while sexual diversity in Barbados is immersed in and partially produced through contemporary Euro-American gendered and sexual politics and identities, it is simultaneously produced in and through a relationship to local gendered and sexual identity politics, which requires us to acknowledge the ongoing influence of a colonized past, and its attendant classed, raced and cultural dynamics that produce unstable, unpredictable, multiple possibilities of sexual subjectivities. This sexscape is neither an illustration of a "creolized," "hybrid" culture, nor is it a "pluralistic" compendium of multiple, discrete cultures. The queens' understandings of themselves, their controversial visibility, and the relative invisibility of gays and lesbians reflect subjectivities and positionalities that simultaneously challenge and reveal their embeddedness in any singular Western or African, gendered or classed framework. Their narratives illustrate the ongoing tension between differentially located and produced subjectivities and values, which are pieced together in myriad, contextually shifting ways by individuals who are marginalized by virtue of their non-heteronormative desires and identifications. The result is contextually produced subject positions that may appear to be blended, multiple or fractured from a Euro-American socio-sexual perspective, but these verbs reflect more the social and analytical frameworks of the researcher than they do the viewpoint of the Bajan queens. Indeed, the queens' self-understanding is produced through a local ethos influenced by multiple external factors, in which we can also identify locally generated values where individual identity is constructed through a complex, fluid calculus of classed, raced, sexed and gendered roles. These roles, in turn, are constrained by principles of respectability and reputation.

In their stories of the past and present, the queens stressed the importance of a combination of respectable behaviors and having a reputation for talking "hard" or fighting back if they were challenged or insulted. Related to respectability was status, often described in terms of socio-economic difference, but also in terms of comportment and interpersonal social skills, thus operating as a structuring principle of difference within the queer community (and reflecting its importance throughout Barbadian society). For the queens, respectability is a dynamic social ethos which simultaneously creates, reinscribes, and transcends gendered, classed, racialized and sexual divisions in Barbados.

Worth repeating is the cautionary proviso that this article represents only a very partial glimpse into the complex and rich terrain of sexual diversity in Barbados: gay-identified males, bisexuals,and lesbians were mentioned in my interviews and circulated through media discourse and thus merit further investigation for their views on everyday Bajan social life. Further research is also needed into interrogating the means through which status or class divisions may (or may not) segregate queer people in Barbados, and produce differing value systems and subjectivities. Also, the ways in which local sexual subjectivities are produced in relation to regional connections with other Caribbean islands and beyond (i.e. African-American socio-cultural influences) merits further investigation.

Finally, we cannot forget the obvious, but important fact that the presence of sexual diversity in this society does not equal the celebration of it. It is doubtful that queens ever had it easy in Barbados—terms like buller and chi-chi man have been around for a long

time and have always been used as insults in public contexts, and the queens face daily battles of harassment as they try to go about their business. Yet it is equally problematic if we lapse into making over-generalizing statements such as “Barbados is a homophobic society,” because they silence and flatten out the complex ways in which bodies and their desires are organized and evaluated in everyday life. As researchers and activists we must continue to focus on these rich narratives, interactions, and performances, or we run the risk of creating the very thing are trying to challenge.

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Creating (Im)moral Citizens: Gender, Sexuality and Lawmaking in Trinidad and Tobago, 1986

Yasmin Tambiah

[i]

Abstract

Since the 1980s, constructions of gender and the organization of sexuality have become subjects of acrimonious debate in the public arena of law-making in certain postcolonial states. Rooted in the process that led to the revision of the Penal Code of Trinidad and Tobago in 1986, and engaging with the pioneering work of Trinidadian scholar, M. Jacqui Alexander, this paper examines how gender and sexuality interconnected with nationalism and notions of modernity to generate "moral" and "immoral" citizens in parliamentary discourse and legal terrains, with particular implications for women and for persons who did not conform to normative sexual behaviours.

[i]

Introduction

I first read Jacqui Alexander's phenomenal essays on law and sexuality in postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago (Alexander 1991 and 1994)[ii] while writing a paper on sexuality and human rights for an international women's human rights initiative that was to coincide with the United Nations World Conference on Women, 1995. Within a few pages of reading her work, I realized hers was the kind of project with which I wanted to be engaged. Little did I anticipate then, that in a few years I would be working on a comparative study that focused on the process and implications of Penal Code changes in Sri Lanka (where I am from) and Trinidad and Tobago. Alexander's work became both inspiration and site of critical engagement. While this paper focuses on Trinidad and Tobago, the insights gleaned from the comparative study inform its analytical content, just as Alexander's pioneering scholarship undergirds the theoretical framework for the whole.

In November 1986, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago passed the Sexual Offences Act. Its passage had been marked by controversy within Parliament and widespread public debate on "Clause 4"—the marital rape provision. If a married woman's presumed perpetual consent to sex with her husband was capable of being questioned, then heterosexual marriage itself could be under threat. The continuous privileging of marriage was achieved not only by underscoring a sexually compliant female spouse, but also by delineating legitimate, and thus illegitimate, sexual behaviours. Defining acceptable sex was possible only by simultaneously defining unacceptable sex, just as privilege is possible only because its lack is simultaneously authorized. Thus, the debates in Parliament were haunted by the spectre of non-normative sexual behaviour. This paper is concerned with how, in the course of the Sexual Offences Bill and the parliamentary debates that refined it, the category of "woman" was understood and (re)constructed. It is occupied with how sexual deviance was constructed so as to elevate marital heterosexuality, and with the configuring of morality as "proper" sexual behaviour, which constitutes the basis for being citizens. Drawing on parliamentary debates and legal texts, complemented by newspaper reports and interviews, it examines how particular discourses of gender and sexuality in law-making and the domain of criminal law intersected with other social concerns and with political imperatives that were informed by nationalism and notions of modernity, to constrain female citizens and

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[ii] Alexander revisits these issues in her book, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 2005, p. 180 ff.

(some) male citizens in new ways. In doing these analyses, I engage with Jacqui Alexander's work and test the validity and limits of her conclusions.

In discussing the general so as to situate the particular, it is notable that over the past three decades, sexual behaviours and their organization have often been bitterly contested in legal terrains of the global south (consider Trinidad and Tobago, Sri Lanka, and most recently, Singapore). Scholars of twentieth-century postcolonial challenges have demonstrated how definitions of the reproductive and sexual roles of citizens (especially if female) in "state" texts such as constitutions and other collections of law have held critical implications for the reconstruction and self-representation of a postcolonial state. Nationalist leaders, charting the course of political, economic and social development of postcolonial states, negotiated between embracing a secular, scientific model for modernization— one that drew on post-European Enlightenment schemes of reasoning and knowledge—and recalling or reinventing cultural and religious traditions from an inevitably glorious, autonomous, pre-colonial past.[iii] This tension between the presumed opposites of modernity and tradition remains at the core of procedural, epistemological and public moral dilemmas being negotiated by postcolonial states in the global south.

We are familiar with how women have been charged with bearing the nation, either biologically or as preservers and transmitters of cultural symbols, in anti-colonial, nationalist movements. Central to the efficacy of this programme is women's compliance with prescriptions that reify female sexual containment through compulsory heterosexuality, marriage and motherhood, and a general adherence to social norms that constantly re-inscribe "woman" as a natural, predetermined, already evident category requiring protection, whether by individual men, families, communities or the state (Parker et al. 1992; Kapur 2005). Law has been implicated in each instance, and definitions of sexuality and sexual actors, and the companion constructions of morality and respectability, both within and outside law, have played key roles in both justifying the colonial project as well as informing anti-colonial movements.

Anxieties regarding sex are often easily stoked. Sometimes sexual behaviour itself may be the primary issue under public debate. At other moments sexuality and sexual discourse serve as a proxy or site of strategic displacement for issues such as censorship and other restrictions on the freedom of expression (Kapur 2005, 51–94). Couched in concerns for morality and public order, and through these implicating the law in the constructions of normative and deviant behaviours, such anxieties continue to intrude upon, and be informed by, contemporary economic, political and social developments at

[iii] Partha Chatterjee locates the problem, in relation to knowledge and power, as follows:
[T]he problem of nationalist thought becomes the particular manifestation of…the problem of the bourgeois-rationalist conception of knowledge, established in the post-Enlightenment period of European intellectual history, as the moral and epistemic foundation for a supposedly universal framework of thought which perpetuates, in a real and not merely metaphorical sense, a colonial domination. It is a framework of knowledge which proclaims its own universality; its validity, it pronounces, is independent of cultures. Nationalist thought, in agreeing to become 'modern', accepts the claim to universality of this modern framework of knowledge. Yet it also asserts the autonomous identity of a national culture. It thus simultaneously rejects and accepts the dominance, both epistemic and moral, of an alien culture. (Chatterjee 1986, 11).

local and global levels. For instance, against a background of increasing international migration (whether to meet labour demands or escape armed conflict), state authorities are alarmed by the challenge posed by HIV/AIDS. They are also concerned about their population's easy access to globalized information and images. Authorities must thus reckon with the compromise of national boundaries as conventionally scripted. They see threats posed to national culture, with culture constructed as essentialist, exclusivist, ahistorical and static. Such constructions often eschew all but the most conservative sexual stereotypes, and the law is deployed to uphold the stereotypes. The law then, intimately linked with the processes of governance and ordering of society, has been, and increasingly in new ways has become, a site of discursive contest regarding sexuality. In particular, criminal law and its interpretations are implicated in the permissions and denials of sexual behaviour, the constructions of legitimate and illegitimate sexualities where sexual behaviour enmeshes with morality, and the frequent gendered differentiations that underpin such binaries. It is at such a point of contestation that this paper is located, while acknowledging the particularities of place and historical moment.

Legislating sex and sexual offences in Trinidad and Tobago

The genesis of the Sexual Offences Bill (henceforth SOB) in the early 1980s in Trinidad and Tobago is rooted in a historical period that witnessed a high level of sexual violence against women accompanied by a growing feminist consciousness in response to this violence and its implications, both locally and internationally. Some Trinbagonian women's rights advocates have suggested that the increase in levels of misogynistic violence over this time may be linked with growing economic hardship and men's unemployment at the end of the oil boom (Johnson 1990, 127; Gopaul et al. 1994, 38-39).[iv] Women, who were likely to be employed in clerical and service-oriented jobs more than men who dominated the fields of production/labour, transport and construction, earned much less than men (Yelvington 1995, 82; Reddock 1991; R. Clarke 1993, 5). This reflected the sexual division of labour that informed both the nature of the occupation as well as related remuneration. These elements would have a direct impact on the level of material autonomy a woman might enjoy, which in turn would affect her capacity to exercise informed choices elsewhere in her life, including the sexual.

The earliest draft

Work on the Sexual Offences Bill (SOB) was initiated by the Law Reform Commission of Trinidad and Tobago in the latter part of the 1970s. The Commission's choice of recommendations for the SOB appears to have taken into account violence against women, the vulnerable locations of youth, children and others in positions of dependency, as well as existing legal provisions affecting sexually stigmatized persons such as homosexual men.[v] There was also a decision to bring under a single rubric, namely "Sexual Offences", those laws pertaining to sexual offences located until then within the Offences Against the Person Act. Relevant new legislation, including revised penalties, was also subsumed therein.

[iv] My gratitude to Cathy Shepherd for these sources.

[v] I have avoided referring to homosexual men as gay men because, contextually, in the Trinbagonian debates, the term "homosexual" was used, linked also with legal conventions.

The Commission drew upon legal reforms in other countries of the British Commonwealth, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and certain Caribbean states, to develop the new legislation for Trinidad and Tobago.[vi] It considered issues such as criminalizing sexual assault in marriage, and modifying the statute on buggery so that it no longer penalized consenting adults.[vii] As a former Law Commissioner remarked, the utilizing of Canadian and British models was informed by the Commissioners' belief that the social values in Trinidad and Tobago had changed in a more liberal direction.[viii] At the same time, to quote from Jacqui Alexander, this process "represent[ed] the first time that the coercive arm of the postcolonial state had confronted the legacy of its colonial trauma", specifically in the realm of the regulation of sexuality (Alexander 1991, 135).

The Commission, multiracial in composition and constituted entirely of lawyers, appears to have been guided by the need to find the best examples of legislative reform within the British Commonwealth, which would then also yield reforms rooted in the shared heritage of British law. Simultaneously, it is evident that the main systems drawn on were advanced capitalist states that also, while multiethnic, had white-majority governments (United Kingdom, Canada and Australia). These were the states whose legal developments were perceived as guided by contemporary liberal values such as gender equality and women's autonomy. Such values were reflected in the proposed legislation regarding marital rape (drawn mainly from Canada), and notions of privacy, as in the suggestion that consensual homosexual acts between adults in private be decriminalized (as in the United Kingdom). In drawing on the legal precedents set by these states, it appears that the Commissioners did not comprehend Trinidad and Tobago as anything other than a society functioning within a broadly "Western" scheme of values regarding equality and privacy, now imagined to be approaching those of the global north, albeit with different ethno-racial communities in contests for political and economic power.

Another former Law Commissioner was of the pragmatic view that, given the proximity of Trinbagonian law to British law, where the Privy Council of the United Kingdom was the highest court of appeal for Trinidad and Tobago, it was generally easier to have legal reforms accepted locally if there was a British precedent than if initiatives had purely local roots.[ix] Such assumptions by the Commissioners regarding values and strategies accounted for their great surprise when several of their key recommendations for change were rejected, first by the Ministry of Legal Affairs and, later, by other Members of

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[vi] Verbatim notes from the debates of the House of Representatives, and of the Senate, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 1986, MG/pjc, 21.2.86, 2:10-2:20 pm, p. 1. Henceforth referred to as "Debates". Parliamentary proceedings, usually published as the Hansard, were unavailable for the debate on the Sexual Offences Bill in 1986. I worked from the transcripts very kindly made available to me by the Parliamentary Library, Port of Spain, in 1998 and 2001. The notations refer to identification markings at the top of each 10-minute segment on the transcript pages. Verbatim notes are identified by the initials of the parliamentary reporter in block letters, after a slash followed by initials of the typist in lower case, then by the date, time block of reporting, and page number, e.g. LR/cmi, 86.02.21, 1:52 - 2:00 pm, p 3. I have changed the order of the date to read day/month/year (e.g. 21.02.86).

[vii] Commentary on the Sexual Offences Bill, 1984 Draft (henceforth "1984 Commentary"), p. 1, 4, 6.

[viii] Interview, Port of Spain, 1998.

[ix] Interview, Port of Spain, 2001.

Parliament. Thus, one camp of lawmakers, those who conceptualized the reforms (the Law Commissioners), was pitted against the other, those whose business it was to concretize the reforms through legislative enactment and implementation (the Members of Parliament).

The 1984 Draft of the SOB was significantly modified in areas such as marital rape and homosexuality by the time the Bill came before Parliament for the second reading in 1986. The 1984 Draft is therefore important as the articulation of the Law Commission that would have had least interference from the Ministry of Legal Affairs or other parliamentarians. The Explanatory Note of the 1984 Draft asserted that the SOB's main purpose was "to codify the law on sexual offences and to bring the law more in accord with modern day thinking in Trinidad and Tobago". It would "interfere as little as possible in the sexual lives of husbands and wives and of consenting adults".[x] These suggest the belief that social values in late 1970s–early1980s Trinidad and Tobago had altered significantly enough to merit changes in these laws; the Clauses criminalizing marital rape and those permitting acts of "serious indecency" and buggery between consenting adults being cases in point. This simultaneously signalled the assumption, at least on the part of the Commissioners, that the changing values encompassed recognition of rights such as that of a woman to her bodily integrity and her capacity and right to negotiate sex within marriage. It also signalled, at the least, social tolerance for consensual acts such as oral sex and anal intercourse in both heterosexual *and* homosexual contexts. I would suggest it also presumed an equation of modernity with the capacity for such recognitions and acceptances.

However, some notions of equality and rights were tempered, as in the case of the married woman. While drawing on Canadian legislation for its formulation, and declaring that it positioned the wife as equal, not inferior, to non-married women, the proposed Trinbagonian law posited its difference from the Canadian through a preference *not* to construct the husband-rapist as similar to any other rapist. Instead of calling such an offence marital rape, it would be termed sexual assault, because "the position of the husband is peculiar to that of other men".[xi] Thus, it suggests that at least some Commissioners were uncomfortable with equating a husband with any other man on the question of rape. Through this move, while recognizing that "a wife must not be placed in an inferior position as regards other women",[xii] heterosexual marriage continued to be cast as a privileged site for both sex and procreation in comparison with other non-marital heterosexual, and indeed, all non-heterosexual arrangements. There was no indication that a male partner in a common-law arrangement, for example, would have a similar special status even if children were part of that family. I would argue that the variable that accords this special position to marriage is the status of the man within that arrangement, since all women are presumed equally vulnerable to coercive sex, regardless of their marital status. But not all convicted rapists would receive the same

[x] "Bill: An Act to repeal and replace the laws of Trinidad and Tobago relating to sexual crimes, to the procuration, abduction and prostitution of persons and to kindred offences", 1984 (henceforth "1984 Draft"), Explanatory Note, p. 1.
[xi] 1984 Commentary, p. 4.
[xii] 1984 Commentary, p. 4.

punishment, even if the assaulted subject is the same. Thus, the status of the man and the formation within which he carried out the assault determined the meaning assigned to sexual assault for the woman, and the penalty for the man; in the 1984 Draft legislation, a convicted husband-rapist could be imprisoned for up to ten years,[xiii] while any other convicted rapist could be imprisoned for life.[xiv]

The 1984 Commentary drew attention to the key challenge posed to Trinbagonian law makers: "[T]o decide what conduct is generally thought to be morally wrong and what conduct should be subject to the criminal law. The question is, 'To what extent should the criminal law reflect the fact that certain kinds of sexual conduct are commonly thought to be morally wrong or an outrage to public standards of decency?'"[xv] Essentially then, they had to ask: What is the relationship between criminal law and morality? The Commentary pointed out that a similar conundrum faced the Wolfenden Committee in the United Kingdom, which convened in 1957 to address legislation pertaining to homosexual offences and prostitution.[xvi] Citing the following excerpt from the Wolfenden Report regarding the function of criminal law, the Commentary indicates that these conclusions are contained in the approach attempted by the SOB: "[T]o preserve public order and decency, to protect the citizen from what is offensive or injurious, and to provide sufficient safeguards against exploitation and corruption of others, particularly those who are specifically vulnerable because they are young, weak in body or mind, inexperienced or in a state of special physical, official or economic dependence....[I]t is not, in our view, to intervene in the private lives of citizens, or to seek to enforce any particular pattern of behaviour..."[xvii]

The Law Commissioners' decision to link the reasoning behind the SOB with that informing the mandate of the Wolfenden Report places this particular example of postcolonial law-making squarely in the bind observed by Partha Chatterjee (1986, 11): How do we articulate cultural and epistemological autonomy from a postcolonial location while at the same time drawing upon the scheme of knowledge and reason universalized by the (former) colonial power? One may add: How do we do so where law seeks to be a hegemonic discourse par excellence which, in its invocations and enactments, continuously recalls colonial domination, especially potent given that Trinidad and Tobago's highest court of appeal is the British Privy Council? From the treatment of Clause 4 it appears that some of the Commissioners sought to extricate themselves from this bind by naming marital rape "sexual assault", and thereby asserting "Trinbagonian-ness" through granting marriage a privileged place in sexual arrangements and a reduced sentence for the husband-rapist. The treatment of women who have the legal status of "wives" as equal with all other women in the context of vulnerability to rape is traded for the assertion of an aspect of presumed national uniqueness. As the Legal Affairs Minister

[xiii] 1984 Draft, p. 2, Clause 4 (2).
[xiv] 1984 Draft, p. 2, Clause 3(2).
[xv] 1984 Commentary, p. 1.
[xvi] United Kingdom, Home Office and Scottish Home Department, 1957. Henceforth, "Wolfenden Report". Here and elsewhere, I have used the term "prostitution" rather then sex work to retain the wording of the legal and parliamentary texts.
[xvii] 1984 Commentary, p. 1; and Wolfenden Report, para. 13, p. 9.

would later echo in Parliament, although the new legislation under consideration was influenced by experiences elsewhere in the British Commonwealth and the Caribbean, the standards of morality, he pointed out, would have a unique cast: "[W]hat has been paramount in our minds is the consideration of our moral standards as obtained in our beloved Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. We hold firm to the view that what is good for England or Canada or Australia is not necessarily good for Trinidad and Tobago".[xviii] He later added, "We feel we have to bring our laws relating to sexual offences into the twentieth and twenty-first century". On the one hand then, what works elsewhere, specifically in the advanced capitalist, white-dominated states, is not necessarily acceptable at home. On the other, some standard was required by which the antiquity or modernity of national laws could be measured. But what would constitute such a standard?

As the citation from the Wolfenden Report suggests, central to the entire scheme was the assumption of the content of the term "morality". Having no discernibly separate definition in the context under scrutiny, one is led to assume that morality, and therefore its negation or lack, was linked with sexual behaviour. Jacqui Alexander concludes: "*Morality* [had] become a euphemism for *sex*. To be moral [was] to be asexual, hetero(sexual), or sexual in ways that presumably carry the weight of the 'natural'" (Alexander 1991, 133). Additionally, the values accorded to (sexual) morality and immorality emerged in relation to the preservation of public order and decency. Sex acts in private, between consenting adults, whether or not they were married, were (allegedly) not the criminal law's concern.[xix] Sex then, even when consensual, has the capacity to disrupt, disorder and dismay when enacted in public because it has already been scripted as a private activity, where the public and private are imagined as discontinuous, discrete spaces with an infallible, impervious boundary in between. This is imagined not only by "normal" persons using their common sense, but also in law. This in turn presumes that all members of society, not only lawmakers and law enforcers, are already in consensus as to what constitutes "sex" and its disruptive potentials, including what is indecent, offensive or injurious. Thus, the question of what constitutes a shared understanding of (sexual) morality is neatly avoided. For its part, criminal law textually purports to recognize "sex" when it encounters it, either through explicit, codified definitions, as in the case of gross indecency, or through common law traditions, as in the case of sexual intercourse, whether "natural" or "unnatural".

The Bill, 1985

In the 1985 version of the Bill, accessible to the public,[xx] some noteworthy modifications had been made compared with the 1984 Draft. Among others, Clause 4 covering sexual assault of a wife by her husband had an additional subsection, (4), which barred proceedings except with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.[xxi]

[xviii] Debates, MG/pjc, 21/2/86, 2:10-2:20 p.m., p. 1.
[xix] 1984 Draft, Explanatory Note, p. 1.
[xx] Trinidad and Tobago, Bill 1985. The Explanatory Note in this version of the Bill covers pp.2-5. Henceforth Bill, 1985.
[xxi] Bill, 1985, p. 9.

While Clause 11 (formerly Clause 10) on serious indecency remained unaltered, accommodating all consenting adults irrespective of marital status or gender combinations in sexual activity, Clause 13 (formerly Clause 12) on buggery had been re-criminalized for everyone, regardless of marital status or sexual orientation.[xxii] What may have provoked such a reversal on Clause 13?

Rhoda Reddock,[xxiii] academic and feminist scholar long active in the Women's Movement, wondered whether the public forum convened in 1985 by the group, Working Women, to both examine as well as formulate a public response to the 1984 Draft, may have contributed to the re-criminalizing of buggery. This public forum was quite likely the first inkling the Trinbagonian public had of the impending legislation because, although the public had been invited to comment on the Bill, it proved difficult to obtain copies.[xxiv] While several in the Women's Movement welcomed the positive changes the Bill heralded, especially for girls and women, and for stigmatized sexual practices and communities premised on these, wider public approval for certain aspects of the reforms, especially those with a positive impact on homosexual behaviour, was not forthcoming. Most Trinbagonians regarded homosexuality as repugnant and deviant, and also as sinful from a Christian context (Pantin 1985). Tina Johnson pointed out that the first publicizing of the Bill coincided with the initial wave of panic regarding HIV/AIDS in the country (Johnson 1990,129). Since HIV was still regarded as a "homosexual disease" in the mid 1980s, it took little to prompt the Archbishop of Port of Spain, among others, to condemn sex between men as instrumental in the spread of the virus. Stigmatized as homosexual men already were, and given the popular elision between buggery and homosexuality (echoed also by the Legal Affairs Minister during the debate[xxv]) it would have required little additional justification for the Ministry of Legal Affairs to suppress the Law Commission's recommendation to decriminalize consensual anal intercourse.

The published version of the SOB was released a week after the first day of the debate in 1986, with some crucial changes. At Clause 4, the provision covering sexual assault within an existing marriage had been deleted, while it remained applicable in instances where the spouses were separated under a decree nisi or by judicial separation.[xxvi] The criminalization of buggery persisted, but it also re-inscribed permissible acts of serious indecency as the exclusive right of consenting heterosexuals, whether married or not (Clause 15).[xxvii] By the same move, it criminalized forms of sex between men other than anal intercourse (already covered under the buggery clause) and, for the first time, sex between women as well.

[xxii] Bill, 1985, p. 12-13. The content of the other clauses under consideration remained unchanged, although some re-numbering occurred.
[xxiii] Rhoda Reddock. Interview, St. Augustine, 1998.
[xxiv] Rhoda Reddock, Interview, and Johnson 1990, 129.
[xxv] Debates, MG/pjc, 21.2.86, 2:10-2:20 pm, p. 1.
[xxvi] Bill, 1986, p.7, Clause 4.
[xxvii] Bill, 1986, p.10, Clause 15.

The second reading of the Bill, 1986

The second reading of the Sexual Offences Bill took place in the House of Representatives between 21 February and 5 March 1986, and in the Senate on 4 November 1986. It signalled also the beginning of a sustained public debate in the media, which engaged lawyers, academics, clergy, newspaper columnists and newspaper readers. In discussing the parliamentary debate on the second reading and its fallout I shall also engage more closely with some of Jacqui Alexander's analyses and insights, bearing in mind that Alexander did not have access to the parliamentary transcripts when she conducted her research (Alexander 1991, 136) and relied primarily on newspaper reports and the different versions of the Bill. In comparison, my analysis and critiques arise from having had access to the parliamentary transcripts and therefore having read the debates themselves, as well as from interviewing some of the actors directly involved in the events—especially law commissioners and women's rights advocates.

In her essays, Alexander traces discursively the production of morality in a legal text, the Sexual Offences Bill, where morality or its lack comes to be equated with the "naturalness" or "unnaturalness" of a sexual act. Through this she assesses how legislators established sexual activity as the basis for different hierarchical relationships between various categories of persons. Essential to this exercise, which included the production of morality, was the construction of categories of illicit sex (sex between men, sex between women, prostitution, sex between adults and youth) in order to establish the arena of licit sex articulated as normative (hetero)sexuality, idealized in marriage and procreation. In the legal text, women become the terrain upon which ideas about sexuality, gendered behaviour, constructions of family, and consequently a citizen's worth are contested and negotiated. But in the debates around the text, women actively engaged with certain of its terms, refusing simply to be the objects of privileged discourse, especially evident in the matter of Clause 4. Alexander is particularly concerned to demonstrate how homosexuality and lesbianism become exceptionally qualified to be designated as unnatural, therefore immoral and criminal: male homosexuality continued to be criminalized while lesbian sex, by its newness, was specially targeted. While most of her central theses are confirmed in the themes I explore below, there are some significant differences, most notably on the place accorded to same-sex activity, whether between men or between women, in the delineation of normative sexuality in the course of the debates.

In presenting the Bill, the Minister of Legal Affairs argued that the crux of the Bill was the question, "to what extent must the criminal law deal with sexual conduct—conduct involving morality and indeed public standards of decency." He recognized that there would be diverse opinions on this, concluding that, as a country, a consensus had to be sought on what standards the law should protect, cautioning that "the criminal law never does and must never try...to make everything you consider to be immoral or wrong something that is punishable by the criminal law. We know for example in the field of literature that what today is forbidden reading, tomorrow is a bestseller."[28]

[28] Debates, HC/as, 21.2.86, 2:00-2:10 pm, p. 1-2.

These introductory comments of the Legal Affairs Minister may be read as an attempt to set the parameters of the debate to follow, both drawing upon and going beyond the language of the Commentary to the 1984 Draft. As before, morality and public standards of decency are explicitly connected with sexual conduct, but there is also the caution against criminalizing certain behaviour simply on the grounds that it is disagreeable. Simultaneously, there is a move that recognizes the diversities of value systems, and asserts the need to serve national interests by establishing a consensus, presumably out of such diversities, on what constitutes morality within the context of this Bill. There is, however, a contradictory core. By invoking a literary example, the Minister appears to recognize the dynamic, therefore changing, nature of social values, but at the same time he seems to presume that whatever constitutes (sexual) immorality, not simply the idea of immorality itself, would be universal and timeless within Trinbagonian society. This is best exemplified by the ongoing characteristic of unnatural-ness accorded to buggery, and through that to homosexuality. The question he poses then becomes not whether notions of what constitutes sexual immorality will change with time, but whether (allegedly) timeless notions of what constitutes sexual immorality will at all times be criminalized.

The Minister declared that the Bill was also propelled by a need to protect citizens from the offensive and injurious, and to provide safeguards against sexual exploitation not only of females, as had hitherto been the case, but males as well.[29] Paternalism thus marked the deployment of protection here, and the insinuation was that lawmakers, especially parliamentarians, were best positioned to determine the nature of such protection. Its implications are especially apparent in regard to women of all ages. For, while asserting the need to "uphold the dignity of the female sex", it also suggests the linking of female dignity with (economic) dependency, and female respectability (in order to deserve such protection) with compliance with certain social constructs of respectable femininity. That is, women exercising sexual autonomy, which would take them outside the sexual-moral categories approved by lawmakers, would preclude the possibility of protection by the state if they found themselves in situations of risk. It is when we reckon that in each instance for women, dignity, respectability and autonomy all hinge upon the constructions and deployments of permissible and impermissible sex set within the extremely powerful discourse of law, that the nature of the anxieties underlying the debate emerge more fully. The location of women in relation to marriage and the availability or denial of female sexual autonomy are also, as we shall see, linked with the construction of the "homosexual".

Homosexual behaviours and persons

The content of consensus on standards of (sexual) morality appears to have already been presumed by the Legal Affairs Minister prior to the debate. He seemed reasonably certain that male homosexual behaviour, including buggery, would not be decriminalized by his fellow parliamentarians, strong recommendations to the contrary by the Law Reform Commission and the Bar Council of Trinidad and Tobago notwithstanding. Equating buggery with homosexuality[30] (a slippage with thought-provoking implications, since

[29] Debates, HC/as, 21.2.86, 2:00-2:10 pm, p. 3.
[30] Debates, 21.2.86, MG/pjc, 2:10-2:20 p.m. p. 1.

the 1985 Bill had criminalized it for all, regardless of sexual orientation or marital status) he argued that anal intercourse, like bestiality, was an activity to which humans were "not naturally given", and that legislation to discourage it was connected with the need to maintain certain standards of public decency.[31] As has become evident above, legal understandings of the natural in the realm of sexual activity was coded as (almost) any sex that occurred between a single man and a single woman, whether within or outside marriage, while all other combinations of sex partners occupied the unnatural space, as did their sexual activity. Buggery became the exception for parliamentarians, even if it was between a man and a woman. Buggery was not only unnatural and equated with male homo-sex,[32] but it also defined an essential state of being homosexual. How one had sex overwhelmingly defined one's personality and being; sex acts were equal to a persona. It was acceptable to retain the full (British) spirit of the Wolfenden Report when it came to marking the "unnatural".

By implication then, the sexual/moral society envisaged by lawmakers who shared the Legal Affairs Minister's view could not accommodate homo-sex, any more than it could have a wife prosecute a husband for rape. The criminalization of buggery across all sex-partner combinations and sexual orientations again underscores the point that the Legal Affairs Minister and other parliamentarians (since none contested him in this regard)—besides taking on board intact the content of what might constitute natural and unnatural sexual intercourse—deemed as mutually exclusive categories that which constituted the natural and the unnatural in sexual behaviour. At the same time, one is compelled to inquire whether the prior, essentialized connection of buggery with homosexual sex made heterosexuals who engaged in it more like homosexuals, thereby threatening to undermine the exclusive binary of natural and unnatural sexual behaviours. Therefore buggery needed to be criminalized so totally as to preempt this possibility.

The continued criminalization of homo-sex and homosexuals found support among some women MPs as well. One MP, who had vigorously protested the removal of Clause 4 from the SOB,[33] crafted the male homosexual as a direct physiological threat to the heterosexual conjugal union, when she remarked that a married man who has sex with a homosexual man could infect his chaste wife with HIV/AIDS. She called for a clause in the SOB that would specially penalize such an instance of transmission.[34] In her case, the conjugal union needed to be premised on sexual respect between spouses, but the sexual protection of the moral wife necessitated ensuring that extramarital sex by the husband, if it occurred, took place with a partner who was not of a category as contaminating and as stigmatized as a man who had sex with other men. It also suggests that a wife could expect the protection of the law only if she had behaved in such a way as to comply with the prescription of heterosexual monogamy. As indicated in the public debate in the newspapers, the man who has sex with a woman and also with another man is not deemed bisexual or marked by any other term. The MP too does not mark him, implying that it is the unmarried, habitual homosexual who is thrice marked—as

[31] Debates, 4.11.86, CLJ/sh, 3:15-3:25 pm, p. 2. This part of the articulation was made before the Senate.
[32] Homo-sex = sexual activity between persons of the same sex.
[33] Debates, CN/gf, 21.2.86, 4:00-4:10 pm, pp. 2-3
[34] Debates, LR/gf, 21.2.86, 5:40-5:50 pm, p. 1

engaging in unnatural sex; as carrying a sexually transmitted, even lethal, infection such as HIV; and as being a detonator who, through anally penetrating a "heterosexual" male, explodes infection into (marital) heterosexuality, thus afflicting marriage partners with a debilitating and terminal disease heterosexuality/heterosexuals could not otherwise acquire.[35] The male homosexual thus facilitated the *physical* disintegration of (hetero)sexual/moral/marital society.

Throughout the debate, it is male homosexuality that was explicitly scripted as the overt threat to institutionalized heterosexuality. Sex between women was barely discussed, and when it was, it was not with the same notion of threat and danger. By the sole MP who made an issue of it in Parliament (or at least in those parliamentary reports accessible to public scrutiny), lesbian sex was invoked as a means by which older women could "corrupt" young girls. By basing his argument in anxieties about the seduction of female youth by other women into sexual activity, the MP[36] scripted lesbian sex as being not only unnatural, but also as predatory and premised on intergenerational sex. Thus it became a performance, I would argue, that emulated a heterosexual script where older men seduced young girls, toying thereby with the stereotype of the "manly" lesbian. In such a context then, a female subject who demonstrated a capacity for sexual agency outside heterosexuality could be accorded recognition *only* as simultaneously unnatural and criminal.

The Legal Affairs Minister's own reluctance to make an especially big issue about criminalizing sex between women, both in general and in response to the MP, when compared with his reactions to male homosexuality, also supports the position that it was not perceived to be as threatening to institutionalized heterosexuality as sex between men. I would further posit that this was because the reference point for sex meriting discussion, whether natural or unnatural, heterosexual or homosexual, was penetration by the penis, that is, which orifice a penis made contact with determined whether or not it was sex worth discoursing on in the realm of law. For instance, not only does penetration by the penis establish whether or not rape has taken place,[37] but consonantly, whether a married man has been penetrated by another man is what renders him an explicit threat to his wife and to marriage itself.

Thus, Jacqui Alexander's compelling theses have some key shortcomings, of which I offer two. Firstly, the argument that the possibility of sex between men being decriminalized was as responsible as Clause 4 for the public furore that resulted in the innovation of a select committee of the entire Parliament to conduct private readings of the Bill (Alexander 1991, 136), is not borne out in those parliamentary transcripts available for public review (bearing in mind that deliberations of closed parliamentary sessions are not publicly accessible). As will be recalled, buggery was re-criminalized for all persons beginning with the Bill of 1985, and there is no traceable indication in the sources to suggest that issues on sex between men also informed the decision to hold

[35] Recall that this was 1986, where information about multiple means for HIV/AIDS transmission was still emerging through medico-scientific research and only recently had begun to be given wide publicity.
[36] Debates, CR/pjc, 5.3.86, 5.30-5.40 pm, pp.1-2
[37] 1986 Bill, Clause 24; Sexual Offences Act 1986, section 25.

closed sessions of Parliament. As discussed above, given the emerging national fear of an HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the scripting of AIDS as a "gay disease" that fuelled that fear, the Legal Affairs Minister encountered no liberal-minded opponents in the House of Representatives.

Secondly, while one finds sustainable Alexander's argument that marital heterosexuality and its procreative promise were elevated by the simultaneous, continued, or new criminalizing of sexual practices that were posited as "other" (such as prostitution, pleasure-premised non-marital heterosexual sex, and same-sex sexual activity), her point that legislators felt prompted "to ensnare and to specifically control lesbian sex" (Alexander 1991, 136, 138-139) is not supportable, either in the accessible parliamentary transcripts or in the contours of changes in the 1985 and 1986 Bills. Rather, from these sources as well as from the public debate in the newspapers, it appears more likely that male anger at men being exclusively scripted as perpetrators, as vividly articulated in the reactions to Clause 4,[38] prompted the gender-neutral language of Clause 15 of the Bill (Section 16 in the final Sexual Offences Act). The clause criminalized serious indecency in all instances except in the case of marital heterosexual sex and non-marital, consensual, heterosexual sex. This observation supports Rhoda Reddock's suggestion that such hostility fuelled the demand for "equality" as in men and women being equally culpable for sexual offences, with sex between women subsumed under this. As Reddock cautioned, the deployment of the "equality" principle in the SOB, where equality was equated with equal culpability, is a salutary warning about the use to which equality arguments may be put.[39] I propose it would be more accurate to conclude that *all* sexual activity between consenting adults that did not fall within the frame of normative/natural conjugal sex, shared almost equal dishonours (prostitution, sex between women, sex between men, group sex in whatever combination) with the exception of sex between two adults, one male, one female, who were not married, but who did not include anal intercourse in their sexual repertoire.

Through the lenses of ethnicity/race and religion[40]

It would be remiss not to comment, even if briefly, on the impact of the country's ethno-racial and religious diversity, associated hostilities and accommodations, on the Penal Code debates. As noted above, the Law Commission was multiracial, with its representatives drawn from a cosmopolitan, well-educated group of lawyers. Parliamentarians too came from a range of ethno-racial backgrounds. In regard to education and outlook, some parliamentarians came from locations similar to the Law Commissioners'. Overall, however, political representation was, in 1986, still informed by deployments of power begun under British colonial rule, with political mobilizing along racial lines inhering in postcolonial electoral politics and government (Meighoo 2003). This found expression in the political domination by the People's National

[38] Debates, EE/ct, 21.2.86, 4:10-4:20 pm, p. 3, and Cl3/cmi, 21.2.86, 4:20-4:30 pm, p. 1.
[39] Rhoda Reddock. Interview, St. Augustine, 1998.
[40] I use African, East Indian, etc. to denote different ethno-racial identities as used within Trinidad and Tobago. These terms are used with cognizance that ethnicity and race are constructed, not natural, categories. Using the descriptive terms above is also with acknowledgement of their inadequacy in accounting for the considerable racial intermingling that characterizes Trinidad in particular, and the lack of comfortable fit between politically-catalysed categories and this long and variable history of miscegenation.

Movement (PNM) from independence through to 1986. While the PNM attracted votes from all ethno-racial groups, nearly three-quarters of its support came from Trinbagonians of African descent (Ryan 1991). PNM-dominated governments did bring on board East Indian supporters as Members of Parliament and state ministers, but it drew on the card of religious distinction among East Indians. In the PNM's long history governing Trinidad and Tobago, until the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) victory of 1986, East Indian members of PNM Cabinets had been exclusively Muslim. Hindus, who constituted the majority of East Indians (C. Clarke 1993), and approximately one quarter of the entire population of Trinidad and Tobago, were excluded from the highest levels of elected government, even though some were appointed to the Senate (Premdas 1993, 141-142).

In the context of the parliamentary debate on the SOB, then, religious arguments, when made, drew on Christianity and Islam. These were largely directed to the issue of whether or not to criminalize marital rape. Perhaps predictably, divine law was often interpreted by male MPs to support the suspension of women's consent in marriage.[41] To the contrary, a female MP invoked religion as the basis from which she too defended the institution of marriage, but with a wife's entitlement to bodily integrity and sexual safety as intrinsic to that institution.[42] Considering the overall flow of the debate, however, it appears that neither racialized socio-political unease and its reflection in parliamentary representation, nor different religious loyalties, significantly affected the terms of the debate in parliament. Antagonisms rooted in ethno-racial or religious differences appeared to have been either suspended or mutually accommodated when it came to curtailing women's sexual autonomy and integrity, and to re-inscribing normative sexuality.

Conclusion

The two issues discussed in the context of the Sexual Offences Bill in Trinidad and Tobago in 1986 (marital rape and homosexuality), their discursive representations in the various versions of the Bill, as well as the parliamentary debates, offer insight into the ways a small, postcolonial state may use law to refine or re-define gender roles, gendered/sexual performances and normative sexual behaviour, while simultaneously consolidating its notion of nation. From the outset, lawmakers engaged with transnational ideas, several of which were drawn from a shared, international heritage of law. Much of this law was rooted in colonial impositions and inheritances, prompting the concerns to determine authenticity and uniqueness for a postcolonial state while simultaneously addressing the subjects of legal reform. The subjects themselves (women, youth, persons defined through their non-normative sexual behaviours) were spoken for and discursively defined by state authorities. At the same time that such legal reforms were under consideration, these same authorities were contending with local and global forces, which informed the process of legal change. For instance, in Trinidad and Tobago, economic crises and the emerging pandemic of HIV/AIDS framed the parliamentary debate (even if the latter was not a pressing consideration when the 1984 Draft Bill was produced). Countering the paternalism of the state, and the temporary patriarchal alliances across

[41] Debates, JS/gf, 21.2.86, 2:20-2:30 pm, p. 1-2, and Debates, LR/gf, 21.2.86, 5:40-5:50 pm, p. 3.
[42] Debates, JS/cmi, 5.3.86, 4:10-4:20 pm, p. 2.

ethnicity/race and religion, were the coalitions of articulate women and their occasional male supporters. Often, they too transcended ethno-racial, religious, and even political, differences. Like the Law Commissioners, women mobilizing in Trinidad and Tobago to support Clause 4 were informed as much by critical reflections on national needs as they were by international movements of ideas, especially on women's rights advocacy and analyses of gender violence.[43]

The processes that informed Penal Code changes and related parliamentary debates elsewhere in the world over time—Sri Lanka in 1995 and Singapore in 2007, for instance—underscore the point that sexual behaviours and privileged sexual arrangements continue to be sites fraught with anxieties concerning postcolonial, national identity and membership in the national body. This is particularly potent where local consequences of global economic forces, and transnationally disseminated ideas and images, are perceived as threats to national sovereignty, identity and borders. The (re)construction of gender roles and "culturally" appropriate sexual behaviours remains important in attempts to assuage such anxieties. The terms of negotiation and resolution often massage already existing unease related to sexuality and gendered behaviours, serving to foreground constantly the notion of women as embodied nation (and youth as the reproduced/future nation) in need of direction and protection by a paternalistic state.

Legal processes of regulating sexuality and female decorum become convenient sites of displacement for social and political tensions or accommodations. Even if its representatives are not active "peeping toms", the law is empowered to lie comfortably with other systems of moral policing in order to determine who can be constituted as a fit or unfit citizen. As the coalitions of women and their allies in Trinidad and Tobago in 1986 demonstrated, given that such a terrain of power is not uniform, it is possible to locate capacities for disruption and resistance within its fissures. The challenge remains, how best to use those capacities, and to what end, in determining the contours of the national body.

[43] Such ideas circulated across the global south, as much as between global south and global north. For instance, at the 1985 Women's Forum in Nairobi, to coincide with the United Nations Decade Conference on Women, many lively debates and much sharing of information took place between women from the geographical "Third World", with key speakers among them being from the Caribbean.

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Gender, sexuality and exclusion: Sketching the outlines of the Jamaican popular nationalist project

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Abstract

"Inevitably, the underprivileged carve out for themselves spaces which they hegemonise". —Figueroa, 1998

In recent years, with some notoriety, there has been a vibrant debate in Jamaica over the boundaries and contours of national identity in relation to sexuality and fundamental rights and freedoms. It has involved a broad spectrum of participants, from clergy to dancehall artistes and academics; from journalists and the political elite to the leaders of the private sector. At the heart of the debate lie controversies over what constitutes "Jamaicanness" and what may be tolerated under the category of "rights" within Jamaican society. The debate has been taking place in a context where physical violence against persons deemed to have violated national mores has occurred. Chief among the violators are sexual minorities, portrayed as deviants in a nationalist paradigm that is extensively influenced if not defined by Jamaican popular culture (cf. Human Rights Watch 2004).

Introduction

As primary purveyors of this culture, dancehall artistes lyricise and bolster the values against which citizenship and rights are often measured. Thus, "bati bwaai", "chi-chi man" (gay boys/men), "sadamait" (gay men/lesbians) and "bowkyat" (people who engage in oral sex) may be routinely "dissed" in support of values linked to national identity, and their calls for respect dismissed as the brazen defence of anti-Jamaican practices. Yet, if antipathy toward specific sexualities and sexual practices are explicitly condemned by dancehall artistes, it could be—with its twin, patriarchy—the unarticulated subtext of questions regarding both national symbols and the commitments of those claiming to be Jamaican.

In this paper we explore how specific manifestations of gender and sexuality have come to challenge or define popular conceptions of Jamaican national identity. To do this, we examine a number of archetypal features of the country's creole history, which we use as the backdrop for analysing three sets of controversies in the country's media over the last six years linked explicitly or implicitly to definitions of Jamaican nationality. We refer specifically to criticisms of a monument consisting of two nude statues—one male and the other female—unveiled in 2003 in Kingston as a memorial to the emancipation of enslaved Africans; the 2004 campaign aimed at reining in dancehall artistes calling for the killing of gays and lesbians; and the anti-gay thread in the discourse of several high ranking political leaders between the late 90s and early 2009. These controversies, we contend, brought to the fore tensions regarding the elemental role of normative gender and sexuality constructions in framing Jamaican national identity, particularly in the age of rapid cultural globalisation.

Beginning with a reading against the grain of the foundations of Jamaican cultural nationalism, we argue that at the dawn of the 21st century, patriarchal and gendered identity constructions, with their resultant antipathy toward minority sexualities have become central themes in the struggle to define an authentic if popular Jamaican national identity. Following Lewis (2004a), who admonishes students of Caribbean gender relations to "carefully examine the extent to which the articulation of cultural nationalism . . . carries the seeds of a specific brand of masculinity, which is oppressive both to women and to men in subaltern classes and sexual categories" (261), we interrogate how, in the Jamaican cultural space, overdetermined notions of race and religious values compete against individual rights to act and to be in the construction of national identity. We posit that the racial and religious parameters of Jamaican national identity, characterized by vocal denunciations of overt manifestations of non-normative sexualities, have permeated the public space in unexpected ways, reinforcing a dynamic of exclusion which, despite its claim to indigeneity, marks a continuity of the exclusionary practices of slave society.

Race and gender in Jamaican identity: Plantation foundations

The recent close association between Jamaican national identity, "blackness", religiosity (Judaeo-Christianity in its various manifestations, including Rastafari) and patriarchy emerges from a colonial paradox that has been central to the island's creole history. As in most of the Caribbean, modern Jamaica took shape primarily in the colonial encounter

between European capital and enslaved African labour on the sugar plantation. As one of the most mature of the territories that were "fully developed plantation societies", the island was characterised by a small number of Europeans and Euro-Jamaicans. As with its sister territories, it had "a preponderance of Africans and Afro-Caribbeans" (Knight 1990, 125). Forming a "natural middle class" (Nettleford 1998, 28) between the African and European groups were the freed coloureds, the product of "widespread miscegenation" (Knight 124) who had "suffered a circumscribed freedom" (Nettleford 28) that they fought to preserve from the 18th century onwards. Thus, there existed in the island a tripartite social compact comprising racialised and occupational groups, with the European and Euro-Jamaican elite in charge of the levers of power; people of colour—those of Euro-African mix—occupying jobs for the free; and Africans and Afro-Jamaicans as slaves, though Knight notes that only toward the end of the 17th century did the term slave suggest "African and menial work" (122). A corollary of this social system was the elevation of European traits and values, and the deprecation of those associated with Africa (cf. Nettleford 1998). Vasell notes, however, that relations in the plantation were not based solely on race and class but "also on considerations of sex" since "black women, equal under the whip with men, had been placed at the bottom of the plantation hierarchy within the division of labour of skilled tasks and occupations" (1998, 190)

The gendered dimensions of relations between European and Africans under slavery went well beyond the plantation itself to structure more broadly the evolution of Caribbean societies. Beckles argues, for instance, that colonial societies such as those in the Caribbean were constructed on "the basis of a dominant white-black male encounter", a situation he describes as being akin to the "military defeat and subsequent violent subordination of black males by white men" (2004, 228). One emblem of the military defeat he evokes is the crushing of the 1760 Tacky Rebellion, described by Burton as "the most serious eighteenth-century threat" to the survival of the system of slavery in Jamaica (1997, 25). The European overclass identified the African-born slaves and particularly their religious practice of obeah as the source of the revolt and moved swiftly to ensure there would be no repeat of it. Legal measures were taken to proscribe the practice of obeah and witchcraft, the sentence for which was death or deportation (Burton).

With the end of the Tacky Rebellion came a more powerful force in the contest between African masculinity and European masculinity, that of creolization, or de-Africanisation (Burton 1997). This resulted from deliberate attempts to change the gender makeup of the enslaved population. Up to the end of the 18th century, due to the high demand for labour during the consolidation and expansion phases of British slave society in Jamaica, the bulk of slaves entering the island, as other parts of the Caribbean, were males. This followed the general view that "males were more effective at clearing the forests and establishing the plantations", resulting in "about 80 percent of all early arrivals being male Africans" (Knight and Crahan 1979, 12). The Tacky Rebellion triggered a decision to experiment with female slave labour in the plantation economy. When it was realised that "women were just as effective on the plantation as men" (Knight and Crahan, 13), a path was cleared for the creation of a new society through a change in demographics. A better gender balance meant more slaves could form sexual unions and produce offspring

on the plantation. Born into slavery, these would not have the memory of freedom and therefore would not suffer from its loss as greatly as the African-born slaves. In this way the slavery establishment effectively made the Tacky Rebellion the "last of the old-style' African dominated uprisings in Jamaica" (Burton, 25) and ushered in the era of the Creole.

As the plantation society consolidated, it was the males from among the creole slaves that were given the "privilege" of being drivers or slave gang leaders and charged with "seasoning" African-born slaves into the ways of the plantation. Status among slaves in the emerging creole space was also marked by proximity and attachment to European values and cultural practices. Assigning creole slaves positions of authority over other slaves, particularly those born in Africa, strengthened the sense of superiority of the former in a highly hierarchical society. In this regard, Burton writes, the outnumbered African-born slaves "were literally marginalized by the creole majority, their manners, language and appearance stigmatized as 'primitive'" (1997, 34). Efforts to de-Africanise African-born slaves were facilitated by this sense of superiority on the part of Jamaican-born slaves. Consequently, the pitting of local-born slaves against those born in Africa, marking the former as preferred, was used as a neutralising force against uprisings and to bolster the developing social order.

An additional feature of the creole plantation society was the disparity between the "(large) minority of skilled and domestic slaves . . . and the mass of field slaves". Because the majority of slaves were in the latter category and women "were the most likely to work in the fields and the least likely to have skilled or privileged positions" (35), the plantation became a platform for providing special advantages to males, particularly those born in Jamaica. Vassell suggests there was a deliberate strategy at work in the privileging of men: She remarks that the preservation of skilled occupations for males "by the white plantation patriarchy" meant that "black men [had] wider options and greater economic flexibility in the society in the post-emancipation period" (1998, 190–191). Thus, the Euro-male owned and run plantation was a space in which both Africans and "their creole progeny . . . shared and actively supported the important tenets of the ideology of masculinity as represented by white men within the colonial encounter" (Beckles, 229).

It was this social complex reflecting "the conquistadorial ideologies and interests of white patriarchy" (Beckles, 229) that was bequeathed to the post-Emancipation society, where privilege was accorded to Euro-descendants and others who bore the mark of a "fair" or "light" complexion or who were able to mimic European ideals. The primary beneficiaries of this complex were the descendants of the free coloureds, most of whom had been fathered by European or Euro-Jamaican men. Constituting a "buffer class" whose status was "ambivalent in the extreme" (Burton 1997, 35), they were "most inclined to venerate the European, and specifically the English, at the expense of the creole and the local" (Burton 1997, 36). As the number of Europeans and Euro-Jamaicans declined, the free coloureds began rising to the top of the social order as "the heirs to the European position and power" (Nettleford 1998, 29). For instance, their "sons steadily displaced white boys at schools like Woolmer's (sic) Free School, where there were 3

colored pupils to 111 Whites in 1815, but no fewer than 360 to 90 by 1832" (Burton, 36). In replacing the Europeans in the power structure, they maintained a quasi-plantation social hierarchy that replicated the value system of the Europeans. Yet, in opposition to European practice, but consistent with that of the plantation, they attempted to construct a sense of localised identity. Burton echoes Nettleford who argues that as Jamaicans of mixed African and European ancestry became more socially dominant, they began regarding themselves as the rightful sons of the Jamaican soil and felt that theirs were the true faces of *the Jamaican*. Early in Jamaica's creole history they had been mocked by both Africans/Afro-Creoles and Europeans/Euro-Creoles for having no homeland of return. This ambivalent status served them well, as it formed the basis of their strategic claim to be "the only true Jamaicans" (Burton, 35). Thus, their role in the construction of Jamaican national identity, emblematised by their political leadership of the country into independence, was to secure for themselves the social and political protection necessary for survival in a hostile environment. This they did by associating Jamaicanness with that which was unequivocally creole, their being "living embodiments of creolization" (36).

Yet, despite the fact that they benefited from the social structure created by the Europeans, and though mimicking and accepting European values, Jamaicans of mixed European and African ancestry harboured suspicions about Europeans and Euro-Jamaicans. Their resentment derived from the view that members of these groups stood to benefit most from "traditional privilege in the white bias [social] structure" (Nettleford 1998, 35). It was, ironically, this same bias that made it easy for them to participate actively in the social exclusion of Afro-Jamaicans, whose image was "not regarded as the desirable symbol for national identity" (Nettleford, 36). In this way Afro-European Jamaicans embodied "the tensions set up by the counterpoint relationships in the twin heritage from Europe and Africa" (Nettleford, 30). It remained, then, for Afro-Jamaicans to evolve, over time, a discourse on their legitimacy as representatives of the new nation.

'Black' nationalism: To Africa, backing away from Africa

One could argue that Afro-Jamaicans' concern with the conceptions of Jamaican national identity inherited from the plantation apparatus stemmed not only from a desire to stake a claim as representatives of the nation but also from the need to project a vision that was decidedly counter-hegemonic and that restored the masculinity of the Afro-Jamaican man. Having lived in society as the most oppressed and dispossessed of social groups, they saw their liberation as the counterpoint to European domination ethno-culturally as well as in terms of gender. This set the stage for antagonisms between Afro-Jamaican and Euro-Jamaican value systems.

In articulating their claim to be identified as legitimate representatives of the nation, Afro-Jamaicans faced a challenge similar to that of Euro-Africans, viz. the enduring contest between foreign-oriented ideals and their localised varieties. Wilson (1969) famously documents and contrasts the Euro-dominant notion of *respectability* with that of the localised (Caribbean) *reputation*. While the former encompasses a high regard for European culture and habits in determining personal value, the latter regards fatherhood, mechanical skills and musical talent among the important features of good standing in

society. In this way reputation is supposedly counter-cultural and non-elitist, though decidedly masculinist.

It is within this context of contestation of and resistance to Euro-dominant values, including European masculinity, that a new discourse on Jamaican national identity would emerge. Decidedly majoritarian—given the numerical dominance of Afro-Jamaicans—it manifested itself as a quest to bring psychic redress to dispossessed and socially alienated Afro-Jamaicans, particularly males, vacillating between the objectives of a return to the African "homeland" and the demand for respect and acceptance as co-inhabitors of and co-leaders in the creole space.

From as early as the late 19th century, the question of how to improve the image and social status of Afro-Jamaicans began to be explored by thinkers within the local Afro-Jamaican community. Thomas (2004) points to *Jamaica's Jubilee; or, What We Are and What We Hope to Be* (1888) as one of the most important contributions to the debate. The book was "the first published work by black Jamaicans that codified a critique of racism" (33). Targeting primarily a British readership, it was an attempt to demonstrate that Afro-Jamaicans were socially redeemable and that progress in this regard had been made since Emancipation. Additionally, because of the strong emphasis the authors placed on the advancement of Christian values and institutions as evidence of progress toward civilisation, the book was also a means of demonstrating to the British how successful the church had been in its work among ex-slaves. Remarkably, Thomas states, the authors:

> Attributed the postemancipation development in Jamaican society to the nonconformist missionaries, whom they viewed as having instilled in the slaves a desire for freedom and progress during slavery and as having worked to counteract the effects of the slavery system that had continued after emancipation, including . . . laziness and apathy (34 and 35).

Notwithstanding this praise for British institutions, Thomas notes that the authors criticised the colonial government for "having abandoned the ex-slaves after emancipation and for having failed to initiate any policy that would counter the destabilizing influences of slavery" (36). In pointing the way forward, the authors emphasised the need to strengthen the values of Jamaicans, particularly in the areas of industry, thrift and godliness, located "in the persona of the independent peasant", seen as needing to achieve respectability in order to overcome the demoralisation of slavery. In articulating their values, the authors "consistently evoked the principle that individual effort was related to national development" and argued that "the cultivation of respectability would give black Jamaicans entrance into the 'brotherhood of nations'" (35).

In introducing the work of the *Jamaica's Jubilee* authors, Thomas notes the changed social climate in which they operated. She claims that post-Emancipation Jamaica displayed a new form of racism based on social Darwinism in which nationalists "were placed in the awkward position of having to prove both their equality (to the civilized British) and their difference (from the uncivilized masses)" (2004, 33). She remarks that

the result was a stress on reform of colonialism rather than on radical alteration of its underlying structure. This emphasis on reform rather than change, she asserts, persists in Caribbean social and political historiography "despite the emergence of alternative nationalist ideologies and was ultimately consolidated within the creole multiracial nationalism that became hegemonic by the time of Jamaica's constitutional independence" in the mid-20th century (33).

From the *Jamaica's Jubilee* authors' stated claim, it is clear that their intervention into the debate on race and culture was an attempt to project Christian values on the incipient Afro-Creole Jamaican nationalism. That Christian values became important as part of the creole moral complex was not surprising. A few decades before the end of slavery, Burton recounts, missionary activity among slaves had been started by freed African Americans. These subsequently encountered competition from European Protestant missionaries, mainly Baptists. At Emancipation, the latter "seemed to provide the greatest support for the aspirations of the ex-slaves who had been preparing for a modest life of self-sufficiency for many years before they were free to pursue it" (Gordon 1998, 1). The emergence in later years of autonomous native churches practising syncretised Afro-Christian religion, while threatening the numbers of the European Protestant denominations, was an important feature in the cultural creole continuum, which ranged "from the Euro-Christianity—principally Methodist—of the free colored class through the 'Creo-Christianity' of the white-led Baptist churches to the black-led Afro-Christianity" (Burton 1997, 37). In a number of ways, this continuum reflected the process by which African practices were replaced or overlain by those from Europe or those given spontaneous birth in Jamaica. The arrival of the African American missionaries resulted in public "leadership of a large mass of the slaves shift[ing] from obeah-men to black preachers—evidence certainly of creolization, since it was now an element of the white man's religion that was being used by the slaves for their own spiritual purposes" (Brathwaite 2005, 162). A more significant feature of the continuum was leadership primarily by Afro-creole men. Using Beckles' prism of slavery as the contest between European and African masculinities, it may be argued that through religion, Afro-Jamaican men found a way to restore their masculinity, even if this was premised on a European model.

Equally significant examples of attempts to restore Afro-Jamaicans to a sense of pride included the Garveyite United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) at the turn of the 20th century. With its discourse on return to the African homeland, the UNIA became the vehicle through which Afro-Jamaicans—but Afro-descendants of the Americas more generally—sought to organise themselves for the common cause of uplifting the "race". Garvey was determined to rebuild the "racial self-respect" of Afro-Jamaicans "through a new feeling of pride in the Negro heritage" (Cronon 1969, 11).

As a leader, Garvey distinguished himself by travelling the world, where he made a tremendous impact as an orator championing the cause of the "Negro". Like many of his contemporaries and predecessors, he linked the progress of the "race" directly to the pursuit of religious values, making the motto of his UNIA "One God, One Aim, One Destiny" and initially listing among the aims of the organisation the promotion of "a

conscientious Christian worship among the native tribes of Africa" (Cronon, 17). It was no surprise, then, that Garvey was among a group of prominent Afro-Jamaican figures who became central to the emergence of male-led Afro-Jamaican movements that were simultaneously social, political and religious.

Thomas views Garvey as well as his forerunner Bedward (and Bedward's disciples who founded the Rastafari movement) as "nationalists" who were "integral participants" in debates that were "the first regarding the relevance of race to political identity and participation, and to sociocultural and economic development," (2004, 45). It is, however, the religious dimension of their engagement with the concerns of the Afro-Jamaican masses that has had the most enduring impact. Many Garveyites, for instance, perceived their leader as more than a political figure: he was a prophet because he had "predicted" the ascent of Ras Tafari Makonnen to the Ethiopian imperial throne (Hylton 2002), an event that made sense to them when interpreted through the prism of the Judaeo-Christian sacred texts, the only ones Afro-Jamaicans knew.

In contrast with their discourse on the return to Africa, the appropriation of Judaeo-Christian symbols marked Bedwardian, Garveyan and Rastafari discourses as those of creolised people. Relying on Price (2003), Thomas describes this appropriation as part of "a more explicit millenarian vision of black redemption and white malevolence" which fell within the framework of a "moral economy" in which social questions were treated as issues of justice (Thomas, 47). This use of a European derived tool to denounce European oppression, while paradoxical, reflected the foundational tension in creole Jamaica. In this way, Afro-nationalist forms, like their middle-class equivalents, actively contributed to syncretising African and European culture in the island.

Gender in nationalism

In this process of defining the national self, both before and after Emancipation, as well as under colonial and postcolonial rule, women are often silent or absent. In tracing the contours of this erasure, it is possible to draw on a wider Afro-American discourse. Spillers, in her critique of gender in national constructions as presented in her 1987 essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" notes that the New World, "with its human sequence written in blood, represents for its African and indigenous peoples a scene of actual mutual, dismemberment, and exile" (67). Consistent with this catastrophic entry into that world of unreality and exaggeration, the Afro-American woman is marked as a creature of sex but without sexuality. In the specific context of Jamaican slave society, Vassell (1998) remarks that the complexity of economic and social relations was "based not only on race and class but also on the consideration of sex" (190). Spillers identifies the gendered violence against the bodies of enslaved women as central in the shift from African woman to a degendered object of property at the founding of Afro-American societies. She examines the effects the un- and re-en-gendering has had on present day anxieties over the place of Afro-American men in New World societies and the purported "distortionist" impact of the role of Afro-American women in the household as well as their role in (re)constructing and (re)membering the family. By exploring the ways in which "the institutional design of Caribbean slavery, particularly its cultural specificities, significantly affected the (re)making of gender

identities of males and females" (2), through violence and bloodshed, Beckles echoes and localises the concerns expressed by Spillers. Barrow (1996) traces the same contours, but in anthropological pronouncements on the Afro-Caribbean family. Here, as in America, women are cast as embodying acts of familial dominance with a brutal history. Thus, the emergence of black proto-nationalism and community organising at the turn of the 20th century in the Americas has involved the creation of an Afro-American public that is ungendered although re-engendered with each step in the creation of a body politic that is gendered male in its battle with the "white" (colonial) master. The response of Afro-Caribbean men is noted in the 1960s attempt at (re)construction of gender by locating women's role in the *oikos* while claiming theirs in the *polis*.

In summary, then, two key foundational features of the Jamaican nationalist project have been the dominance of male rulership/leadership and the absorption of formerly marginalised racialised groups into the power structure irrevocably gendered *male*. One sees in this structure a number of dis/continuities. That each of the racialised groups outside the "white" power group has been able to appropriate political and cultural power unto itself suggests that the structure has been sufficiently malleable to constitute the basis upon which a society could be formed (cf. Smith 1965). However, the persistence of male dominance suggests that the system of male privileging left by colonialism has been little transformed by the social and political changes in the society (cf. Chevannes, 2001). In this one sees the evolution of resistant if unstable patriarchal and masculinist ideologies which are "under constant revision" and in which may be discerned "the continuity of certain fundamental elements" that together "constitute the rollers on which masculinities evolve as sites of cultural power with changing social realities" (Beckles 2004, 226).

Like most patriarchal societies, then, Jamaica polices masculinity. Through socialisation, it determines what men are expected to do in their interactions with either sex in public and private. While many of the expectations of men are inflected by class, ethnicity, geography and religion, there are some overarching principles by which the behaviours of all Jamaican men are judged. In many ways, these behaviours are expected to meet standards set primarily by the religious establishment, which pervades all sectors of society.

Class differences notwithstanding, a common thread that runs through Jamaican society is the tendency to view males as providers. Shepherd (2007) points to the slavery and post-Emancipation root of this understanding, which was the Victorian "gender ideology [that] . . . promoted the sex-typing of jobs, the masculinization of the labour force, the male-as-provider . . . and the payment of gender-discriminatory wages . . . by missionaries, employers and state officials" (287). This means that women and children came to be seen as dependent on resources provided by men (Brown et al. 1997). The idea of the man as provider continues to be reinforced by social institutions, particularly the church, which is among the main determiners of social expectations in the creole space. This perception of men as providers is particularly striking when one considers that females today generally outperform males educationally (Figueroa 1998 and 2004; Parry 2000). In this context, men are forced to either find means of social and economic

support that require low levels of schooling or depend on systems of contact for obtaining resources. For all classes, this is achieved through male support networks characterised by comradeship and economic interdependence (Figueroa 1998).

The flip side of the need to demonstrate heterosexuality and men's reliance on supportive relationships with other men is the extreme aversion to homosexuality. Accordingly, preoccupation with overt demonstrations of antipathy toward homosexuality and homosexuals has been ritualised in social interactions (Bailey et al. 1998; Chevannes 2001). The overt denunciations of homosexuality are in fact eruptions of an always already present rejection of homosexuality as central to the construction of hetero/sexuality as default normality. In this way, engagements between men and women and between men are overdetermined by conformity to gender performances. For this reason, the content of men's conversations about sexuality, how and with whom they sit in public spaces are closely scrutinised. It means also that men are proscribed from expressing too much affection toward their sons, as this is seen as possibly favouring the development of homosexual tendencies in the boy. Further, boys are restricted from displaying overt signs of tenderness toward one another and instead are expected to show affection by greeting "each other with clenched fists and backslaps . . . and other forms of aggression" (Brown et al. 1997). Thus, how men touch one another or negotiate mutual affection is circumscribed by the need to conform to behaviours that cannot be read as homoerotic. For instance, friends go so far as to police each other to ensure conformity with these standards of behaviour that come to constitute and reiterate the performance of masculinity which carries with it the preservation of normativity and social order (Bailey et al. 1998).

It can be argued that the preoccupation with protecting the desired gendered social order is reinforced by both men and women, even though in its ideal form this social order is one in which males have authority over women and their offspring. This order is seen as "natural" and as "God's plan". Accordingly, the traits of the "real" man are "proven and prolific heterosexuality, financial provision for [his] family, and family headship" (Brown et al. 97). The corollary of this discourse is that men should never be placed in situations where their heterosexuality can be questioned.

The male gaze

The discourse on gender and sexuality colours what is permissible in the public space. Since the outdoors is the primary space in which males are socialised, their ability to effectively perform their masculinity and heterosexuality in that space is of capital importance to both men and women. In the presence of gendered and sexually marked stimuli, men are expected to deploy the appropriate socialised responses. The prism of the admirer and the admired, a relationship initially analysed as "the male gaze" by feminist film critics in the 1970s and '80s (Mulvey 1975), becomes useful in examining responses in the public space, where men are socialised to be admirers and women to be admired. Though this is a subtext, it nevertheless dominates patriarchal perspectives on sex, gender and social order. In the Jamaican context, it appears in everyday life in the projection of the feminine for public admiration. The images of semi-nude females in local tabloid newspapers as well as on calendars are manifestations of women's sexuality

on display for consumption, presumably by men. This contrasts with the far more circumscribed conditions under which the male body has been traditionally placed in public, to conform to existing ideas of the appropriate re/presentations of masculinity (Bailey et al. 1998; Chevannes 2001).

The masculinisation of the public gaze became the object of controversy at the July 2003 unveiling of Facey Cooper's "Redemption Song". According to the artist, the work, depicting two nude Afro-Jamaicans, one male, the other female, standing in a pool of water and staring into the heavens, arms limp at sides, was meant to communicate "transcendence, reverence, strength and unity through our procreators - man and woman - all of which comes when the mind is free" (Afiwi.com). Despite Facey-Cooper's stated intent, a chorus of outrage rose against the statues, many reviling them as symbols of social and cultural depravity that needed to be removed from public sight. But if the unveiling of the monument unleashed a quarrel about the meaning of Emancipation and revived the all-important debate about what it meant to be Jamaican, more importantly, it became a lightning rod for national preoccupations about sex and sexuality. For many critics of the work, the question of its artistic value was never even posed. Indeed, as *Gleaner* columnist Glynis Salmon opined,

> for many persons the ART of the sculpture is not so much the HEART of the matter. ART or not, (the naked truth about many of Michaelangelo's masterpieces, and the Eden-like quality of many of the classic Greek works notwithstanding), the simple fact is, many Jamaicans suffer a vulgar assault on their sense and sensibilities by the unclothed body. They are just not comfortable with public expressions of either sex or sexuality, and would rather keep it covered (2003, para. 5).

The all too evident physical qualities of the subjects—bare breasts and dangling phallus—transformed the monument for many into a piece of pornography irreverently put on display in a public space. Dr. Peter Morgan, Senior Pastor of the Covenant Community Church, in a letter to the editor pointed out that more than a representation of purity, nudity depicted "an expression of lewdness, shamelessness and sometimes of poverty," he concluded, adding: "And, if I am not mistaken, it is still a legal offence in the statute books" (Morgan 2003, para. 8). The appeal to law, however nebulous, becomes an aid in the policing of public and national morals over which pastoral coalitions are seen as standing eternal watch.

While some of the reactions to the statues might be viewed as the projection of fundamentalist Christian prudishness about nakedness onto the nation, there are alternative ways of reading the concerns about them. These readings are rooted in an understanding of attitudes toward gender and a particular understanding of the power of the public gaze. The importance of these factors emerges in a commentary by *Gleaner* religion reporter, Claude Mills, who reports on a number of reactions, both positive and negative, to the work. One man he spoke to who had, in contrast to religious and other objectors, referred to the statues as art, nonetheless gave expression to the great unsaid in the debate: the size of the male statue's phallus. "I wonder why they couldn't have shown

more of the woman, the ladies can see everything the man has, but what about the men? They should have shown more of the woman in some way" (Mills 2003, para.10). Thus, even in this apparent desexualisation of the statues, the gendered perspectives and sexuality in the masculine gaze came through.

Patrick Bailey notes in a letter to the editor in the same newspaper as follows:

> In most of the comments thus far the phallus looms large and much ado has been made of the man's penis. A size which, in terms of its harmony and proportionality with the rest of the massive male figure, could hardly have been depicted as a thumb tack. Nonetheless, I can well understand the distraction the size of the penis may have caused as penis envy may be a form of red eye not yet researched in Jamaica. (Bailey 2003, para.4).

The concern alluded to by Mills' interviewee and raised directly by Bailey is one of those underlying debates about the monument: the placing of the Afro-Jamaican male form, in all its nakedness, in the public domain. The naked male body as presented in Emancipation Park throws the gendered social order into chaos: it becomes a potential if not actual object to be admired as beautiful or aesthetically pleasing—a role traditionally reserved for the female form—by the archetypical male viewer. Such a scenario could be read as the subversive acquiescence to (male) homosexual desire. In this way, the viewing of the male statue becomes an affront to the normative gaze because it thrusts male sexuality into the face of a public male admirer whose heterosexuality would need to be affirmed if he were tempted to look. Thus, Facey-Cooper, in a very public way, has re-textualised the image of the Afro-Jamaican male and by so doing created social and cultural dissonance. In the absence of outrage in regard to the female statue and the inordinate focus on the (in)appropriateness of the male's naked body in a public place, this reading is all the more compelling.

Contextualizing discourses on masculinity in the age of globalisation: Dancehall's antipathy toward homosexuality

For many emerging dancehall acts—mostly males—the singing of songs calling for the killing of gay men is a rite of passage to membership in the dancehall fraternity. From the defiant 1992 anthem "Boom-bye-bye" by Buju Banton (Mark Myrie) to the 2000 appeal by TOK ("Touch of Klass" comprising artistes Alistaire McCalla, Roshaun Clarke, Craig Patrick, Anthony Thompson and Xavier Davidson) for the burning of those who par with "chi-chi man", the last decade and a half of Jamaican dancehall music has seen an intense preoccupation with the subject of male homosexuality. Hope, one of the foremost researchers on dancehall, writes that "songs of the chi-chi man genre" are replete with narratives of how gay men are to be scorned or killed (2006, 83–84). She attributes the rise and preponderance of anti-gay songs to the "progressive unmasking of (male) homosexuality since the late 1990s . . . reflected in growing numbers of openly homosexual men on television programmes broadcast during prime-time on [international] cable television stations that are accessible to Jamaicans." She describes the 1998 formation of the gay and lesbian rights group, the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-sexuals and Gays as "another catalyst when it raised the visibility of proud, gay

Jamaican men and women" (82). Hope presents the antipathy toward homosexuality as the defence of a fragile sexual and gender identity, where artistes attempt to affirm their heterosexuality and manhood. Thus, "to publicly take a violent, anti-homosexual stance is to express one's accordance for masculinity, male sexuality and male dominance even when [one] has no real intent or history of physical assault against gay men" (2006, 80).

While the defence of sexuality and gender norms is typical of some anti-gay dancehall acts, other exponents of the art form, local heroes in their own right, resort to "strong fundamentalist Christian religious imperatives" in their music as a means of condemning what they perceive to be corrupt social practices in Jamaica. In their eyes, the spectre of these practices becoming more visible in the national space compels them to produce songs "devoted to condemning male homosexuality as a vile abomination that threatened to corrupt and overturn Jamaican society, like the Biblical example of Sodom and Gomorrah" (Hope 2006, 82). Thus, their opprobrium is deemed as a justified attempt to cleanse the social and cultural spheres of the excesses of the "system", that is the Euro-dominant worldview and its local manifestations in political, economic and—ironically—religious institutions. In this conceptual framework, homosexuality is not only a taboo practice, it also epitomises the extreme end of the liberal turn in Western societies. It is the very embodiment of "Babylon", an important trope in traditional Rastafari conception of the (Western) oppressor (cf. Cooper 2004) which appears in the musical forms associated with the movement. Thomas (2004), relying on Saunders (2003), treats the aversion to homosexuality and its association with anti-Western sentiments in Jamaican music as a thread that runs through both reggae and dancehall. Homosexuality thus becomes a powerful symbol linking both musical forms and against which even neo-Rastas—supposedly conscious dancehall artistes whose music delivers a message against the "system"—such as Capleton (Clifton George) and Sizzla Kalonji (Miguel Orlando Collins) can direct their rage.

Despite this preoccupation with homosexuality, Jamaican popular music is seen by some as representing no real danger to the lives of gays and lesbians. Arguing that even if artistes such as Buju Banton (Mark Myries) resort to using the popular Jamaican refrain "aal bati-man fi ded [all gay men must die]," Cooper, a pioneer in the study of dancehall, notes that this should not be read literally for although the term may suggest a call for the killing of gays,

> in its cultural context, this battle cry, which is appropriated by Buju Banton in "Boom By-By [sic]," primarily articulates an indictment of the abstraction, homosexuality, which is rendered in typically Jamaican terms as an indictment of the actual homosexual: The person (the homosexual) and the project (homosexuality) are not identical. (2004, 160)

Research on the ground in Jamaica has made it clear, however, that this violence is not merely lyrical. Carr (2003) was the first to write about the issue, documenting in an article the testimonials of men who had been victims of anti-gay violence. This was shortly followed by the Human Rights Watch report, *Hated to Death* (2004), which catalogued the abuse of gay men as well as persons living with HIV in Jamaica.

There is yet another side to the performance of antipathy toward homosexuality in the lyrics of dancehall artistes. Farquharson (2006) notes that anti-gay discourse could unwittingly draw persons who have no hostility toward gays and who wish to participate in dancehall culture into performing such hostility. For him, markers of disapproval of homosexuality in the dancehall space such as the flashing of lighters and the pointing "gun fingers" could lead even tolerant men or those who have no opinion on homosexuality "in the instant of the speech act", to comply with the hegemonic directives of deejays "for fear of being branded gay" (2006, 107–108). In this regard, anti-gay lyrics do not only communicate disapproval of homosexuality but drive those who hear them to behave in specific ways such as "staying in line with the heterosexual code (or stay in hiding)" (113).

While acknowledging that there is actual violence toward gays in Jamaica, Cooper contends:

> Jamaicans are generally socialized to recognise the fact that anti-homosexuality values are entirely compatible with knowing acceptance of homosexuals within the community. This is a fundamental paradox that illustrates the complexity of the ideological negotiations that are constantly made within this society. (162)

She describes this antipathy as part of a perceived national prerogative to protect the core value of heteronormativity which defines the national space and national identity.
Given the recognition that the lyrical violence celebrates a real world practice, it was inevitable that gay rights activists would attempt to condemn it. Thus, in July 2004, a campaign to stop the promotion of violence against gay men was launched. Dubbed "Stop Murder Music", the campaign—initiated by the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG) and the UK-based rights group Outrage!, and groups as diverse as Lesben-und Schwulenverband in Deutschland (the Lesbian and Gay Federation of Germany, LSVD), Italy's Arcigay, and France's Inter-LGBT, among others—targeted the most popular proponents of lyrics promoting the killing of homosexuals, that is, seven individual deejays, Beenie Man (Anthony Moses Davis), Bounty Killer (Rodney Price), Buju Banton, Capleton, Elephant Man (O'Neil Bryan), Sizzla Kalonji, Vybz Kartel (Adidja Palmer), and the group, TOK (cf. Hope 2006).

Stop Murder Music was not the first international attempt to contain the anti-gay sentiments of Jamaican artistes. In 1992, a coalition of gay rights groups led by the US-based Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, GLAAD, attempted to censure Buju Banton for "Boom Bye-Bye", a song that Farquharson (2006) described as epoch-defining because it brought Jamaican hostility toward homosexuals to international attention. Banton's words troubled many First World liberals who had come to see reggae as the music of protest on behalf of the underdog as exemplified by Bob Marley's music. In this way dancehall, the child of reggae, began to lose some of its sheen as "progressive" music arising from a response to social injustice (Manuel, Bilby and Largey 2006).

Consequently, the SMM campaign threw up a number of challenges for dancehall. Through its lyrics promoting the murder of gay men, the music demonstrated that it held values that were increasingly antithetical to global trends toward tolerance and civil and human rights. Against this background, the music needed to reconceptualise its idea of boundaries. It had moved, on the back of reggae, its predecessor, into diverse spaces across the globe, where, in the words of Cooper, "highly politicized groups of male and female homosexuals wield substantial power" (2004, 170). The challenges to the Jamaican culture, for which dancehall had become proxy, were clear. Accusations of producing songs that advocated the killing of gays brought to the fore what Cooper describes, in relation to the GLAAD/Buju Banton controversy, as "the separation of aesthetic and ideological issues that can arise in the exporting of Jamaican music" (170). Again, framing the challenge facing the music as the result of textual misunderstandings by cultural outsiders, she posits that "in the U.S. export market, where the multivalent Jamaican cultural terms of reference are not clearly understood, indigenous cultural texts like Buju Banton's 'Boom By-By' can be taken all too literally out of context" (168).

All these debates about dancehall's meaning, its spaces of production and its politics of representation revolve around the central problematic of the construction of the nation and its boundaries. As if an empty signifier, the music form comes to stand at once for the voice of the oppressed as much as the voice of the oppressor, the precious text of academics celebrating the cultural production of the masses as well as breaking the silence on quotidian acts of violent discrimination, of Western audiences supporting the music of the marginalized as well as standing up for the rights to exist and to be of the native Jamaican homosexual. The crux of the issue is about the place of rights in Jamaican culture, who has rights and about national sovereignty and cultural prerogatives, with representations of the lone figure of the Jamaican homosexual being "stereotyped, labelled, nicknamed, disrespected, burnt, stabbed, beaten, run out of town, shot and killed in a variety of creative and excruciating fashions" (Hope 2006, 83–84) with the covert, open or contested approval of the native public.

'Not in my Cabinet!' Social exclusion as government diktat

While the patriarchal/anti-gay complex has been known to shape popular constructions of Jamaican national identity, it has generally remained unarticulated in the country's politics. This began to change a little over a decade ago, when political leaders began playing to popular anti-gay sentiments. In 2001, as the country prepared for a national election (held in 2002), the then divorced leader of the governing People's National Party and Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, found himself on the defensive regarding his sexuality. The Opposition Jamaica Labour Party had fed into public suggestions that he was gay, using anti-gay songs at public rallies in a clear attempt to damage his reputation. Patterson declared publicly on a popular morning talk show, the *Breakfast Club*, that his "credentials as a lifelong heterosexual person [were] impeccable", a declaration that made headlines the next day (cf. Davis 2001, para. 7).

The Jamaica Labour Party had used rumours about Patterson's sexuality in its campaigning before. In 1997, then leader of the Opposition, Edward Seaga, pulling on Buju Banton's song, pointed out that no one could use Banton's expression "Boom Bye-

Bye" against him (Davis 2001, para 8). That Seaga, a Jamaican of Syro-Lebanese ancestry found it possible to appeal to the song's anti-gay sentiments as a means of reaching his political audience of mostly Afro-Jamaicans is indicative of the strength of anti-gay sentiments as a cultural and political weapon in the nation. Seaga's deployment of Banton's anti-gay rhetoric was a means of bridging the divide between political leadership and its mass base through a common denominator. In this regard, his pronouncement was an appeal to national cultural identity in the service of a political agenda.

Yet, if anti-gay discourse was an undercurrent of the political landscape and appeared primarily on the stages of political campaigns, it took on new life in two important recent declarations by members of the ruling JLP. On May 20, 2008, Prime Minister Bruce Golding, in an interview by Steven Sackur on the BBC World Service television programme *HARDtalk*, became the voice of the state discursively enacting the exclusion of gays and lesbians from service in the Cabinet. Asked by Sackur to address concerns about anti-gay attitudes in Jamaica, Golding responded that although Jamaica had a "long-standing culture" that was opposed to homosexuality, attitudes had begun to change and that he believed there was "greater acceptance now that people have different lifestyles, that their privacy must be respected." Sackur pressed further, asking Golding to clarify a statement he had made in a local newspaper the previous year that gay people would find no solace in his Cabinet, wondering whether people should not be considered for such positions based on merit. Golding's response was clear and direct: "A prime minister must decide what he feels would represent to the Jamaican people a Cabinet of ministers who will be able to discharge their function without fear, without favour, without intimidation". Asked by Sackur what message that attitude might send to the outside world, Golding responded that "Jamaica is not going to allow values to be imposed on it from outside". Sackur's final question, whether Golding would wish for the day that a gay person could serve in his or any Cabinet in Jamaica, elicited what was perhaps the most definitive statement by any Jamaican politician on normative perceptions of homosexuality and the manner in which gays are to be treated. Golding, after some discomfort and equivocation, responded "sure they can be in the Cabinet, but not mine" (*Gleaner* May 21, 2008).

Golding's utterance was enthusiastically welcomed and endorsed by important segments of the Jamaican population, who thought he had been a strong defender of Jamaica's reputation for intolerance of immoral practices even in the capital of the former mother country. Alternative reactions suggested that Mr. Golding had erred in reinforcing such a perspective of Jamaica to a global audience, intimating that he had misunderstood the nature of the environment in which he spoke and that his words would come back to haunt him, his party and the country. Following Golding's statement, Jamaica's gay rights advocates, notably J-FLAG, issued a statement condemning it as discriminatory and antidemocratic.

Golding's pronouncement was matched on February 10, 2009, by that of government Member of Parliament for South West St. Ann, Ernest Smith, who expressed concern that homosexuals in Jamaica had "become so brazen", they had "formed themselves into

organizations". He declared how violent and abusive gay people were and called on the minister of national security to investigate why so many of them were "licensed firearm holders". His most significant remark was that the security forces—particularly the Jamaica Constabulary Force—were "overrun by homosexuals". He ended his statement with a call for the tightening of colonial era laws proscribing anal sex (buggery), that the penalty be increased from ten years hard labour to life imprisonment. Media reports claimed that Smith's party had distanced itself from his statements. A few days later he apologised to the Jamaica Constabulary Force but expressed even more vociferous objection to the continued existence of gay rights organisations in the country. He specifically named J-FLAG, calling for it to be charged by the Director of Public Prosecutions "for conspiracy to corrupt public morals" (*Gleaner* February 16, 2009)

In response to the increasing bluntness of exclusionary discourse, a number of voices have been raised, analysing the challenges and dangers posed to the Jamaican community by the obsession with anti-gay sentiments and expressions. This is indeed a turning point in the understanding of how deeply anti-gay rhetoric runs and how damaging it can be if taken to its logical conclusion. The antidemocratic concern raised by J-FLAG, for instance, in its response to Smith's declaration in parliament, was taken up by the *Gleaner* in its two editorial responses to his recommendation that the organisation be banned (*Gleaner* Editorial February 16, 2009; February 23, 2009).

Conclusion

While debates about the sculpture served to police public space through the prism of religion, dancehall exults about a certain kind of (hyper)masculinity that vilifies men who, by their sexual orientation, are deemed to have been feminised. These cultural manoeuvres demonstrate not only the extent to which gayness is abhorred but the threat it represents to the normative masculinities that Afro-descended Jamaicans have come to claim as their heritage. In this way, culture comes to serve as "the vehicle through which patriarchal domination is normalised" (Lewis 2004b, 257). This patriarchy insists not so much that non-normative sexualities disappear but that they remain silent, invisible and subservient to the normative. As *Jamaica Observer* commentator Mark Wignall aptly puts it:

> Jamaicans expect homosexuals to be quiet as they indulge in their watchamacallit. Jamaicans expect them to be ashamed, remorseful, penitent and retiring. None of us want them to take their song and dance routine to the National Arena, or Jamaica House. (1998)

In Wignall's world the construct "Jamaicans" seemingly excludes lesbians and gays. Additionally, their clamour for a legitimate voice as representatives of the nation must be silenced. It is perceived as dangerous not only to the nation and its values but also now to the state, which has adopted the "anti-homosexual male paranoia" (cf. Hope 2006) of dancehall adherents. So the prime minister, using his office as chief of government, attempts to demonstrate to the nation and the world that he will police the sexuality of his ministers, and Member of Parliament Ernie Smith declares in parliament his outrage at the brazenness of gays in seeking to enjoy the rights to free association and to bear arms

like other Jamaicans, with parliamentarians banging their desks to signal approval of his comments. Under examination, Smith's proposal is to use the power of the parliament and of the state to persecute and prosecute rights-based advocacy that seems to threaten the patriarchal moral order. The need for the averted or repressed masculine gaze in the face of the nude male statue and the anti-gay sentiments of dancehall artistes are dwarfed by this imprimatur, given by the highest officers of state. Such exclusionary practices might seem to be in defence of particularist racialised and religious values. However, they derive from and are driven by a more powerful historical current which has shaped the privileging of some groups and values over others. The power of that structure is seen in the hold a piece of colonial legislation—that banning anal sex—has had on the minds of colonial subjects and descendants of enslaved peoples. The fact that this law buttresses creole religious values shared by these descendants is sufficient for them to constantly affirm it anew and attempt to stop all conversations on the meaning and function of law in a modern society. That the erstwhile mother country and precursor of the current Jamaican state has eschewed said legislation has had little impact on debates in Jamaica because these values, having been creolised, can be deployed as evidence of what the nation is and ought to be.

Thus, as conceived and articulated by many Jamaicans, affinity to the racial-religious compact of values is more important than respect for the principles of citizenship and individual freedoms. In this regard, the preoccupation with supposed national cultural authenticity is privileged over the guarantee of individuals' right to act and to be. Nevertheless, when examined through the prism of the values enshrined in the national motto "Out of Many, One People", the status quo begs interrogation. The motto alludes to an ideal that acknowledges if not respects diversity, albeit one of races. Indeed, Jamaicans of different ethnic and social groups have, by and large, managed to co-exist in relative peace over recent decades. There are, however, broader possible readings from the motto which could be deployed to contest the exclusionary behaviour of politicians such as Golding and Smith, charged, as they are, with the protection of all citizens. Those readings should make it possible for Jamaicans who violate majoritarian constructions of "blackness" and Christian values to still participate in what South African Justice Albie Sachs calls "equality and inclusive moral citizenship" (Sachs 2005, 10).

In summary, then, what is latent in debates about the nakedness of Afro-Jamaicans' emancipated ancestors, elaborately sidestepped through attempts to metaphorise and allegorise calls for murder in dancehall, becomes explicit in the political arena. It is here that rights are debated between the political leadership and the international media, in campaigns and in debates in parliament over whether gay Jamaicans warrant the civil right of free association as guaranteed in section 23 of the Jamaican Constitution or, instead, life imprisonment. Thus, what is only hinted at or debated in cultural analyses emerges frontally at the level of governance; the unarticulated subtext in the discussions about the statues and the ostensible metaphors in the music are made plain in the pronouncements of politicians and in the most unlikely of places and circumstances.

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La Lucha Mujerista: Krudas CUBENSI[1] and Black Feminist Sexual Politics in Cuba

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Abstract

This essay analyzes the discursive intervention of the Cuban Underground hip-hop group, Las Krudas CUBENSI, whose members are Black feminist activists. From 1998 to 2006, their work in Cuba centered on challenging the oppressive discourses concerning Black women and Black lesbians within Cuban society. Las Krudas link Black women's, particularly Black lesbians', oppression to the ideological legacies of colonialism. I argue that Las Krudas' feminist discourse is a Black feminist critique because of their choice of art, particularly hip-hop, as a political aesthetic. Las Krudas' feminist discourse has become a key discourse within the hip-hop community. The data for this essay are drawn from ethnography, textual analysis, and interviews collected from 1998 to 2006.

[1] For additional information about Las Krudas visit their website at: www.myspace.com/3krudas

Introduction

One of the most influential groups of the Cuban Underground Hip-Hop Movement (CUHHM) is the Black feminist lesbian trio called Las Krudas CUBENSI (Rivera-Velázquez 2008, Armstead 2007, Fernandes 2006, Joffe 2005, West-Durán 2004, Perry 2004). Las Krudas use art to challenge the oppressive hegemonic discourses within Cuban society that concern race, gender, and sexuality. They have been working to do so for over a decade. Las Krudas describe their goal as contributing to "the third revolution within the Revolution,"[2] that of Black women and lesbian equality. Their work is a timely intervention into public discourse surrounding gender and sexuality, as several recent independent surveys (released in 2002, 2003) have concluded that lesbians remain one of the most socially marginalized and invisible groups in Cuba (Acosta et al 2003, Más 2003, OREMI 2005, Saunders 2009). The studies note that cultural norms persist in which women are evaluated by their physical appearance, specifically by how "feminine" they are. Black women face a particularly harsh social environment because they are deemed unfeminine or even mannish because Blackness is perceived as a marker of aggressiveness and hyper masculinity (Candelario 2007 Saunders 2009)

In their music and hip-hop performances, Las Krudas attempt to interrupt hegemonic systems of representation, as a means to expand Revolutionary discourse to include the citizenship demands of socially marginal groups such as Black women and Black lesbians. By combining Revolutionary discourses of inclusive citizenship with an Afro-Cuban, hip-hop and Black feminist consciousness that centers on embracing difference as a means to promote social equality, Las Krudas' strategy as cultural workers has been to challenge dominant discourses concerning "women" and heteronormativity[3] within Cuba's expansive cultural sphere[4].

Krudas' politics of a linguistic and ideological intervention into hegemonic discourses surrounding race, gender, and sexuality, problematizes oppression through the critique of individual experiences that they link to systemic forms of social oppression. Their work centers on changing the minds of fellow citizens as a means of spurring grassroots social change. It is through their usage of tools such as poetry (hip-hop lyrics) and street theater performance that Las Krudas has been able to work within Cuba's cultural sphere, a key component of Cuba's public sphere. In this sphere, they have been able to challenge the hegemony of the sexist, racist, and homophobic discourses that continue to circulate within Cuban society. They do so by educating their peers and communities about social inequality, particularly racial, gender, and sexual inequalities.

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[2] In reference to Fidel Castro's 1966 speech where he stated that the women's movement represented a revolution within the Revolution (Bunck 1994, 87)

[3] Heteronormativity consists of the social practices and social institutions that legitimize and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as 'natural' and fundamental to a healthy society. See Cathy J. Cohen. "Punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queen: The radical potential of queer politics?" in *Black Queer Studies*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, 25(Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

[4] A note about language: the Cuban government is referred to as the "Revolution" on the Island. In this piece, I use the term 'mulato' to refer to Cuba's biracial category. In Cuba, 'mulato' is considered a separate racial category. I use the Spanish spelling 'mulato,' so that this racial category is not confused with the English word 'mulatto.'

In this essay, I will first locate Las Krudas within a Black feminist epistemology and within Cuba's radical artistic tradition. I will then focus on their work within the CUHHM, a key genre in Cuba's alternative music scene. In the CUHHM, Las Krudas coined the term "mujerista" to denote their particular feminist identity, which is constructed at the intersection of their identities as Black lesbians, Black feminists, and socially conscious Revolutionary artists. The "mujerista" identity, I will explain, is an indigenous term that Las Krudas themselves coined in order to name their discourse of Black women's liberation. In an American context, this term would be akin to Black feminism. Black feminism, Las Krudas' mujerista discourse, and Las Krudas' decision to use underground hip-hop as a chosen aesthetic, reflects a Black feminist epistemology that centers on an experience of oppression linked to the cultural legacies of colonialism. These legacies are racialized forms of sexism, classism, and homophobia that intersect to make life particularly difficult for all Black women, regardless of their actual sexual orientation. Within Cuba, the CUHHM is considered a movement for Black empowerment through community activism and anti-racist social critique. Thus, the CUHHM is very popular among socially conscious activists and a larger Afro-descendant public who value the anti-racist critique of the CUHHM.

The majority of women performers in the CUHHM seek to support the CUHHM through showing solidarity with the male leaders of the CUHHM. These women refuse to take any actions in their performances that seem unfeminine and anti-male. However, Las Krudas' music ended the silence on the particular oppressions faced by women such as sexism and homophobia. They explicitly challenged the deference of women to a male gaze at the expense of women's solidarity. Las Krudas felt that these dynamics were reflected in the dearth of all women hip-hop groups within the CUHHM. They argued that the disappearance of women from the CUHHM was not simply due to male domination of the CUHHM as it grew in popularity, but because women's boyfriends and spouses dictated whether women should continue in the CUHHM or to focus on their role as a mother, or a partner. In the cases of women that continued performing, their male partners controlled their creative energy. The result is that many of the women now performing within the CUHHM are primarily singing backup to male artists.

Las Krudas' concerns are well founded. There are very few women MCs in the CUHHM, and there are a few women MCs who write and produce their own music or who MC alone. In my own interviews with female artists, there were a few cases where the MC's husband refused to release her music or to let her work with producers that could enhance his wife's career. In this piece, I draw from ethnographic data collected in Havana's underground hip-hop and lesbian scenes from 1998 to 2006, and several interviews with each member of Las Krudas and a total of 20 hip-hop artists, in Havana, Cuba, during the period 2004–2006. The interviews lasted two to three hours.

Embracing difference: The alternative music scene and Cuba's underground hip-hop movement

Havana's underground hip-hop scene is an integral part of Cuba's contemporary alternative music scene (AMS). Cuban music critic Joaquín Borges Triana writes in his online journal, *Those of Us Who Dream Through The Ear*, that the term "alternative music scene" is an operative category. This scene is not simply composed of a limited number of genres, though hip-hop, rock, jazz, and Nueva Trova could be considered key genres. The AMS does not reject the egalitarian ideals of the Revolution; indeed, it works for the furthering of Revolutionary ideals through its advocacy of multiple discourses in service of social equality. The AMS addresses one central critique of the Revolutionary cultural aesthetic: that the Revolution's hegemonic discourse of unity and sameness, which the state argued was necessary to ensure social equality and defend against U.S. aggression, implicitly supports older pillars of artistic expression through limiting the criticism of Revolutionary discourse and social policy. The effect is that the classism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of social inequality associated with the pre-Revolutionary institutions, which were developed under Spanish colonialism and U.S. neo-colonialism, continue unaddressed in many areas of social life (Borges-Triana 2004).

The CUHHM is the story of how disenfranchised and marginalized youth, living in a marginalized nation, found their critical public voice. The CUHHM emerged during the 1990s when the Cuban state faced a legitimacy crisis, as generational pressures for social change increased, and the loss of Soviet-based economic stability resulted in the post-Soviet economic downturn called "the Special Period" (Perry 2004, Fernandes 2006).

The economic downturn affected Black Cubans the most (De La Fuente 2001, Perry 2004, Fernandes 2006). During the 1990s, Black Cubans began to face more public discrimination. Black Cubans were the first cut from jobs and the least likely to be hired within the lucrative, foreign currency-driven tourist industry. When employed, Black Cubans were usually employed by the State, which meant that Black Cubans were paid using the weak Cuban peso. Black Cubans were also the least likely to receive remittances from family members abroad, as the first few generations of Cuban immigrants had few Blacks. Black Cubans live in a highly racialized society where the majority of the population holds negative views about Afro-Cuban culture, social conduct, and/or physical appearance (de la Fuente 2001, 322–323)

Meanwhile, during the early 1990s, Cuba began receiving radio signals and TV images from Miami. Cuban youth of African descent were fascinated by hip-hop and requested recordings of hip-hop music videos and tapes from tourists, even though they were initially skeptical of the ideological content of the music. However, through African American intellectual and cultural exchanges in the late 1990s, Black Cuban youth became drawn to U.S. American socially conscious hip-hop as a critical art form they could cultivate within a Cuban context (Echeverria 1990). These youth also rejected commercialized forms of hip-hop as an example of capitalism's perversion of socially productive creative energies for the sake of profit.

The aesthetic form and content of socially conscious hip-hop were compatible with the socially conscious traditions of Cuba's radical artistic movements, and the ideological interests of Cuba's state (Pacini- Hernandez 2004, Baker 2005). This allowed Cuban Underground hip-hop, with state support, to quickly emerge as a utopian social movement that challenges social and economic oppression through grassroots-level consciousness raising, community activism, and an anti-capitalist critique.

Cuba's 1990s hip-hop generation has much in common with its U.S. American counterpart who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s. Bakari Kitwana (2003) describes this generation as those who came of age at the end of the civil rights/Black power generation. The hip-hop movement had its origins in New York City, in the 1970s, in the midst of an economic collapse that demonstrated the inability of capitalism, and the 1960s movements, to provide the socio-economic benefits associated with the American dream. Cuba's Black and Mulato youth connected with the socially conscious critiques of poor, urban Black American youth, who also faced racism and economic disenfranchisement. By the mid-1990s, Cuban artists began a socially conscious movement called "Underground Hip-Hop."

"Underground" refers to the socially critical and uplifting messages produced by youth as a means to empower fellow Cubans to understand their social experiences, and to work for social change[5]. The artists refuse incorporation if incorporation depends on changing the socially conscious message in the music. The CUHHM is referred to as being "underground" because these socially conscious critiques are not easily marketed for profit like mainstream forms of hip-hop such as "Gansta Rap" or "Reggaeton." The anti-capitalist orientation of the music does not lend itself to cooptation by profit-driven music corporations that market whatever sells, even if it is socially toxic. In this sense, most socially conscious or "underground" hip-hop exists outside of hegemonic centers of media production and dissemination.

Like other influential underground hip-hop artists, Las Krudas sought to connect with audiences at the level of feeling. Las Krudas link lived experiences to theory in their social critiques, and they reject the generalized, abstract universalism embedded in most theoretical frameworks concerning social life, including canonized academic feminism. Las Krudas connect the difficulties that they and other Cuban youths face in their everyday lives to the larger struggles of inequality. For Krudas, these struggles are connected not only to the U.S. blockade and Cuban government policy, but also to larger issues of globalization, such as the global exploitation that manifests itself in sweatshops in some places and, in Cuba's case, in tourism. However, the most difficult struggle they face is the inequality that persists in Cuban society due to racism, material inequality, sexism, and homophobia.

[5] This definition of underground is based on my interviews with CUHHM artists. This definition is also reflected in Baker's (2005) and Perry's (2004) work with CUHHM artists. Similar definitions of "underground" are also found in the United States' socially conscious hip-hop (see Rose 1994).

Race, gender and sexuality in contemporary Cuba

From the late 1960s through the late 1970s, homosexuality was deemed a decadent, bourgeois social ill by the Revolutionary Cuban state (Arguelles and Rich 1984, Lumsden 1996). Between 1965 and 1980, the Revolutionary government considered homosexuality to be a form of immorality that could corrupt Revolutionary youth and it enforced preexisting social decency laws, which criminalized homosexual acts (Arguelles and Rich 1984, Lumsden 1996). In 1971, the state mandated that known homosexuals not be allowed in educational, cultural and other institutions that were in direct contact with Revolutionary youth. In the case of women's rights organizations, by 1970, known lesbians were not allowed to join the country's only women's rights association: the state-run Federation of Cuban Women. This exclusion lasted until the late 1980s (Smith and Padula 1996).

Existing research on sexuality in Cuba largely focuses on heterosexual women and gay male sexuality; analyses of homosexuality have tended to focus on a universalized "gay experience" in Cuba (Almendros and Jiménez-Leal 1984, Arguelles and Rich 1984). Additionally, print accounts of homosexuality in Cuba in the 1980s and 1990s have been written by men who acknowledge that their work does not focus on the experiences of lesbians, as lesbian spaces are hard to access (Lumsden 1996, La Fountain-Stokes 2002).

There has been some representation of lesbian's experiences in independent film (*Not Because Fidel Says So* [1988], *Looking for Space* [1994], *Gay Cuba* [2000]). These films capture the changes in state policy concerning homosexuality between 1980 and 1996, when the state began to focus on targeting homophobia within Cuban society in order to address the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s. The state sought to address the crisis through reducing the social stigma concerning homosexuality, and undertaking a massive sexual education program that targeted men who had sex with men (Acosta et al 2003, OREMI 2005). The result of state policies has been more public space that is inclusive for gay male Cubans.

T Con T: Lesbian Lives in Contemporary Cuba (a forthcoming film in which members of Las Krudas are interviewed) is the first film to focus exclusively on lesbians in Cuba. *T Con T* offers more insight into the issues facing lesbians, as it focuses on the underground lesbian scene in Cuba and efforts at creating a lesbian community while navigating their decreased economic independence as women (which is a result of Cuba's 1990s economic crisis). The women in the film note the increase in gay male public space over the last 20 years, while lesbian space remains invisible. Gay male domination of non-heteronormative space is linked to the ways in which heteronormativity intersects with machismo[6] to create a particularly vitriolic and isolating experience for Cuban lesbians (Arguelles and Rich 1984).

There seem to be several factors that make it difficult for women, particularly Black lesbians and self-identified feminists, to challenge the social ills that they face. One is

[6]Fleites-Lear (2003) defines machismo as "the idea that men are superior to women and should dominate them socially, economically, physically, and sexually."

that throughout the Caribbean, and much of the world, feminism is associated with imperialism. This belief has some basis in some of the historical actions of European and North American feminists. For example, during the hemispheric struggle for universal suffrage during the 1920s and 1930s, feminists from the United States argued that Latin American women were not ready for universal suffrage; that they did not understand the responsibilities of participating in an electoral public (Stoner 1991, 113). Feminists from the United States fought against suffrage being expanded to the racialized, and by extension inferior, populations of women of Latin America and the Caribbean (Stoner 1991). As a result, this history has prevented feminism from being accepted as a legitimate discourse for social equality in post-colonial and neo-colonial societies.

Another factor is that post-colonial and neo-colonial Caribbean states tend to conflate morality, sexuality and gender. M. Jacqui Alexander (1991) argues that the managing of sexuality through legislating morality has affected the ability of subsequent organizing against heteronormativity. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, Alexander links this move to legislate morality to colonial rule and to the post-colonial state's attempt at legitimizing itself: the postcolonial state uses Victorian notions of civilization as a tool to discipline and regulate the social. By conflating gender and sexuality with a notion of morality, feminists and other women-centered activists cannot only focus on "gender" or "women" as a means of challenging social inequality; they must also focus on morality. Like Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba also implemented morality laws that sought to implement social order through the conflation of gender, sexuality, and morality.

When the Cuban Revolution occurred in 1959, the Revolutionary government ushered in the "New Man," or the "Revolutionary," as the ideal citizen. At the core of the notion of the "Revolutionary," was a notion of morality: the Revolutionary was a white, heterosexual male and moral subject who cared for and defended his nation (Bejel 2001). These factors, combined with Cuba's highly racialized society, has created a situation where women can only critique their social experiences as feminine, heterosexual subjects. While the majority of the women within the CUHHM critique the treatment of women within their music, only Las Krudas have connected the ways in which heteronomativity—as a racialized system through which culturally based notions of gender conformity and heterosexuality are policed—is constitutive of and reinforces Black women's oppression.

Towards a black feminist critique

Black feminist identity is composed of multiple subjectivities that borrow from multiple theoretical frameworks, especially personal experiences, in order to articulate itself (Smith 2000). Personal experience is a crucial element of Black feminist thought because Black feminist subjectivity is located at the intersection of multiple subjectivities (Smith 2000, The Combahee River Collective 2000). Black feminist epistemologies are disseminated through poetry, music, video, performance, and essays instead of positivistic forms of academic media (Smith 2000, Hill Collins 2000).

"A Black Feminist Statement" by The Combahee River Collective (2000) is a key canonical essay that explicitly outlines a Black Feminist epistemology. The Combahee River Collective argue that Black feminist politics are a struggle against racism, sexism,

homophobia, and classism, as all these forms of discrimination simultaneously affect the lives of Black women. They link these forms of discrimination to capitalism and colonialism—specifically identifying slavery as one of the sources of Black women's oppression. The Combahee River Collective argue that their Black feminist consciousness emerged because they realized that these intersecting dynamics were "driving them crazy." A Black feminist consciousness also emerged when they learned how to love and value themselves and other Black women. They reject the mandate to separate their struggle from the struggles of the larger Black community since the struggles are interconnected.

The Combahee River Collective writes that neither a socialist Revolution, nor an anti-racist movement, nor a feminist revolution will guarantee Black women's liberation. For them, Black women's oppression is a result of culturally based ideologies. The Collective's analysis considers culture, as this is something that is often understudied in discourses about oppression. Their goal as Black feminists, however, is to examine the "multilayered texture of Black women's lives," as a means of developing the theories and practices necessary for achieving Black women's liberation (17).

Las Krudas CUBENSI emerged in the 1990s in a country that had an anti-racist, socialist revolution. Las Krudas argue that their feminist identity emerged as an "indigenous feminism," one in which they started to realize how significant aspects of their experiences were not addressed by anti-racist and socialist discourses, which guaranteed their material equality regardless of race and gender. Through using Cuba's institutionalized cultural sphere, Las Krudas sought to make a cultural intervention into the issues that they faced as Black Cuban women. Like The Combahee River Collective, they link their culturally based oppression to the legacies of colonialism, particularly slavery, and imperialism. Through an ideological intervention in Cuban cultural life, Las Krudas worked tirelessly to end the ideological basis of social oppression.

Las Krudas CUBENSI: Underground hip-hop and Cuban black feminism

Las Krudas are sisters Odaymara Cuesta (Pasita), Odalys Cuesta (Wanda), and Olivia Prendes (Pelusa), the long-term partner of Pasita. Pasita and Wanda are Black women from central Havana, while Pelusa is White, and from Guantanamo, Cuba. Though Pelusa is white, she is staunchly anti-racist. In hyperracialized, Spanish-speaking societies such as Cuba, Pelusa's solidarity with Pasita and Wanda is a political statement: all Cubans must unite to fight oppression (Helg 1995, Ferrer 1999, De la Fuente 2001).

Before joining the hip-hop Movement, Pelusa and Pasita of Las Krudas entered onto the performance art scene in 1997 as the founders of the independent art troupe, Agrupación de Creación Alternativa CUBENSI, which is a precursor to their internationally acclaimed street theater group, Tropazancos. Wanda joined the performance art troupe in 1998. Pelusa writes the following about their group:

> We were not happy with the landscape offered to females and our gender within the movement and stimulated by the possibilities of expression that the occasion presented, in 1998 we founded Krudas Cubensi, with the

> intent of satisfying our own expectations of representation and to incorporate a feminist discourse to the unrestrained posture of the masculine majority, which meant a great challenge for us. (Prendes Riveron 2006)

In 1998, Pasita, Pelusa, and Wanda emerged as *Las Krudas CUBENSI* in Cuba's underground hip-hop scene. Known for their work as community-oriented street theater artists, they were asked by several influential artists and producers to perform at the 1998 IV Hip-Hop Festival in Alamar, a housing project outside of Havana. As Pelusa notes in the previous quote, Las Krudas felt that CUHHM was heavily dominated by a masculine discourse. The women MCs who participated in the movement largely rapped about themes such as their relationships with men or presented themselves as sexual objects. Las Krudas decided to focus on the needs of Black women as a way to address the limited discourse concerning women's liberation in the movement. Las Krudas did their first non-Tropazancos solo performance, as a trio, at the 2000 Havana hip-hop Festival.
Black feminist thought is at the core of Krudas' work as Black lesbians. Pasita and Wanda are highly ske discussions with Krudas, I asked what feminism has meant for them. All three agreed with the following description by Pasita. When I asked Pasita how Krudas defined feminism, her first comment was, "We are not talking about the feminism of Gloria Steinem!!!" She went on to state as follows:

> What is feminism for me? It is a woman defending the reasons to live and the necessity that we have to be happy and respected in …[every one] of the decisions we make in life. Or better, I'm talking about a basic feminism. I am not talking about the academic feminism of Gloria Steinem or none of those other White women over there… Nor do you need to have a vocabulary of 2,603 words per minute, but feeling yourself to be a woman and feeling the things that happen to all us women and from that stand up and say, yes I am a feminist…always defending my thing because I think that we are at a super, super disadvantage. For me, that is feminism. (Pasita interview, Havana 2006)

In this quote, Pasita points to the importance of lived experience in forming feminist subjectivity. For Black Cuban women, one's identity and experience cannot be found in the canonized feminist texts of scholars such as Gloria Steinem. Because of the multiple forms of oppression Black Cuban women face, it is important first to have that moment of acknowledgement that, as Barbara Smith notes in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, there are multiple -isms that are kicking one's "behind." For Krudas, it is in the moment that one realizes there are multiple forms of oppression facing Black women *and* one realizes that one should be happy, respected, and respecting oneself as a woman, that a feminist consciousness emerges.

Las Krudas locate their work within the tradition of Black Cuban women, such as Gloria Rolando and Nancy Morejón, who have offered their social critiques through the arts. Also, when Las Krudas invoke the names of feminists, they are the names of women, oftentimes Black women, who have been influential figures in Cuban and world history.

They also include the names of the women ancestors of their families. Krudas do this in order to locate their work within social change spurred by the actions of everyday women and popular women who have not been written into Cuban history, while linking their struggle to the global struggles facing women, particularly Black women. Las Krudas center their critiques not just on Cuba, but also on issues facing Black women regionally and globally.

The following song, *Eres Bella,* is an example of Krudas' poetry (hip-hop lyrics). In the song, they ask the women in the audience how long they (Krudas) will be the only women on stage. This often drives the point home that there is a glaring absence of women in public life.

Eres Bella	***(Eres Bella –"You Are Beautiful")***
[Coro]	[Chorus]
Eres bella siendo tú,	You are beautiful being you
ébano en flor, negra luz	Ebony in bloom, black light
Eres bella siendo tú,	You are beautiful being you
cuerpo no es única virtud	The body is not your only virtue...
Eres bella siendo tú,	You are beautiful being you
ébano en flor, negra luz	Ebony in bloom, black light
Eres bella siendo tú,	You are beautiful being you
inteligencia es tu virtud	Intelligence is your virtue

Pasita begins the song with a temporal play, which is a key component of African-based music and culture (Rose 1994). Pasita states, "Never here [has anyone spoken to you like this], I left." Such a temporal rupture may spur one to think about, or try to understand what is happening at that moment. It is after this point that Pasita tells the audience what is happening: they are going to talk about a "colonial story."

In the song, Las Krudas attempt to illustrate how the realities of today are linked to a history of colonial oppression and anti-neocolonial struggle. Las Krudas use the image of an Ebony tree in bloom to describe Black women; Krudas want women to remember that Blackness is beautiful, and that Blackness is feminine. Blackness, which socially marks Black women as outside of femininity and beauty, affects the ability of Black, poor, and/or fat women to see themselves as beautiful (Fernandes 2006, Joffe 2005, De la Fuente 2001, Kutzinski 1993).

In their interviews, Las Krudas argue that in Caribbean societies, women still have a difficult struggle ahead of them: figuring out a way to challenge heteronormativity is difficult when feminism is still considered a foreign and imperialistic Western European and American discourse (Smith and Padula 1996). They hope that by pinpointing the problems within their culture, they can encourage people to work for a resolution. To this end, Pasita says the following about the goals of their feminist activism:

> Our thing is working against the posture of the entire world, specifically that of Cuban culture, Latin culture, Caribbean culture. [These cultures] are very rich, very flavorful but [they are also] very *machista*, very *lebophobica*. Very misogynistic are these cultures. So our project is to take all of this negative stuff, put it on the table, acknowledge that it exists and decide what we are going to do to resolve this problem. (Pasita interview, Havana 2006)

In their particular position as Black Caribbean women from a Latin culture, Krudas are working at the intersections of their own culture(s) for social change. Las Krudas' intervention in the CUHHM is also an intervention in the preexisting Black feminist discourses of the CUHHM , which did not challenge heteronormativity but encouraged it through its focus on heterosexuality, and the reification of Black femininity (Cuesta Rousseau interview 2005, Prendes Riveron 2005, Fernandes 2006, 2007).

Thus, Las Krudas do not only identify as feminists; they also theorize about pushing the boundaries of feminism, by exploring other identities, such as their "mujerista" identity, as key identities that form part of their larger "Kruda identity." The term "mujerista," Pelusa commented in a 2005 interview, seeks to acknowledge that feminism at times operates as a counterbalance to patriarchy, and that each maintains and reinforces the other.[7] But a mujerista identity is completely outside of the feminism/patriarchy dichotomy, and focuses particularly on all things part of women's experiences, including sexuality and the right to represent one's interests, whatever they are, without limiting the analysis of women to their experiences of oppression under patriarchy. For Krudas, being a "Super-feminist" is not enough. Pelusa argues in a 2006 interview that women have to be stronger, more assertive, and learn everything they can from men, since men dominate established knowledge, including music production within hip-hop. Las Krudas' identity is not only one of Black female subjectivity. They also have a lesbian subjectivity. Pelusa says the following about their agenda:

> Then when we feel that there are other women who have a feminist discourse, we felt that we could take it up another step. And the other step is the step of coming out of the closet completely, and come out as lesbian rappers and continue going up the ladder until we arrive at an emancipation absolutely Kruda... (Pelusa interview, Havana 2005)

Las Krudas' strategy was first to help women develop and deploy a feminist discourse in their music. They tried to build solidarity with women artists. When they felt there was a solid feminist discourse within the CUHHM, they felt that they could then completely come out of the closet on stage and focus primarily on their experiences as Black lesbians. As Las Krudas gained acceptance and respect as women artists who revealed

[7] The literal translation of mujerista is "womanist." The English term womanist is a product of specific political debates that occurred in the United States. Las Krudas use this term differently and the term emerged in a Cuban context, not an American context. Therefore, I will use the Spanish term mujerista, in order to contextualize Las Krudas' identity politcs.

much of the complexity of life surrounding women, they gradually began to come out of the closet.

Mujerista identity and the black feminist critique

In the following excerpt from their song "Candela," from their first album *CUBENSI 2003*, Las Krudas talk about their intersectional existence as fat, Black lesbians. At the beginning of the song, Las Krudas show that that the "mujerista vanguard" are "giving school," or educating the listener.

"Candela" by Las Krudas CUBENSI
***Metia* (forthcoming)**

The primary voice of this song is Pelusa with Wanda and Pasita Krudas sounding in agreement.

el hombre esa expresión	man [as a universal term] this expression
no me incluye	does not include me
los humanos esa expresión	Human beings this expression does not
no me incluye	include me
somos hembras todo eso	We are women and all of this influences
influye en lo que voy a	that which I am going to
explicarte aquí adelante	explain to you in a moment
...	
como existe lo masculino	Like masculinity exists
exista la feminidad	Femininity exists
como existe lo heterosexual	As heterosexuality exists,
existe la homosexualidad	Homosexuality exists
todas y todos tenemos	all women and all men, we have
derecho a la libertad	the right to liberty

At the beginning of this song Pelusa shouts, "Audience, listen!" After assertively commanding the audience's attention, Krudas then directly plant a seed for people to reflect on: embracing human diversity also means embracing sexual diversity. In this song, they talk about their feelings of being poorly treated, ignored, because they are women (and implicitly meaning lesbians). Pelusa rejects the term "mankind" as exclusionary to women, as the term centers on "man." It is in this way that Las Krudas call attention to the subtle ways in which women's oppression operates systemically: even something as mundane as everyday language is male-centered. Las Krudas' references to male and female, darkness and light, may be linguistic references to symbols that are seemingly natural dichotomies. By stating these accepted realities first and couching them in terms of persisting inequality, Las Krudas create the space necessary to assert a reality that is often invisible to most Cubans: homosexuality, particularly female homosexuality, exists.

The issue of "morality" plays a key role in justifying the social isolation of lesbians. Parents are very hesitant to let their children be "exposed" to "homosexual behavior" for

fear that their children may be influenced by such "immorality." In 2004, I asked Las Krudas about their views on being lesbian. Pasita said the following:

> To be lesbian is a path. To be bisexual is a path. To be transgender is a path. Every person has their path and within the most diversity is the world, the richest...variety covers the surface of the world… Can you imagine if the world were equal? Damn!!! [with] the varied richness, the [varied] diversity because there are different criteria and different ways of living life, then... the... how do I explain this to you... the transcendence of the human species is more varied because of the different origins of the different components that have mixed, and so at the end a person is more on point because they have an open mind towards all that comes because it's [all] OK (Pasita 2004).

Krudas argue for the embracing of difference. In this quote, Pasita envisions a future where people can simply be without any requirements on what that being entails. For Pasita, everyone, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, will be able to follow his or her own path. Las Krudas felt comfortable in discussing the difficulties they faced as Black lesbians, because they were part of a movement, the Underground Hip-Hop Movement, where the goal was to create a space for the representation of marginalized and racialized social identities and experiences; it was a space that strongly encouraged social critique. Through Pasita and Pelusa's long-term relationship and their numerous contributions to Cuban society, Pasita hopes to challenge established notions of morality that depict lesbians as morally inept and socially unproductive.

In another song, "Amikemiñongo," which is on their upcoming CD, ***Metia***, Krudas directly engages the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and their relationship to Cuba's colonial legacies. The following is an excerpt of "Amikemiñongo" (all three voices of the group are represented throughout the song):

¿Qué más tú quieres de mi, si todo yo te lo he dado?	What do you want from me if I have given you all of it?
…	…
Que te creías pequeña que el mundo	What do you think that the world is small
De estar organizado seria como tu cuarto	As to be organized like your room
…	…
Explotación discriminación pobreza violencia osorbadera	Exploitation, discrimination poverty, damn violence
…	…
Bruja, tuerca, Yo mujer, yo Libertad por siempre…	Witch, dyke I am woman, I (am) Freedom forever…

This song is another critique of modernity. In essence, Las Krudas center on modernity as a corporal and cultural project of social reorganization for the productive interests of

Western capital. In this song they focus on the social organizing agenda and the cultural logics of colonialism. In essence, they center on modernity as a corporal and cultural project of social reorganization for the productive interests of Western capital. In an anti-modernist temporal move, Las Krudas evoke the collective memory of Black and Brown populations as a means to articulate the connection between the colonial period and the contemporary period. Rhetorically, they ask the imagined perpetuators of colonialism, "Do you think that the world is small, as to be organized like your room?"

There are several factors that frame Krudas' conceptualization of colonial legacies. For Krudas, it is global European capitalist interests that deploy physical and ideological violence in an attempt to organize subjects, including "nature," to prepare them for European capital's productive interests. The colonial period marks the emergence of oppressive ideologies and social hierarchies such as racism, sexism, and homophobia that are a result of the social organization and the valuation of people according to reproductive capabilities.

While focusing primarily on women in this song and making the call for women to fight to liberate themselves, they also slip in the word "tuerca," which is slang for "dyke." Through addressing all these elements in one song, Krudas are able to link race, gender, and sexuality to colonization. Through making these connections between racism, sexism, classism, exploitation, homophobia, and colonialism, Krudas attempt to help the audience to see that liberation is for *everyone* who has suffered as a result of the organizing impulses of modernity.

In the case of race, Las Krudas also highlight the particular difficulties facing Black lesbians. In a 2006 interview, Pelusa commented that members of the CUHHM often ask Las Krudas why more Black lesbians do not attend underground hip-hop events. She says the following about being a woman in hip-hop, and about the precarious existence of Black lesbians in Cuba:

> It's that, for example, Black lesbian women don't have a lot of time to go to hip-hop [shows], they have to work hard to make it, to survive, to look for money. In hip-hop there isn't much money, there is no money and lesbian Black women don't have money, they don't have ways to... [Pauses to think] For a lot of Black lesbian Cuban women it is difficult, their life, very difficult. (Pelusa interview, Havana 2006)

In this quote, Pelusa discusses the difficult lives of Black lesbians. The CUHHM is a male-dominated space. When Black lesbians have an opportunity to leave the home, they look for other lesbians in other types of spaces. However, lesbian life is so secretive, that oftentimes women, particularly Black lesbians, remain isolated. Black lesbians also have to work much harder than other Cubans to earn a living. The lack of well-paying jobs available to Black women has made economic independence difficult to achieve. Additionally, race and class segregate the lesbian community in Cuba. Light-skinned wealthy women, who are able to afford their own home or have the leisure time to create

women-centered spaces, are typically unwelcoming of working-class women and Black women.

Through their friendships with foreigners, Las Krudas were able to collect films, books and other materials freely circulating outside of Cuba. In Cuba, they shared these materials with lesbian friends and acquaintances. Their activism within the CUHHM has also drawn state attention to the needs of lesbians. Because of their work to bring attention to the issues facing lesbians, Las Krudas were invited by psychologists working at CENESEX (the National Center for Sex Education) to be the co-founders of the first state-sponsored lesbian organization in Havana, called OREMI, during the summer of 2005.

Discussion/conclusion

In his analysis of the heteronormative tendencies of socialism, Roderick Ferguson (2004) utilizes a Black feminist framework to argue that Marx never challenged the relationship between race, gender, sexuality, and notions of social progress in the bourgeois notion of civilization. Black feminist theory accounts for how the "intersecting racial, gender and sexual practices antagonize and/or conspire with the normative investments of nation-states and capital." (Ferguson 2004, 5) Because of Black feminist's subjectivity to colonialism and the emergence of the nation-state, there must be a transnational, or even regional, account of heteronormativity (Ferguson 2004).

It is in this way that Las Krudas' critique of heteronormativity is a Black feminist critique. Through linking their oppression as Black lesbians to colonial legacies, Las Krudas' non-heteronormative critique challenges the utopian discourses of both Marxism and feminism. Las Krudas bring attention to how they, as non-white, lesbian subjects living in the global south, are excluded from liberatory discourses concerning "humanity." Through taking advantage of the socially critical space provided by the CUHHM, Las Krudas worked to address the intersectional oppression, and social isolation, of Black lesbians not only in Cuba but also throughout the Americas.

In the fall of 2006, Las Krudas left Cuba as a means of realizing their dream of bringing global awareness of the presence of Black Latina and Caribbean lesbians who continue to live an isolated existence globally. They are currently based in San Francisco, California and Austin, Texas. They are currently on tour in the United States and Mexico.

Las Krudas. From left to right: Wanda Krudas, Pelusa Krudas, Pasita Krudas.

Tropazancos, April 2004. Photograph courtesy of Beth Ferguson.

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For more information about Las Krudas see: www.myspace.com/3krudas
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Le Jeu de Qui?[1] Sexual Politics at Play in the French Caribbean[*]

Vanessa Agard-Jones

Abstract
By virtue of their non-independent political status, Martinique and Guadeloupe (France's Antilles) operate under a legal regime unique to the Caribbean vis à vis sexual rights. While in certain independent countries in the region homosexuality is criminalized and "homosexual acts" are punishable by law, France's legal code both affords protections and extends certain rights, such as access to the PACS (the *pacte civil de solidarité* is a form of civil union available to both same sex and heterosexual couples in France since 1999), to Martinican and Guadeloupean citizens.

This paper seeks to understand the modes of representation that frame lesbian and gay Antilleans as subjects of particular (European) rights and victims of certain (Caribbean) violences. I document the loci of power that emerge as these discourses develop in a circuit between the Caribbean and the metropole, paying particular attention to the

[1] Translation: Whose Game?

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questions of legitimacy and authenticity mobilized in these fields. I argue that, despite the best intentions of (mostly) metropolitan-based advocacy groups, these discourses support the mapping of a developmental teleology on the Antilles, labeling them less "modern" than their metropolitan counterparts. I question how this framing dovetails with French nationalism, particularly as it relates to the country's self-perception as an originator and defender of human rights. Because these discourses sometimes occlude the complicated, everyday experiences of queer Antilleans (both at "home" and in diaspora), I integrate into my analysis conversations with various interlocutors in both the Antilles and in Paris. By examining the politics of sexuality in the French Caribbean, this paper is a simultaneous consideration of teleologies of development and the limits of liberal rights paradigms, as well as a critique of the politics of representation that impact queer lives in the Antilles.

Introduction

In April 2007, Paris-based gay magazine *Têtu* published an article provocatively entitled: "La Douleur des Makoumés: Homophobie en Martinique" (The Sorrow of the Faggots: Homophobia in Martinique) (Barzilai 2007).[2] The piece appears under a photograph of black male bodies in motion (presumably dancing), clothed in vaguely "tribal" wear; they are all bare-chested and photographed from the neck down; the person at the center of the shot wears a leopard-print armband and leather and raffia belt, slung low. The caption identifies the photograph as a scene from Carnival—a party called "Jungle Juice"—where during a "moment of détente, *homos* are accepted" (Barzilai 2007, 112).[3] This opening scene—the spectacular title and the exoticizing photograph—set the stage for an exposé, ostensibly penned to reveal the kinds of violences and exclusions that gay and lesbian Martinicans face on the island. Through this paper I chart what else this scene and the article that follows reveals, both about the politics of representation and the rights-based rubrics through which those representations are framed in the "conversation" between French Caribbean subjects and their metropolitan counterparts. Moving from representations to the lived experiences of the subjects being represented, this paper uses discourse as a starting point for an interrogation of matters that are often missed in analyses of Caribbean sexual politics.

"La Douleur des Makoumés" was published on the heels of an increasing interest within *Têtu*'s pages in the question of homophobia in the Antilles, as they had published only two articles on the region in 2005, increasing to eight in 2006, and then finally publishing 15 interventions of varying lengths into the limited public discourse on the topic, in 2007.[4] This evolution was marked by a shift on the part of the metropolitan-based

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[2] "Makoumé" is a Créole colloquialism (sometimes spelled makomé or makomè) that translates, roughly, to mean faggot in English. In anglophone Caribbean slang, the word is most equivalent to "battybwoy." Unless noted, all translations from the Créole and French are my own.

[3] "Homo" is a French slang word, used more often than its anglophone equivalent in everyday speech between self-identified gay subjects. For more on language and sexual identity in French, see Provencher 2007.

[4] Another note on language: "Antilles" is the French word for Caribbean, and is alternately used to refer solely to Martinique and Guadeloupe or to the region on the whole in French parlance.

editorial staff from an interest in Martinique and its "sister" island Guadeloupe as potential (gay) tourist destinations to a consideration of the role that sexuality plays both in local politics and in the everyday lives of gays and lesbians on the islands.[5] Beyond the gay press, Martinique and Guadeloupe enter the French public sphere more regularly than other islands in the region because of the unique relationship that they retain to France: since 1946, they have been Départements d'Outre Mer (or DOM), politically integrated territories of that power's first colonial empire.[6] By virtue of their non-independent political status, Martinique and Guadeloupe operate under a legal regime unique to the Caribbean vis à vis sexual rights. While in certain independent countries in the region homosexuality is criminalized and "homosexual acts" are punishable by law, France's legal code both affords protections and extends certain rights, like access to the PACS (the pacte civil de solidarité, a form of civil union that has been available to both same and opposite sex couples in France since 1999), to Martinican and Guadeloupean citizens.[7]

In the same month that "La Douleur des Makoumés" appeared in *Têtu*'s pages, posters cropped up at numerous sites throughout Guadeloupe's city of Point à Pitre. They read: "ATTENTION DANGER- Ségolène ROYAL veut marier les Makoumès- Nous disons NON!" (Attention! Danger! Ségolène Royal Wants to [Allow the] Faggots to Marry! We Say No!) This was during the last rounds of France's 2007 presidential election, when the electoral race had narrowed to a contest between conservative candidate Nicolas Sarkozy and progressive candidate Ségolène Royal. Far from an isolated series of postings, the production of the signs was coordinated by local political actors, rumored at alternate times to be members of either Sarkozy's Union pour une Mouvement Populaire (UMP) or Royal's own Parti Socialiste (PS) on the island. In Martinique, in the wake of the poster campaign, local political figures argued that homosexual practices (and moreover, ideas about gay marriage) were unacceptable to 95% of the Antillean population, largely because they were said to hold "Christian" beliefs that differ from those of French metropolitans.[8] To many interpreters, the debate signaled a clear distinction between the moral codes deemed acceptable in hexagonal France (the part of the country located in Europe) and those valorized in its territories in the Caribbean. Dramatically and quite clearly, sexuality and sexual rights have emerged as a flashpoint in an ongoing political

[5] I recognize that not all people in Martinique who engage in same-sex sexual activity identify themselves as gays and lesbians, nor do all people who engage in similar practices anywhere else in the world. For the purposes of this paper, though, *Têtu*'s interest in sexuality in the Caribbean is clearly tied to the subjects who assume those identity markers. For a compelling analysis of the relationship between sexual identity and those categories in Martinique, see Murray 2002.

[6] The DOM, in total, number four: Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane (also considered, depending upon the observer, to be a part of the circum/Caribbean), and Réunion. As departments, they are technically comparable to Provence or Brittany. DOMien(ne)s, (as their inhabitants are sometimes called) are citizens of France, eligible to vote in national elections and to participate in national political parties.

[7] Ratified in France in 1999, the PACS allows any two non-related people (regardless of their gender) to enter into a formal relationship of "solidarity," similar to civil marriage. According to France's INSEE (Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques/ National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies), in 2003, 43 PACS were signed in Martinique. In 2004 there were 94, and in 2005, 124 (more current statistics have not yet been released; earlier stats were: 2000: 20, 2001: 23, 2002: 79. To provide a point of comparison, in 2006 INSEE reported 1,477 marriages on the island.

[8] See http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1i17o_occobondamanjak_politics

and social negotiation of the relationship between France and its dependent territories in the Caribbean.[9]

This paper seeks to understand the modes of representation that frame lesbian and gay Antilleans as subjects of particular (European) rights and victims of certain (Caribbean) violences. Representations, such as the ones circulated through *Têtu*, are key sites where the metropole's authority over its non-contiguous territories is both enacted and consolidated. I attempt to document the loci of power that emerge as these discourses develop in a circuit between France's Caribbean *départements* and the metropole, paying particular attention to the questions of legitimacy and authenticity that have been mobilized in these fields. I argue that, despite the best intentions of (mostly) metropolitan-based advocacy groups, these discourses unwittingly support the mapping of a developmental teleology on France's Caribbean territories, labeling them less "modern" than their hexagonal counterparts. I wonder how this framing dovetails with other French nationalist projects, particularly as they relate to the country's self-perception as an originator and defender of human rights. Because these discourses sometimes occlude the complicated, everyday experiences of queer Antilleans (both at "home" and in the diaspora), I also integrate into my analysis interview material from conversations with various interlocutors in both the Antilles and in Paris.[10] Ultimately, by examining the politics of sexuality in the French Caribbean, this paper is an attempt at a simultaneous consideration of teleologies of development and the limits of liberal rights paradigms, teased out through an analysis of the politics of representation that impact queer lives in the Antilles, as well as in their French metropolitan diasporas.

La Douleur des Makoumés

In bright red letters a floating text box on the second page of "La Douleur des Makoumés" asserts: "If you don't have a computer and you want to meet people, you risk your life."[11] This dire pronouncement sets the tone for the article, which begins with the story of Michel, a teacher and activist who was attacked in Fort de France in late 2006. Michel was distributing condoms on behalf of an advocacy organization at the port, a place well-known as a pick-up spot for gay men (presumably those without computers), when a group descended on him with knives, leaving him in need of 21 stitches.[12]

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[9] Activist Mario Kleinmoedig has analyzed a similar dynamic in Curaçao and Aruba, islands of the Dutch Caribbean. There, gay marriage functions as a pivotal issue for indexing sovereignty when questions of political in/dependence are being debated (personal communication, 2009).

[10] I use "queer" as a convenient shorthand here, fully cognizant of the fact that there is no equivalent term in French, nor is it the way in which my interlocutors either define themselves or their sexual practices. My interlocutors in Paris have been fairly evenly divided between lesbians and gay men, while my interviewees in Martinique and Guadeloupe are more often lesbian and/or bisexual-identified women, save for self-defined activists with whom I have interacted in Martinique, all of whom are gay men.

[11] The "you" being interpellated in this message is somewhat ambiguous: it is both the (presumably white, metropolitan) *Têtu* reader and the gay Antillean person, indexing a kind of community between those readers and the article's subjects. I thank Ram Natarajan for helping me clarify this point.

[12] I use Michel's real first name, as the article does, but decline to include his last name, which follows their convention, though I met with and interviewed him in July 2008 and May 2009. A note: the article misidentifies the advocacy organization's (Amvie's) work as being directed only towards HIV positive people, but their charter includes advocacy for LGBT people and sex workers (Fred Cronard, director, personal communication July 2008).

Seeking to account for the 43 instances of homophobic aggression that were reported in Martinique in 2006 (in addition to what Michel suffered), *Têtu* contracted journalist Martin Barzilai to write "La Douleur des Makoumés." The article points to two key features of Martinican society thought to be at the root of its homophobia.[13] The first is many Martinican citizens' adherence to forms of conservative Christianity.[14] Barzilai writes:

> The strong influence of different churches, Catholic, Protestant, or Evangelical, constitute [sic] a form of social pressure. It is not rare to hear readings of the most contested passages of the Bible on this question (Leviticus XVIII, 22 and XX, 13)…This omnipresence is also found on a local television station, KMT, that systematically ends its programs with 'That God might save Martinique.' It is also in the name of their religious convictions that numerous elected socialist officials on the island have taken positions against those of their party on gay marriage or in respect of *laïcité*. That's the case with Marlène Lanoix, first federal secretary of the PS, who in July 2004 called the PACS a 'by-product of a decadent society.' (Barzilai 2007, 113)

Here, Barzilai activates a common frame for understanding sexual mores in the Caribbean, one rooted in the politics of respectability and deeply informed by Christian orthodoxy (Wilson 1973). As anthropologist Deborah Thomas explains in regard to Jamaica, "Respectability...is a value complex emphasizing the cultivation of education, thrift, industry, self-sufficiency via land-ownership, moderate Christian living, community uplift, the constitution of family through legal [heterosexual] marriage and related gender expectations, and leadership by the educated middle classes" (Thomas 2004, 5). This vision of respectable conduct has been roundly criticized by Caribbeanist scholars, even as it has been taken seriously as a response to labeling the region and its people hyper-sexual (Thomas 2004; Kempadoo 2004; Mohammed 1998). But beyond the usual skepticism about this approach to the nexus between religion and sexuality, the revelation that a local television station uses a tag-line that references "God" in its programming would be particularly surprising for a metropolitan French audience because of the deep resonance that the political value of *laïcité*, or (public) secularism has in that country. Further, that Marlène Lanoix, an elected official aligned with one of the more progressive of the national parties, would use even vaguely religious reasoning in her articulation of a position against gay civil unions (the PACS) would be downright shocking. For French metropolitan audiences, the blows keep coming. In a text box on

[13] There is a limited effort at the end of the article to articulate a more nuanced third "explanation" for Martinican homophobia. Toward this effort Barzilai quotes Stephanie Mulot, an anthropologist whose thesis research was on sexuality and matrifocality in Guadeloupe (Mulot 2000). She says, "Antillean identity is constructed on the basis of the individual having to respect the rules of the community. Identity must be collective and not individual" (Barzilai 2007, 114). Rather than blaming Christianity or popular culture, she points to the smallness of the islands and the community ethos that springs, in part, from propinquity. Parsing these explanations allows us to begin to examine the function of homophobia(s) in particular contexts.

[14] The generalized anxiety about conservative Christianity may also reflect the shifting demographics within Christian adherence in the French Caribbean. While the majority of the citizens of the islands have traditionally been Roman Catholic, evangelical Protestant churches have been making significant headway within these populations.

the following page of the article, large black letters read: "In the Bible, God says it's an abomination" above the smiling face of Raymond Occolier, another member of the Parti Socialiste and mayor of the Martinican commune of Vauclin. In the mini-interview that follows, Occolier calls for "the next government to consult the Martinican population, by local referendum, on the question of gay marriage," stating that "after Madame Royal announced her political program, that included gay marriage, a lot of socialist party members [*militants*] turned in their membership cards. We must stop the hemorrhaging [from the party]. I don't want to be cut off from my electorate" (Barzilai 2007, 114). Quite clearly, conservative Christianity and its interpretations of scripture emerge to explain the homophobia that causes Martinican "makoumés" such sorrow.

The article goes on to articulate a second rationale for this state of affairs:

> Martinique must face important social problems: high rates of unemployment, notably for youth, social precariousness that is not abating, undeniable economic difficulties, and the ravages of crack. Baseball caps, baggy pants, and Nike, [sic] many young people sport the bad boy outfit of the West Coast [presumably, he means of the United States here] and listen to ragga or dancehall. This style could be innocent if certain singers didn't call for the murder of *homos*. (Barzilai 2007, 113)

In this instance, homophobia is interpreted as the result of the diasporic circulation of cultural forms, themselves understood to have arisen as a result of social inequality.[15] Rather than the hagiographic framing of this circulation that a seminal critic like Paul Gilroy has invoked (Gilroy 1995), the movement of these cultural products between the United States and among the islands of the Caribbean is reframed as a threat. This echoes the kinds of arguments that have been made, particularly in Caribbean cultural analyses, about musical forms popularized since the 1980s. Almost invariably with reference to Jamaica, these works have focused on critiques of dancehall and ragga music—for their misogyny and/or their homophobia—and have inspired vociferous debate both within the academy and beyond. Much has revolved around Buju Banton's 1991 track "Boom Bye Bye," a song wherein the dancehall don quips, "boom bye bye inna batty bwoy 'ead…rudebwoy nuh promote nuh nasty man dem haffi de'd." This track's circulation, first as an underground product in Jamaican dancehalls and then internationally when released on Banton's Mercury Records-produced album, led to what Tracey Skelton has analyzed as "the airing of a debate about race and sexuality" (Skelton 1995, 275) in certain parts of the Caribbean and its diasporas in North America and the United Kingdom—and this same debate has only recently made its way onto the francophone circuit. With this airing, though, has come the consolidation of a type of binary critique: on the one hand, of what many (white) gay activists have referred to as the "exceptional" homophobia of "Jamaican (and by extension— Caribbean) culture," and on the other, of what Jamaican/diasporic activists have charged is another round of cultural imperialism

[15] In keeping with a typically French reluctance to articulate the racial markers of these forms, Barzilai never calls them "black," even though that is the implicit marking.

emanating from the West, crystallized by the censorship of Banton's songs and boycotts launched against both his music and concerts.[16]

On one front, in these debates dancehall has been elevated as a beacon of resistant artistry, positioning the Caribbean against the decadent West, and heralded as the voice of the Caribbean's margins—the poor, the youth, and the disenfranchised (Cooper 2004; Niaah 2004; Bakare-Yusuf 2006). On another front, dancehall has become emblematic of a form of violent black pathology, uniquely homophobic and illustrative of the cultural backwardness of the region. As Faith Smith has remarked, in this era "issues of sovereignty seem to be waged more forcefully in the domain of sexuality" (Smith 2007, 136) than in any other, as these debates and the ways that they have called up international human rights standards, sanctions, and the withholding of global capital, have made clear. "La Douleur des Makoumés" sits smack in the middle of these conversations, as francophone artists such as Admiral T., Krys, and D. Pleen are identified in its pages as torch-bearers for the translation and re-articulation of the homophobic speech found in the dancehall music of their anglophone counterparts.[17] Studies of homosexuality and homophobias in the broader Caribbean have paid attention to these issues, as well as to the particular intersections of cultural politics and national discourse on various islands of the region (Kempadoo 2009; Barrow, de Bruin, and Carr 2009; Glave et. al. 2008).

Still, the discourse on *homosexualité* in the francophone Antilles continues to be framed (by French journalists, activists, scholars, and politicians alike) as a binary opposition between Caribbean-ness (associated with violence, black popular culture, and Christianity) and an implicit French-ness (associated with rights, safety, and secularism). The solidification of this ideology inserts the Antilles into a developmental teleology, less aligned with the tradition/modernity binary that we often see in postcolonial contexts, but

[16] JFLAG's response to the 2009 Boycott Jamaica campaign illustrates the ways in which local queer subjects have sought to develop and disseminate their own critique of both lines of argumentation.

[17] A wave of critics have sought to make a more complicated intervention into this debate, acknowledging that in cases like these the stakes are high and therefore the imperative for nuance is great. Rather than forcing a choice between "colonial and sexual politics"(Chin 1997), certain critics have been moved to develop an intersectional blending of the two, both in this controversy and beyond (Johnson and Henderson 2005; Muñoz 1999; Gopinath 2005; Ferguson 2004). Sara Salih, in a 2007 essay on the Banton controversy, struggled to come to a less reductive reading of the dissonant registers at which it was (and continues to be) racialized, sexualized, nationalized and gendered. In an attempt to stake out her own position she asks, "What does it mean to be postcolonially queer, or/and queerly postcolonial, particularly in a context where the self-styled 'local' values of the post-colony are pitted against what are regarded as the permissive sexual mores of the west?" (Salih 2007, 1) I would like to suggest an ethnographic analysis, mindful of Salih's questions, that examines the relationship between popular culture and the forms of violence—both corporeal and symbolic—that shore up heteronormativity, as just one possible research agenda to which future scholarship might attend. Locating anti-gay ideologies and their continued relevance in authorizing discourses—be they religious, biological, or merely "popular"—may be an important way to evaluate the construction of both sexual and racial normativity, claims to authenticity, and their attendant formulations of the abnormal. Looking to "the multiple spaces where these contestations occur—the church, the dancehall, the street—and the increased visibility of lesbian and gay organizing in the Caribbean" (Alexander 2007, 160) is one of the tasks to which social analysts might set themselves, particularly as they work to disrupt the spurious binary that positions the "queer-friendly, progressive West" against its "retrograde, homophobic" counterpart in the Caribbean.

instead organized around a religious/secular one. Because arguably "tradition" is a less applicable conceptual frame for the Caribbean, a place that many argue has always been "modern" (Trouillot 1992; Khan 2001; Mintz 1996), this binary gets reworked through the French political value of *laïcité*, which itself functions as an index of modernity. The political division of the private and public spheres in French thought is, as in other liberal traditions, one that places politics in the category of the "public," and both religion and sexuality in the category of the "private." Feminist critiques of this spurious division aside, the ideologies that reinforce this separation continue to have powerful resonance. The article in *Têtu* is but one place where the representation of the Antilles as gripped both by a conservative-Christianity-gone-wild and a retrograde set of (black) cultural values is juxtaposed against the properly secular (white, European, though tacitly Christian) public space of the French republican state. This discourse draws lines of radical cultural difference to ostensibly "explain" the homophobic violence that occurs in a place like Martinique, even when much the same can be found in a place like Provence.

Within this logic, remedying the problem of homophobic violence would require admission that the Antilles are places in need of "development"—secularization and Europeanization—in order to fulfill the promises of their inclusion in France's liberal rights regime. Here "development" is not tied to neoliberal humanitarian programs, like those promoted by economic development industries elsewhere in the region, but instead to ideas about the proper place for both religion and blackness in the French public sphere. While the article does not point to "development" as the explicit solution to the Antilles' purported problem with homophobia, the suggestion is that Martinique departs from hexagonal France's model due to a set of cultural values that are both behind the times and beyond the pale for a modern democratic state.

Qui Parle…?[18]

Returning to "La Douleur des Makoumés's" opening gambit, the subtitle of the article reads, "Between the declarations of hostile elected officials against *homos*, the sermons that keep with the same sentiment, and the local singers who call for the burning of 'faggots,' the climate in Martinique is not the most welcoming. But gays and lesbians are not ready to *laisser faire*…" (Barzilai 2007, 112). But who are the "gays and lesbians" to whom this subtitle refers? Who are the subjects who will not let this Bible-beating and identification with homophobic (black) popular culture continue? Are these local actors? Diasporic ones? From whom did Barzilai get his information in order to represent the issue in this way?

Beyond the conversation with local politician Raymond Occolier, "La Douleur des Makoumés" reads like a who's who in the debates over queer sexualities and their place in Martinique, including quotes from the organizers of various activist and advocacy groups, entrepreneurs, and scholars based both in Paris and Fort de France. While Barzilai is careful to present a fairly diverse set of positionings and experiences, a certain narrative about "good" and its battle against "evil" still emerges between the lines. Although this is a reductive frame, it still bears mentioning: activists, social welfare workers, and entrepreneurs are written into the narrative as the ones fighting the good

[18] Who Speaks…?/ Who is Speaking…?

fight, and they are clearly positioned against locals with religious convictions, including public figures like Marlène Lanoix and Raymond Occolier.

Among the "good" guys are Amvie, the organization that Michel was working for when he was attacked at the port, though they had no representative quoted in the article. Patricia Louis-Marie, the director of Action Sida Martinique, the island's oldest and most established HIV/AIDS organization, is referenced as having told Barzilai that condom distribution is still blocked by many institutions on the island (including secondary schools and prisons), even though the statistics for HIV transmission are dire (Barzilai 2007, 112). Lastly, Barzilai draws heavily on the analyses offered by David Auerbach Chiffrin, then-secretary general of An Nou Allé, an organization founded in 2004 as both the Antilles-Guyane arm of France's nationwide network of gay and lesbian centers (CGL) and as an activist organization for black and métisse LGBT people in France. While An Nou Allé has had representatives based in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the majority of the adherents to the organization—including its founder Louis-Georges Tin and Auerbach Chiffrin—now live in Paris.

That metropolitan-based queer subjects play such a dominant role in the debates about queerness, race, and rights in the Antilles speaks to the ways in which the power of representation gets concentrated in diasporic hands. Further, while *Têtu* can be exceedingly difficult to find amongst vendors in Martinique (during a recent stay on the island I could find it in only one store), in hexagonal France it is the flagship publication for the mainstream gay and lesbian demographic and as such is widely available.[19] The conversation that is then enacted through the magazine's pages is largely a closed-circuit one, between people in the metropole rather than between the metropole and the Antilles. While remaining vigilant against a tendency to flatten and reify a North/South or diaspora/local divide, it is nonetheless critical that we question how emplacement either within the region or outside of it matters in these political fields.

Têtu is sited in a field of knowledge production and circulation that centers on international human rights-based advocacy and while not as nefarious (nor as coordinated) as what Joseph Massad calls the "Gay International," (Massad 2002) the modes of representation that are circulated through *Têtu* are not only similar to, but are largely derived from the discourses developed by activist groups, with the French Caribbean material being tied closely to the statements made by (mostly) metropolitan-based members of An Nou Allé.[20] Given these dynamics, the conversation increasingly

[19] The magazine may be something akin to what the *Advocate* represents in the United States.

[20] Since the publication of Barzilai's article, that role has been increasingly fulfilled by TjenbéRèd, a splinter group that developed out of An Nou Allé (starting its work in May 2007) that is based more self-consciously in the metropole. Frequently, TjenbéRèd's interventions and public statements are picked up by reporters at the magazine and are used as the basis for their stories. See http://www.tjenbered.com. It is fairly clear that the organization's positions have been influenced by the work of Peter Tatchell, a London-based self-proclaimed human rights activist who has taken up controversial, universalist positions on a variety of LGBT issues. Jasbir Puar offers an insightful and important critique of his oeuvre, highlighting its investment in notions of Western supremacy (Puar 2007).

inscribes a narrative whereby metropolitan queers are mobilized to "save" local (Antillean) queers from local (Antillean) people.[21]

This framing is troubling, in part because of the way that it reifies and reinscribes colonial categories (the backward Caribbean vs. the enlightened West), but is even more so because it reflects the genuine good intentions and sincere desires on the part of metropolitan subjects to both document and combat violence. In her article on the "Tragedy of Victimization Rhetoric," feminist legal scholar Ratna Kapur maintains that any attempt to argue with inequality starts with showing that it exists, usually by showing its victims (Kapur 2002). There is no denying that people fall victim to homophobic violence, both symbolic and physical, in Martinique (just as they do in Paris, Bordeaux, and Marseilles). Nor is there any denying that even the threat of violence, as well as of less spectacular exclusions, shores up a regime of sexualized inequality in the Antilles. But the crafting of a particularly Antillean victim subject and a particularly Antillean homophobic subject backs our political responses into a contradictory corner. When the problem is framed in this way, the possibilities for resistance get limited to calls for "development," usually through public education. This discourse often leaps over actual queer Antilleans and their experiences, instead privileging the interpretations of activist subjects, themselves usually based in (or from) the metropole.

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and Zakia Pathak have argued that "discourse…works only by significantly excluding certain possibilities [in this case full representation of the subject]. It achieves its internal coherence by working within parameters which are ideologically fixed" (Pathak and Rajan 1989, 563). Similarly, Dorothy Ko questions the framing of the victim subject and the ways in which the binary through which it operates conceals the *actual* subjects of the discourse and turns them into a one-note monolith, united (and given voice) solely through their victimization (Ko 2006).

A number of my interlocutors in Martinique and Guadeloupe have emphasized to me that they cannot be reduced to victimized subjects living in a universally homophobic place. One, a Fort de France-based lesbian who publishes anonymously on her "Blog de Moi," wrote upon first learning about An Nou Allé's existence, "I am not going to deny everything they say, but believe me, there are ways of living one's homosexuality here. 'Constantly clandestine' 'social outcast status?' … No. Well, yes and no! So sorry to be raining on parades again! It really depends on individuals and their histories and it's not worse here than it is in a small rural town. But I concede that some probably have difficult lives on the day to day."[22] Her urban, middle-class milieu makes her experience of living as a lesbian in Martinique something much less fraught than Barzilai's article might have readers believe. Equally, her experience of sexual politics as a lesbian is inscribed—though not unproblematically—in the tropes of silencing and invisibility that Makeda Silvera highlights in her now-classic essay "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians" (Silvera 1992). Referencing the

[21] This point echoes postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak's classic critique of representation and the victim subject in her 1988 essay "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice" (Spivak 1988).

[22] http://www.blogdemoi.com/2006/05/27/an-nou-alle-association-lgbt-martiniquaise/. Thank you to Alice Backer for this translation.

work of An Nou Allé, other interlocutors have wondered aloud to me whose interests the negative representations that they proffer ultimately serve. They suggest that in the absence of an ongoing and serious engagement with the lives of people on the ground in the Antilles, these forms of advocacy serve to do little more than benefit the personal political and professional trajectories of the mostly diaspora-based advocates.[23]

In "La Douleur des Makoumés" a similar problem emerges: local people unaffiliated with either activist or advocacy organizations make only cameo appearances. Even Michel, the "victim subject" whose story opens the article, is little more than a name, an age, and an incident—in other words, a prop. Everyday queer Antilleans only appear between the lines of the argument about homophobia that Barzilai and his interlocutors build in this article, though the violent incidents that impact on (but do not necessarily define) their lives are mobilized for activist purposes. Pathak and Rajan convincingly demonstrate how discourses of protection, in addition to giving "authority to speak for the silent victim…can [also] serve as a camouflage for power politics" (Pathak and Rajan 1989). This move "conceals" the power differentials between the protectors and the protected while granting legitimacy to the protectors to speak on their behalf. When this happens, an important consideration drops out of the picture: that emplacement in the metropole and emplacement in the Caribbean come to matter differently to queer subjects' understandings of safety, strategy, and the "development" necessary to rid their communities of homophobia.

Activist proponents frame the limited rights that France extends to its LGBT citizens as critically important. The right to the PACS and the ongoing fight for rights to adoption, medically assisted reproduction, and marriage all activate a narrative about LGBT identity that centers on coming out, the assumption of queerness as an identity, public visibility, and political action.[24] If outness, visibility, and the spoken are taken as the measure of these rights, queer subjects in the Antilles are understood to experience them only as unrealized, particularly because so few people choose to, as they term it, *s'afficher* (to wear their sexuality on their sleeve). But the narrative that rarely gets taken seriously in this formulation is one that centers on discretion. Among my gay and lesbian interlocutors in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the grand majority have chosen to live their (sexual) lives discreetly, at least when they are at home. François-Xavier, a metropolitan man who lives and works in Fort de France as the proprietor of a cyber café, tells Barzilai that he approaches his outness in Martinique in this way, "I don't hide anything, but I'm not ostentatious" (Barzilai 2007, 113).

Conventional interpretations of this choice would highlight its groundedness in fear—fear of gossip, of outing, or of violence. But I would like to caution against making the

[23] While no one to whom I spoke questioned the advocates' sincerity, the gap between these actors suggested that the advocates' intentions themselves emerge as a result of the development teleology at work.

[24] See the work of scholars like Martin Manalansan, Carlos Ulises Decena, Gloria Wekker, Gayatri Gopinath, and José Esteban Muñoz for important critiques of these teleologies of gay identity and the political projects of which they form a part (Manalansan 2003; Muñoz 1999; Gopinath 2005; Wekker 2006; Decena 2008).

analytical slip of understanding discretion to be equal to either passivity or some crude form of false consciousness.[25] In an effort to take seriously some of my interlocutors' beliefs that political inaction and personal discretion are preferable to the kind of action initiated by activist groups in response to homophobia, I wonder what it would mean to think about their positions as both a call for an alternate understanding of the steps necessary to make their living conditions more ideal and an instantiation of what Judith Jack Halberstam has called "radical passivity" (Halberstam 2008). In Halberstam's hands, radical passivity describes a subject position that declines the contestatory, that either cannot or refuses to speak, and can be used conceptually to rethink both passing and passivity as active in their own way.[26] The complicated stories of negotiation that my interlocutors in the Antilles have shared with me highlight some of the contradictions between having access to sexual rights and living under intense social pressure to "pass" as heterosexual. Yet some still understand the political projects of a diasporic activist group like An Nou Allé to be participating in a game that they would otherwise decline to play, as the next section of this paper will explore.

C'est le Jeu de Qui…?[27]

While sitting in the parking lot of her apartment complex in Schoelcher, a bedroom community of Fort de France, my interlocutor Jewel,[28] a Martinican lesbian in her 30s, insisted that I answer her questions: "Whose game are they playing? Whose game are *you* playing?" We had been talking for nearly an hour about the "Ségo Veut Marier Les Makoumés" poster campaign, Raymond Occolier's call for a referendum on gay marriage in Martinique, and An Nou Allé's advocacy on behalf of victims of homophobic violence. I had expected a conversation with her about why there weren't any queer women involved in local contestatory projects, but instead we were talking about whether the issues themselves were worth contesting, particularly given the way that they were framed. She wanted to know whose game An Nou Allé was playing when they contributed to stories like "La Douleur des Makoumés" that would run and be read largely in the metropole. She wanted to know whose game Occolier was playing when he spouted off about calls for a referendum, even though the French legal code would never allow such an initiative. She wanted to know where I stood too—whose game I was playing—as I talked to her about my desire to craft a dissertation project on sexuality and politics in the Antilles.

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[25] As Neville Hoad has insightfully argued, "The claim to rights on the basis of homosexuality has been a fraught business in the modern West. A universalizing faith in the liberatory potential of such politicization of sexual minority identities repeats the failures and fantasies of modernization theory without taking into account its devastating riposte: underdevelopment theory" (Hoad 2007).

[26] I am aware, here, that even this formulation of passivity insists upon an agentive subject, itself usually formulated as the measure of the full exercise of a rights-bearing subject's humanity. Halberstam's intervention with the notion of radical passivity is meant, in part, to circumvent the privileging of acting/action as the only proper way to deal with power relations. Rather than engage the active/passive binary much further here, I would like to suggest that the passivity that I describe may be diagnostic of the forms of power at play in the Antilles, as well as in other communities where sexual discretion is understood, by most queer subjects, to be the best option for their public lives. I thank Yasmin Moll for stimulating my thinking on this point.

[27] *Whose Game is This?*

[28] A pseudonym.

Surprised by her adamant tone, I stumbled. I hedged. But Jewel insisted. She approached these topics with an intensely skeptical (and expansive) eye, and tried to shift our conversation away from the questions that interested me then ("Have you ever been to an An Nou Allé meeting?" "Why don't you consider that to be a good use of your time?" "Do you know the members?") to the larger politics at play. While I would later come to understand (and agree) with her skepticism, our reasons for doubting ultimately differed. Like Jewel, I was concerned that the (mostly) diasporic subjects who purported to speak "for" lesbians and gays in the Antilles were complicit in other projects, ones that demonized Martinique and labeled its queer inhabitants victims. Not only did Jewel decline to construct herself as a victim, she focused her critique on how very different Martinique was from a place like Jamaica, a place she understood to be a "real" (and spectacularly unique) site of homophobic violence in the Caribbean. Jewel confessed a deep love for her island and its French-ness. She understood Martinique to *be* France, not a place in need of some sort of ideological development in order to be *equal to* France.

While I share Jewel's critique of observers representing Martinique as a place in a state of developmental delay, in contrast to her position I am equally skeptical about the kinds of complicities that are shored up by insistently framing Martinique-as-France. I question how all of these positionings participate in a narrative about French national pride that many of its postcolonial subjects—from both the Caribbean and other parts of the world—have contested. I see both sides of this discourse—framing the Antilles as radically religious and Other to French secularism and downplaying island homophobia in order to claim those places to be "as French as France"—as moves that contribute to a reductively nationalist, or if looked at through the lens of *Têtu* and An Nou Allé's advocacy, as part of a "homonationalist" project (Puar 2007).[29]

Furthermore, I would like to suggest that current concerns with sexuality and its relationship to religion in the Antilles are haunted by the debates happening in the hexagon about the integration of postcolonial, often religiously marked, migrants into France's political community.[30] Numerous scholars have written about the fraught relationship that France continues to have with Muslim, and particularly Algerian or Algerian-descendant, populations (Cohen 2000; Shepard 2006; Silverstein 2004). French anxieties about their integration into the national body have flared around the question of the headscarf and what its wearing is thought to represent about gender parity, ideas about women's sexuality, and Muslim incompatibility with the French civilizational project (Keaton 2006; Scott 2007; Bowen 2008). This is the paradigmatic battle in the French public sphere, while questions about homophobia in its Caribbean territories represent, by comparison, mere blips on the metropolitan radar screen. For this reason, conversations about postcoloniality and modernity, particularly as they are filtered through debates about gender and sexuality, continue to refer to the perceived "Muslims

[29] Puar defines homonationalism as "a form of sexual exceptionalism—the emergence of national homosexuality...[that] operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects" (Puar 2007, 2).

[30] This is also a trend in Europe more broadly, as countries from the Netherlands to Denmark to Spain participate in a near-continent-wide conversation about the relationship between Muslim migrants, "security," and the neoliberal political order.

vs. France" crisis in the country. If queer activists are not careful, they may also contribute to the consolidation of France's congratulatory narrative about its role in the global adjudication and spread of human rights.

The congratulatory narrative goes like this: France is the home of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*. French universalism guarantees rights to all people, who are seen as equal (and unmarked by any form or group membership) before the state.[31] Because of this political heritage, France is a beacon for other polities, and has taken a progressive stance on forms of inequality related to race, gender, national origin, and sexuality that other states should want to emulate. Given this narrative, ideas about French exceptionalism and the relative enlightenment of other countries' governance systems are increasingly indexed by issues like the "emancipation" of women and the treatment of queer subjects. [32] Indeed, when activists who want to contest homophobic violence in the Antilles call upon tropes of French-ness and lean upon French rights as the solution to the problem, they may end up playing a game that ultimately disserves them.

Who Speaks? Whose Game? What Next?

Throughout this paper I have sought to understand how modes of representation impact the subjects being represented, how having the power to speak may not run parallel with having the most politically efficacious things to say, and how the problem of advocating for the end to violence against queer subjects in a postcolonial (or neocolonial) context is fraught with pitfalls. By grounding their reasoning in one line of logic, advocates for change may fall in line with homophobic projects. By grounding their reasoning in another, they may support imperialist ones. While sketching a map of the political field as well as the seemingly intractable problems that are part of it remains an important endeavor, where does this critique leave us? Will we ever find a way to work around having the locus of power for representation rest in the metropole? What can we do with the good intentions of those metropolitan actors? Even more importantly, what do we do with the real violences that people suffer and the rights that might, in whatever incremental way, protect them?

Even given the enormous diversity that characterizes Antillean experiences in the metropole and in the Caribbean (Beriss 2004), there remains a complex gap between what these groups of people understand to be the meaning of the nexus between sexuality and rights in the Antilles. As an example of one way to bridge it, the Martinican lesbian responsible for the "Blog de Moi" has forged another locus of representation for queer

[31] France has a peculiarly romantic, self-congratulatory narrative about its relationship with rights talk, given the nation's central place in the genealogy of those frameworks. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) was a founding document of the modern French state, initially composed by the Marquis de Lafayette during the French Revolution, and is widely cited as a forerunner to documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[32] When French Secretary of State for Human Rights, Rama Yade, announced in 2008 that France would bring a resolution to the United Nations calling on all member states to decriminalize homosexuality, it was with the framing that this was a fitting call coming from France, the home of human rights. In this project, Yade has consistently referenced the over 90 countries in the world where homosexual acts are penalized and the five or six (all Islamic) states where a conviction on charges of homosexual practice carries the death penalty.

subjects in the Antilles. In this digital age, her work points toward the opening that new forms of media might provide in shifting the metropole-weighted distribution of those who are given the platform to "speak," though the class-laden implications of this form of action remain intact. Rather than learning about Martinique only by way of analyses refracted through Paris, her blog is but one outcome of more democratized access to various public spheres.[33]

Perhaps the more difficult problem to confront, though, is the conflict between the sincerely proffered political projects of those who seek to "liberate" queer Antilleans and the local (queer) resistance to those interventions. It bears remembering that both sincerity and good intention were at the heart of most colonizing missions, and France's *mission civilisatrice* acted as the standard bearer. Returning to this time-worn yet still present dynamic forces us to acknowledge the limits of our political imaginations.

I offer these analyses not as an incitement to close down political projects, but rather as an urging to open them up, to question them in new ways, and to reconfigure and realign them as critically as we dare. Jewel's reminder that we look to the big picture as we engage in these politics is one that we might well heed, while also paying more sustained attention to the everyday experiences of the people most affected by them. As an anthropologist, I am particularly interested in the relationship among imaginaries, representations, and materiality and am moved by the complicated ways in which our imaginations sustain us, but also work to occlude certain experiences. While some imaginaries function as necessary means by which we can dream and actualize certain futures, others turn into representations that bypass the experiences of everyday people. For the latter reason I am convinced that ethnography, that sustained engagement with people who do not necessarily have recourse to authorial or artistic authority, is of the utmost importance as we seek to understand sexual politics in the Caribbean. As we ask politically urgent questions about human rights, homophobias, the politics of respectability and about sexual "freedoms," it would behoove us to also ask questions of those who every day negotiate these politics as they go about living their lives, for in the end, none of this *really* is a game.

[33] A number of anthropologists of culture and media have made important interventions on this front, documenting the development of indigenous "media worlds" and their interactions with global communications networks. On these topics, see the work of Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, Larkin 2002). I thank an anonymous reviewer for their reminder that the Internet, like the diasporic music circuit, harbors both revolutionary and reactionary potentialities. I acknowledge that while functioning as a site for the proliferation of previously unheard voices, it can also function as a site for the development of anti-gay political positions.

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Putting the 'Cool' in Coolie: *Disidentification*, desire and dissent in the work of filmmaker Michelle Mohabeer

Tara Atluri

Abstract

> "It's referencing back all of those Indian women that have come worked on the plantations and in the cane fields. It's empowering them to a degree and yet the dance is South Asian…it evokes Bengali folk dance. It has an Indianness coded in it….And on the side of that shot is the Guyana flag which I've inverted as well which is a big thing because in not showing the flag as is, I'm gesturing to the question of sexuality. So there are many layers there…" (Mohabeer 2008)

Toronto-based filmmaker Michelle Mohabeer's films offer a rare glimpse into the multiple layers of irony and resistance that define dissident Caribbean sexualities. Mohabeer offers what she terms an "oppositional aesthetics" (Ibid) to capture the disparate layers of politics, memory, and desire which shape dissident sexualities in postcolonial Guyana and the Caribbean diaspora. In this paper, I am interested in how the complex entanglements through which Caribbean sexualities are processed are expressed through avant garde art forms.

Introduction

Dominant narratives of Caribbean sexuality often revolve around the oppositions of nationalist movements that see queerness as non-existent or menacing to the heterosexist bourgeois goals of the nation (Atluri 2001; Kempadoo 2004). Conversely, the rhetoric of the "homophobic Caribbean" is frequently rooted in a neo-colonial paternalism which misses the often untranslatable way in which sexualities operate in non-Western contexts.

Throughout this work, I argue that avant garde art and aesthetics are used in Mohabeer's films to trouble the idea of a universal "queer" identity, which often masks the deep ethnocentrism that defines mainstream Western understandings of desire. At the same time, I use the term "queer" cautiously throughout this work in the spirit in which it was intended. While terms such as "gay" and "lesbian" are largely derived from a gender and sexual binary that revolves around succinct and discrete identities based on the articulation of same sex desire, "queer" emerged as a radical term that sought to politicize a range of sexualities. Queer theory as a body of scholarship, while often associated with studies of same sex desire and gay and lesbian communities, in fact seeks to challenge succinct categories of sexuality and gender. Some argue that the main aim of queer theory as a body of scholarship is not to study gay and lesbian subjects or same sex desire, but rather to deconstruct heteronormativity as the benchmark of normalcy (Beemyn and Eliason 1996). For that reason, the term continues to have value, particularly in relation to postcolonial sexualities.

If one accepts that the fictions of heteronormativity are supported by and work to support the European nation state, then queering the nation can and should also be part of the postcolonial project. The phantasmatic imaginings of heteronormativity are tied to imagined racial purity: the construction of the idealised white, middle-class family as foundational to the nation state not only constructs "queers" as deviant, but imagines racialized others to be sexually suspect as well. The fiction of the happy white, middle-class, heteronormative family not only marks gay and lesbian bodies as queer but also envisions racialized bodies as literally "queer" in the sense that such bodies are out of place in the national familial script (Emberley 2007). Hence, I use the term queer in the spirit in which it was originally intended, as an attempt to politicize and interrogate sexual categories and norms and their relationship to larger social and political questions.

Both the rhetoric of homophobic nationalism and neo-colonial missionary discourses of "Gay International" movements place queer postcolonial subjects in inaudible, invisible spaces (Massad 2007). In looking at Mohabeer's films, I am interested in how the aesthetics of film might offer the queer female Indo-Caribbean subject a non-linear narrative, which disrupts colonial ideals of "progress" that define both international developmental thinking as well as mainstream ideas of sexuality.

Mohabeer's non-traditional film techniques speak to how colonial ideals of rationality are often unable to contain the shifting bodies and broken narratives of queer postcolonial subjects. Rather than offering "the true story" of the Caribbean queer, she questions the ability of postcolonial subjects to articulate themselves in clear-cut terms.

Introducing Michelle Mohabeer

Michelle Mohabeer is a Guyanese filmmaker of mixed race ancestry who currently lives and works in Toronto. She has made several short films including the documentary *Exposure*[1] (Mohabeer 1990) which was made as part of Studio D's Five Feminist Minutes project in Toronto. Her films include *Echoes,*[2] *Child Play,*[3] *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass*[4], and most recently *Blu in You*[5] (Mohabeer 2003; 1998; 1998; 2008). In the summer of 2008, I interviewed Mohabeer at her home in Toronto. I will use Mohabeer's words, secondary texts and snippets of her films to discuss the insights she offers into the complexities of dissident desire in the Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora.

Between a rock and a hard place:
Ethnography, pornography, and the invisibility of queer women of colour

In *Desiring Arabs*, Joseph Massad makes a forceful argument regarding the imperialist impulses of what he terms "the Gay international". Dealing specifically with writings and

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[1] *Exposure*, 16mm, 8 minutes, written and directed by Michelle Mohabeer (NFB/Studio Canada, 1990). The Canadian film distribution centre states that *Exposure* is "an experimental documentary that explores issues of race, sexuality and cultural identity. A dialogue between two lesbians of colour (Japanese-Canadian and Afro-Caribbean) is intercut with photographs, texts, paintings and voice-over." Canadian Film Distribution Centre. Online catalogue. http://www.cfmdc.org/home.php (accessed December 1, 2008).

[2] *Echoes*, Experimental Digital Video, written and directed by Michelle Mohabeer (Toronto, Canada: Third Eye Productions, 2003). *Echoes* is described by the Canadian film distribution centre as a film in which, "A woman reflects on the off-beat moments and stirrings of girlhood experiences that shaped her life." I would add that the film is very much a story about a young woman's upbringing in postcolonial Guyana, which uses experimental film techniques, music, and satire to comment on the ironies of exile. Canadian Film Distribution Centre. Online catalogue. http://www.cfmdc.org/home.php (accessed December 1, 2008).

[3] *Child Play*, 16 mm narrative, written and directed by Michelle Mohabeer (Toronto, Canada: Third Eye Productions, 1998). The Vancouver International Film Festival states that *Child Play* is "a stunning surreal allegorical dream-tale about a woman in her late 60's colonized by fears of the usurpation of her identity by the Dutchman Spirit of a child molester she met as a young girl. Through a complex narrative structure and style the film evokes the psyche and dream-state of the elder woman." See artist's website: http://www.bluinyou.com/ (accessed December 1, 2008).

[4] *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass*, 16 mm, 32 minutes, hybrid documentary, written and directed by Michelle Mohabeer (Toronto, Canada: Third Eye Productions, 1998). *Women Make Movies* state that "Coconut/Cane & Cutlass weaves a rich lyrical tapestry of imagery shot on location in Guyana melded with dramatic scenes shot in Toronto to communicate a complex, lyrical and touching rumination on exile and displacement. Narrated from the point of view of a mixed race Indo-Caribbean lesbian, 'the exile' (and filmmaker) who migrated to Canada as a young girl, this beautiful film explores personal experiences of identity as they relate to colonial and sexual oppression." See artist's website: http://www.bluinyou.com/ (accessed December 1, 2008).

[5] *Blu in You*, 50 minutes, essayist documentary, written and directed by Michelle Mohabeer (Toronto, Canada: Third Eye Productions, 2008). *Blu in You* is "is an essayist rumination mediated through the lens of a female observer (Melanie Smith), who watches the staged conversations between a visual arts curator (Andrea Fatona) and a writer (Nalo Hopkinson). These conversations bridge historical and contemporary representations of the black female body, subjectivity and sexuality exploring various thematics from a cultural history of violence and spectacularization (embodied in the figure of 'the Hottentot Venus') to discussions of art, representation and celebrated cultural icons (Josephine Baker, Dorothy Dandridge and the figure of the muse Jeanne Duval), to a contemporary black queer female erotic body and sexuality." See artist's website: http://www.bluinyou.com/ (accessed December 1, 2008).

activist interventions pertaining to the Middle East, Massad argues that the need to find a subject that approximates Western articulations of same sex desire misses the nuanced ways in which sexualities operate in non-Western spaces, while also having disastrous practical effects. The need for an overt articulation of same sex desire that mimics queer communities in the West serves not only to mute other forms of sexual expression and practice, but also rather ironically has increased the amount of policing of dissident sexuality in Middle Eastern contexts (Massad 2007).[6] Massad's "Gay international" consists of predominantly white, affluent men who direct an imperialist gaze towards non-Western sexual dissidents in similar ways that the white Western women's movement has incited a colonial discourse of perpetually oppressed "third world women" (Mohanty 1988).

These acts are at best missionary impulses and at worst racist visions which imagine "the Other" to be steeped in a pre-modern barbarism that circumscribes the possibility of same sex practices. It should be noted that Massad's work deals almost exclusively with attitudes toward same sex desire among men. While Massad argues that Orientalism structures the Western gaze toward male same sex desire, I would argue that Orientalism makes female same sex desire in non-Western contexts virtually invisible (Gopinath 2005).

On the other side of this debate are nationalist governments which pathologize same sex desire as at best a form of Western cooption and at worst a heathenistic form of deviance. Again, it is interesting that invisibility also colours attitudes toward same sex female desire in nationalist writing. Acts of homophobia by vigilant nationalists have often been against men who have sex with men. While one could argue that this lack of negative attention towards female same sex desire is positive, I believe it speaks to the complete invisibility of women's dissident desire in postcolonial contexts (Silvera 1996; Alexander 1997).[7]

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[6] Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Massad writes specifically of Egypt and the need to identify and articulate dissident desire in various ways as the increasing presence of gay male culture has created a definable group that can now be policed. While some would argue that this identification of dissident desire as "gay" helps to normalize same sex desire and to construct queers as a recognizable political cleavage, Massad argues that men who have sex with men have ironically had to face more state-led and police persecution now that they are identified as "gay."

[7] There are notable exceptions to this, namely the works of Makeda Silvera and Jacqui Alexander who have written about queer female desire in the Caribbean. See Makeda Silvera, "Man Royals and Sodomites", in *Lesbian Subjects: A Feminist Studies Reader*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Indiana University Press, 1996), 167–77); Jacqui Alexander, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonisation: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy", in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, and Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jaqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty (London: Routledge, 1997). However, while these writers offer revolutionary works that attempt to make queer female desire in the Caribbean visible, I would argue that more work needs to be done in this area. Here, I am in agreement with Gopinath that much contemporary postcolonial theory builds upon nationalist writings which have predominantly been both heterosexist and masculinist in their imagining of colonized and postcolonial subjectivities.

Forms that form the native informant:
The avant garde's refusal to "museumise" the Other

Where do queer non-Western and/or diasporic female subjects find articulation among these competing discourses? I want to argue that the forms through which same sex desires are articulated are just as important as what is said. The non-Western queer, like the non-Western woman, is invited to adopt the position of the native informant through developmental discourse, academic theory, and documentary art and exhibiting (Ansari 2008).[8] Drawing on the work of Gayatri Spivak, Shahnaz Khan argues that "white capitalist culture accepts native informants to the extent that we 'museumise' or exoticise our national origin." (Khan 2005; Spivak 1995) I agree with Spivak and Khan, and want to further suggest that certain narrative forms might lend themselves to this "museumisation". I believe that narrative forms and disciplines which emphasise "truthful", mimetic representations of "Other" cultures often lend themselves to native informing. Khan draws on the work of Daphne Patai who has argued that "research itself depends on a subject/object split through which the objectification and exploitation of the object of research are integral to the design of the project." (Khan 2005) Similarly, I would argue that museum style exhibiting and classical documentary film and photography also invite a fetishistic gaze that objectifies those being represented and constructs both artist and spectator as superior in their ability to watch, judge and remain at a distance from those who become objects of study or spectacle.

Trinh T Minh ha argues that one must acknowledge "the irreducibility of the object studied and the impossibility of delivering its presence, reproducing it as it is in its truth, reality, and otherness." (Minh-ha 1989, 70) Perhaps this acknowledgement of irreducibility might be possible within avant garde artistic forms and spaces that often allow for complex, nonlinear, unfinished stories to be told. In refusing to tell the "truth" of queerness in the Caribbean, Mohabeer's work avoids a native informant position, while questioning how histories are told, and how contemporary ideas of sexuality are tied to colonialism.

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[8] For an excellent discussion of the ways in which the native informant is used within diasporic film and popular cultures, see Usamah Ansari, "Should I Go and Pull her Burqa Off? Feminist Compulsions, Insider Consent, and *A Return to Kandahar*", *Critical Studies in Media and Communication* 25, no. 1 (2008) 48–67. Ansari critiques the film, *A Return to Kandahar*, made by Afghani Canadian Nelofer Pazira and Paul Jay for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Ansari argues that while Pazira is able to position herself as a community "insider", the narrative she tells is one of a native informant, who is used to telling Western audiences about non-Western contexts in ways that confirm the superiority of white Westernness and invite imperialist interventions. Ansari states that while Pazira's status as an Afghani Canadian woman, "may support contemporary debates around authority over voice and representation, it also produces the native informant: the classic anthropological sidekick who tells her faithful audience about the novel idiosyncrasies of her 'traditional' society while inviting various interventionist discourses… *Return to Kandahar* is not merely a site where series of discourses including feminist interventionist compulsions and Orientalist tropes on modernity and Islam are negotiated, it is also a site where Pazira becomes an Orientalized insider subject who mediates the audience's encounter with the Other; she is positioned within a supposedly traditional society and yet also exposed enough to modernity to speak to the audience" (48). I would argue that Pazira's work is part of a larger trend within state-funded Canadian film, whereby non-white, non-Western "others" are elicited to tell similar narratives in which their hyphenated status lends their narrative authority while also confirming the benevolence and superiority of Western nations.

Of Autoethnographies and Disidentifications: queers of colour live to tell

In "The Autoethnographic Performance: Reading Richard Fung's Queer Hybridity", taken from his work *Disidentifications: Queers of Colour and the Performance of Politics*, Jose Munoz discusses how films by queer artists of colour rupture both the ethnographic gaze of colonialist discourse and the exoticising gaze of mainstream white queer pornography. Munoz argues that "Fung's video 'visualizes' the workings of power in ethnographic and pornographic films, two discourses that assign subjects such as Fung, colonized, colored, and queer, the status of terminally 'other' object." (Munoz 1999, 78) Munoz argues that many queers of colour use strategies of "disidentitifcation" to subvert discourses of racism and homophobia. He states as follows:

> Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism, this "working on and against" is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance (Ibid, 12).

Mohabeer's films can be read as disidentificatory in her troubling of heteronormative notions of Caribbeanness and white Western notions of queerness. Like Fung's work, Mohabeer's Indo-Caribbean ancestry also troubles a dominant cultural imaginary which aligns Caribbeanness with Blackness, and a racist-sexist imaginary that imagines brown women to be sexually passive and straight. (Khan 2005)

(Super) model minorities? Autoethnography as a means of queering the script of brown female heteronormativity

Historically, brown female bodies have often been used to confirm Western and masculinist superiority whether they appear in the films of colonial anthropologists or contemporary World vision style development discourse. Lidchi discusses the politics of ethnography, looking specifically at the imperialist underpinnings of museum exhibiting. She states the following:

> What needs to be noted about ethnographic museums is that they do not simply reflect natural distinctions but serve to create cultural ones, which acquire their cogency when viewed through the filtering lens of a particular discipline. The geographical and social distinctions deployed are constructed, but equally they are located historically: in the struggle for power between what has been called "the West and the Rest". (Lidchi 1997)

It should also be added that ethnographic spectacles of "the Other" have always been sexualized, producing "the Other" as deviant in relation to a white, Western, masculinist norm of bodily and moral control. When queer people of colour produce films, they

enter into this history of ethnographic spectacle. However, as Munoz so beautifully argues, queer "autoethnography" disidentitifies with ethnography in subversive ways. Munoz draws on the work of Pratt who states as follows:

> I use these terms (autoethnography and autoethnographic expression) to refer to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways which engage with the colonizer's own terms. If ethnographic texts are a means in which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations (Munoz 1999, 81).

He argues that conventional documentaries can be read as reflecting a colonizing and metropolitan gaze, which emphasises knowing a fixed subject and making a spectacle of Otherness. However, in relation to Fung's work, he states that "autoethnography"

> …is a strategy that seeks to disrupt the hierarchical economy of colonial images and representations by making visible the presence of subaltern energies and urgencies in metropolitan culture. Autoethnography worries easy binarisms such as colonized and colonizer or subaltern and metropolitan by presenting subaltern speech through the channels and pathways of metropolitan representational systems. (Ibid, 82)

Mohabeer's films are autoethnographic in that she uses techniques of documentary filmmaking while also subverting the rationalist rules of this classical form. The subverting of a linear, literal story works firstly to challenge the idea that film can tell an absolute truth about a people. Secondly, non-traditional avant garde aesthetics are used to trouble the idea that human subjectivity itself is fixed. "The truth" of the colonized subject that classical ethnography tells is troubled by the reality of hybrid identities, of shifting borders and boundaries between colonized/colonizer, oppressed/oppressor. Similarly, "the truth" of Caribbean queerness is also troubled through the aesthetic form of Mohabeer's films, which refuse an easy narrative of queer liberation or repression. Rather, postcolonial sexual identities are presented as untranslatable fragments of memory, sensory experience and desire.

Sharp cutlasses and sharper cuts:
The imbrication of form and content in Mohabeer's works

Mohabeer states quite clearly that the form and content of her works are deeply intertwined:

> How I manipulate the form actually comments on the content. Specifically I did it in *Coconut*, in *Child's Play* and in *Blu in You*. Those three films in particular. My work is actually informed by post-modern aesthetics. Not just postcolonial because it's trying to use certain forms. (Mohabeer 2008)

In reference to her short experimental work *Echoes*, she discusses her disidentification with major Western cinema through the use of intertext:

> *Echoes* references a very old film about Billy the Kid actually called the *Outlaw* that was made by Howard Hughes. He had Jane Russell who was the woman who looks Mexican. It has to do with Billy the Kid who tries to rape her. That's the scene I use but I cut it very tightly cropped so it looks like she is attacking him. I was trying to comment on the idea of strong women and not being overpowered by men. And relating that to sexuality. The idea of owning one's sexuality. (Ibid)

Mohabeer's films use aesthetic strategies to disidentify with the masculinist ethos of Hollywood filmic representation, which constructs women of colour as sexual prey for white men. Furthermore, I would argue that her strategies are autoethnographic. Both *Echoes* and *Child's Play* are narrated in the first person, using a narrative voice that is queer, of colour and female.

Mohabeer states that this narrative voice has often been mistaken as being solely autobiographical, "If certain white folks watch your work and they can't find themselves in it, they denigrate it. Someone...said that *Coconut* was all about me and I beg to differ." (Ibid) She draws on the ideas of Manthia Diwara to argue that the use of the "I" in works by filmmakers of colour takes on a plural connotation:

> When people of colour use I it is not just referring to I as subject. I is used in a very different way. It's used in a plural way. I is used in an autobiographical context but it's also used in a very different way. But it also has another aspect—of a commentator, commenting on history, commenting on culture. The filmmaker using I doesn't mean that it's all about them and their own personal subjectivity. And my film tends to do this because I use a lot of poetics and these poetics have abstract elements in them. (Ibid)

The notion of "autobiography" as a solely personal narrative is troubled by Mohabeer's films in that the self that is evoked is not an essentialist, individualist one but is formed and reformed through history and politics and in relation to others. This troubling of autobiography is something that filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha has also written about in relation to her own work. Minh-ha like Mohabeer states that "my films have too often been described as a 'personal film', as 'personal documentary' or 'subjective documentary'." (Minh-ha 1992, 119) She further states the following:

> Although I accept these terms, I think they really need to be problematised, redefined and expanded. Because personal in the context of my films does not mean an individual standpoint or the foregrounding of a self. I am not interested in using film to "express myself", but rather to expose the social self (and selves) which necessarily mediates the making as well as the viewing of the film. (Ibid)

Similarly, Mohabeer's films are often categorized as being "autobiographical" in ways that reinstate a binary between subjective and objective knowledge. Minh-ha problematizes this binary within documentary tradition:

> There is nothing objective and truly impersonal in filmmaking, although there can be a formulary, clichéd approach to film. What you often have is a mere abidance by the conventions of documentary practice, which is put forward as the "objective" way to document other cultures. It is as if the acknowledgement of the politics of the documentation and the documenting subject disturbs because the interests at stake are too high for the guardians of norms. (Ibid)

Mohabeer's films like Minh ha's, disturb the objectivist stance within traditional documentary forms by articulating a subjective narrative. The usual dispassionate imperialist gaze of camera and artist is subverted by a very personal tale that ruptures the divide between objective and subjective realities.

Autoerotics and autoethnographies: Queers of colour and the politics of narrative

Far from being an autobiographical documentary, Mohabeer's films are autoethnographic works that use the lens of the personal to touch on themes of colonialism and resistance. Munoz states as follows:

> Autoethnography is a strategy that seeks to disrupt the hierarchical economy of colonial images and representations by making visible the presence of subaltern energies and urgencies in metropolitan culture. Autoethnography worries easy binarisms such as colonized and the colonizer or subaltern and metropolitan by presenting subaltern speech through the channels and pathways of metropolitan representational systems. (Munoz 1999, 82)

Mohabeer's work troubles binaries of not only colonized and colonizer, but also home and away, foreigner and citizen, homo and hetero, and black and white. By depicting the story of a mixed race queer woman from Guyana who has been exiled in North America, Mohabeer uses the peculiarities of her experience to comment on the ironies of nation, identity and exile.

Coconut/Cane Cutlass begins in Guyana, and narrates the experiences of both the film's narrator, played by Mohabeer, and poet Mahadai Das. The film centres on the intersectional experiences of oppression and disparate social locations, which these figures inhabit. Like Fung, Mohabeer shares the position of being not only a sexual minority in a popular landscape that imagines heterosexuality to be compulsory, but a racial minority in a landscape that imagines the Caribbean to be black. As Munoz says of Fung,

> Fung's status as Asian in a primarily black and white colonial situation further contributes to Fung's postcolonial identity. An Asian in such a setting, like an Asian in the already subcultural field of (white-dominated) gay male culture, is at least double fragmented from the vantage point of dominant culture. (Ibid, 92)

Mohabeer's use of autoethnography as both a queer and a mixed race subject troubles how ethnography recites the story of dominant sexual and racial groups as representing an entire people. Like Fung, Mohabeer disidentifies with dominant ethnographies in her exposure of the subaltern sexual and racial energies that inform both Western and postcolonial nations.

The longings for an imagined landscape: Soil on the lens of the nation in *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass*

Coconut/Cane and Cutlass moves back and forth between Guyana and Canada. Far from a colonialist native informant tale or romantic nationalist tale, her work fails to discount the oppressive tensions that mark the bodies of queer women of colour in both colony and metropole. Mohabeer uses filmic aesthetics to comment on the movement of diasporic peoples and the concomitant feelings of both alienation and belonging that these subjects experience on disparate landscapes. As Mohabeer says of the film,

> The idea of movement and history is important to this film. Tishona Gabrielle writes about that in relation to third cinema. And this film really works with third cinematic aesthetics as well as in terms of movement and history and reclaiming that in terms of how we as diasporic people shift from one space to the next and this film deals with all of those spatial locales, those shifts. (Mohabeer 2008)

The idea of landscape as both enabling and preventing desire is central to Mohabeer's work. She comments on one particularly evocative scene in *Coconut Cane and Cutlass* in which two lovers are separated by a barbed wire fence in Guyana:

> The film moves from tropical landscapes to kind of an interior space where you have two lovers separated by barbed wire. So basically, it's creating spaces of enclosure, at times, spaces that might seem tight and intimate and spaces that are also expansive to a degree. (Ibid)

One of the most memorable scenes in *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass*, a scene that in and of itself has won international recognition, is the rich, sensual love scene that happens between two Indo-Caribbean women.

What is striking about the scene is not only the eroticism that happens between bodies, but how Mohabeer uses the Guyanese landscape to frame desire between the two lovers. The barbed wire fence that separates the lovers acts as a commentary on how the manmade strictures that define the borders of physical space work to police desire. However, the shot of the rich natural landscape of Guyana interspersed with the women's

sexual desire for one another paints the postcolonial landscape as one that can enable desire. The presence of same sex desire in postcolonial space troubles dominant nationalist and neo-colonial readings of the Caribbean as a heteronormative space. Mohabeer states that one of her aims is to normalize same sex desire between Caribbean women and specifically between brown women. She states that "The sex scene demonstrates that as well. The shots are medium frames, everything is close. That proximity is conveying that intimacy." (Ibid) This closeness between women is depicted as being a feature of, rather than an anomaly within, the global south.

Stuck in the middle with you:
Reframing the Middle Passage as a space of sexual dissidence

One of the opening shots of the film recreates the Middle Passage between India and Guyana, showing Indian women being taken from the Indian subcontinent to the Caribbean. What is striking is how Mohabeer creates the feeling of intimacy between Indian women. Of this opening sequence, Mohabeer states, "The film is very disjunctive. It has different phases. It starts off with a historical phase from India to the Caribbean, but they perform a kind of loss. So they seem like lovers, or potentially mother or daughter. There's a closeness to them in some way."(Ibid) The construction of the Middle Passage as a potential site of queer female desire speaks to how histories of female indenture are marked by sexual politics.

In *Mobilizing India: Women, Music, and Migration Between India and Trinidad*, Tejaswini Niranjana discusses the sexual politics that coloured patterns of female indentureship from India to the Eastern Caribbean. She cites the work of Mangru who notes the following in relation to British Guiana:

> Criticisms regarding the type of women imported had not been wanting. Immigration officials and others often referred to their "loose and depraved character" and condemned the Emigration Agents for shipping "the sweepings" of Calcutta and other large Indian cities. (Niranjana 2006, 62)

There were consistent reports from colonial officials which questioned the sexual morality of Indian female indentured labourers, suggesting that it was only women who had "gone astray" that were recruited without opposition from male family members (Ibid, 62-73). While these reports pathologize Indo-Caribbean women, they also speak to the potential for sexual transgression. This is not to discount the regulation of Indian women's sexualities in the Caribbean; however, it points to how forced migration might have ironically created the potential for sexual dissidence.

Reddock and Mohammed make note of the low female to male ratio within indentured populations (Reddock 1994; Mohammed 2002). While this low ratio is used to explain the mass murder of indentured women, it is also used to explain why women were in positions to leave partners or have multiple partners (Niranjana 2006, 58-73). Again, migration may have allowed Indo-Caribbean woman a sexually transgressive space which may have otherwise been impossible in India during this time period.

What Niranjana also points out is the inability to piece together concrete histories that can ascertain the sexual lives of Indo-Caribbean women living on plantations (Ibid 70–73). Anecdotal evidence and colonial narratives which pathologize the sexual lives of "coolie women" come to stand in for history. Mohabeer uses imaginative strategies to rewrite these histories in ways that construct the possibility of emergent queer subjectivity within the space of the Middle Passage and the plantation. However, unlike the realist narratives of colonial discourse, Mohabeer's work politicizes fantasy as a space from which normative histories can be unravelled. Beginning from the premise that masculinist, heteronormative accounts of colonialism are not the only story to be told, her films open up the possibility that the plundering projects of conquest could have created spaces of desire.

Echoes of "Queer" before it was named as such: The untranslatable desires of non-Western space in *Coconut Cane/and Cutlass* and *Echoes*

This normalizing of same sex desire in postcolonial space also occurs in *Echoes*. The short film narrates the migration of a young girl from the Caribbean to North America. At one point, we hear the narrative voice state that she was sad to leave Guyana because she would be leaving her first girlfriend behind. The dominant Gay International discourse, which imagines the postcolonial nation to be a closet that the diasporic queer subject must flee from, is complicated in this moment. Just as *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass* uses closeness between women in the Middle Passage to suggest the possibility of dissident desire, *Echoes* suggests that the freedom that the narrator experienced as a child in Guyana lent itself to a sexual freedom that is neither named as "queer" nor experienced in the Western world. These moments of untranslatability belie Western categories of gay/straight, out/in, touching upon Massad's argument that same sex practices in non-Western contexts have always been in existence, yet fail to be intelligible within Eurocentric categories of sexuality.

From the subtle positioning of women's bodies in sensuous proximity while travelling through the Middle Passage to her mention of the sexual play that occurs between children in rural postcolonial settings, Mohabeer creates an imaginative space for dissident desire in the global south to find expression. It is not the space of bourgeois Westernised gay culture in major urban centres, spaces which often exist almost exclusively for affluent men. Rather, it is a space that defies categories of gay versus straight or in versus out. These spaces not only challenge the heteronormative story of citizenship that nationalist Caribbean leaders often tell, but also the tale of third world gay repression that is often told by Western gay and lesbian movements.

A love letter to a country: Celluloid dreams of belonging

Coconut/Cane and Cutlass is rich in its poetic rendering of sexuality, exile and longing. As Mohabeer states, "the opening is basically a love letter to a country. A country that I felt I was disowned by because of sexuality, because I couldn't claim that sexuality in that space." (Mohabeer 2008) The film begins with a long shot of the narrator standing on a jetty and surveying the landscape. This scene complicates an ethnographic gaze in which the colonized female subject is the object and not the writer of history.

Mohabeer's "love letter to a country" also disidentifies with a dominant heteronormative nationalist story in which the love of nation is often tied to a masculinist and heterosexual imperative.

In *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass*, it is the queer woman's impossible yet persistent longing for same sex desire and for a connection to a nation that become central. Mohabeer quotes the opening lines of the film, "My eyes survey history and my grandmother's children," (Ibid) and discusses the visual images that accompany the narrative. "There's a shot of the filmmaker but the exile, looking over the landscape… It places the woman as this kind of powerful engine in the film," she explains (Ibid). *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass* not only centres the figure of the queer female exile, it also tells the story of Mahadai Das, an Indo-Caribbean poet who lives in Guyana and whose poems Mohabeer interprets throughout the work. She states as follows:

> I interpret a poem by Mahadai Das and in interpreting that poem—we're both interpreting it—her and I, because we're the exiles in the film. I interpret the poem with that shot of me staring across the landscape. So landscape becomes an integral part of my work as well—to create the sense of interior/exterior worlds. (Ibid)

Mohabeer is adamant in her assertion that the technical strategies she employs as a filmmaker are inseparable from the political and philosophical underpinnings of her work:

> I use something called front screen projection. Front screen projection really created these layers. So you have one layer in the back and one in the front and you're shooting them together. So the idea of these layers is really talking about how identity is not any kind of one easy thing and my work troubles this by moving through multiple layers. (Ibid)

The use of post-modern aesthetics creates a text that allows for the hybridity of identity and for the non-linear nature of history to find expression.

No saris and samosas here: Mohabeer's films and a Black British aesthetic

Mohabeer's work also challenges a culture of political Canadian documentary filmmaking that has tended to emphasise linear narratives and didacticism in their approach to diasporic communities. In classical Canadian NFB-style documentary, emphasis has often been placed on having people of colour tell "the truth" about "their communities" to the general white Canadian population at the expense of an attention to artistry, and to theoretical debates that question fixed ideas of "culture" (Walcott 2001).[9]

[9] For an excellent discussion concerning the politics of Canadian multiculturalism as it relates to Black popular culture see Rinaldo Walcott, "Caribbean Pop in Canada: Or the Impossibility of Belonging to the Nation", *Small Axe* (2001) 123–139. Following on from Walcott, I want to argue that this focus on cultural show and tell, and the assumed homogeneity of "ethnic" communities are part of a larger rhetoric of Canadian multiculturalism which fixates on the supposed cultural difference of the nation's racial and religious others in order to maintain a story of pure French and English origins. Having non-white people tell the story of "their communities" works to mask the ways in which the displacement of First Nations people and the exploitation of people of colour is *the* story of Canada. The fetishization of seeing cultural

Mohabeer argues that her films have often been misread by Canadian audiences as lacking political salience because of their lyricism,

> I never actually intended for *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass* to be linear. I always wanted for it to be poetic to a certain degree. That's why when I applied for funding from the arts council, the jury didn't get it. They didn't get that I wanted to make this lyrical documentary. Because they're used to seeing documentaries that have so called political themes not be lyrical. The idea of politics and lyricism, they don't seem to blend or be sustainable for certain people in terms of how they blend—in terms of also how they think people of colour should make work. (Mohabeer 2008)

She goes on to argue that her work, therefore, corresponds more to Black British Cinema:

> That's why I'd say my work is so paralleled and influenced by the Black British work as opposed to Canadian or even North American. I really have this idea of lyricism and aesthetics being very strong and developed in the work that really spoke to politics. So the form really spoke to the content. I was trying to not be political in the sense of just showing people in the usual, typical ways, i.e. talking heads. (Ibid)

The Black British context is marked by a different history in which Black British filmmakers have often been able to express themselves as artists rather than as cultural or community ambassadors.

Sankofa and the Black British school:
Rewriting the fairytales of multicultural show and tell.

Manthia Diwara writes of the Sankofa Film and Video Collective, a group of Black British filmmakers who formed in the 1980's, producing work that challenged the notion of objective filmmaking and spectatorship, politicising the identity of both filmmaker and audience. The collective, through which Isaac Julien made much of his early work, has influenced Mohabeer's use of aesthetics to comment on and complicate understandings

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difference, the celebration of "saris and samosas," displaces any discussion of land claims or systemic racism. As Rinaldo Walcott says of Canadian multiculturalism, "All the material and discursive practices congeal around the repetition of a particular 'origin' that cannot admit to Others. It is thus the work of the Multiculturalism Act and, in the case of Native peoples, the Indian Act, through which the Others are made adjunct to the nation as not-quite-citizens. Such a designation is dependent upon a 'migrant ethnicity' where 'national' belonging is paradoxically placed outside the nation—that is the function of official multicultural policy."(128) I would argue that mainstream state-funded Canadian film is complicit in this placing of people of colour outside the nation, as the narratives that are often elicited from Canada's various Others are ones in which diasporic people are made to tell stories of inter-community conflict and cultural practice which neither challenge Canada's national myth of English and French founding fathers, nor contaminate the white settler narrative with any mention of colonialism or racism. As Walcott further states, "Sacred temples of culture are fabricated and used to conceal our various 'cross-cultural resonances.' Us/Them positions are articulated, and imagined communities attempt to make pure and uncontaminated their 'heritable traits'" (133).

of political and documentary film. She cites Julien and the other Black British filmmakers from this period as being among her primary influences (Ibid).

Diwara discusses *Territories*, a short film made by Julien in 1985 which interrogates how traditional British documentary has represented the Caribbean. Diwara states about *Territories* as follows:

> [It] is concerned with how narrative forms, such as conventional BBC documentaries, violently insert the Caribbean into European history. Focusing on the televisual representation of carnival by the BBC, the film comments on its strategies of containment, and omission of black cultural and subversive practices. (Diwara 1996, 196)

Territories juxtaposes BBC documentary images of carnival with scenes of two black British filmmakers deconstructing their racist underpinnings. Mohabeer's *Blu in You*, which features writer Nalo Hopkinson and curator and visual arts critic Andrea Fatona as they comment on representations of Black female sexuality, shares a great deal in common with *Territories* and other works by the Sankofa collective.

In *Blu in You*, much as in *Territories*, what is being troubled is the objective "I" of both filmmaker and audience. Diwara states that in *Territories*,

> …images on the monitor screen are blurred whenever the camera attempts to occupy the position of one of the spectators to show selected scenes of carnival. The blurred images indicate that instead of "standing in the place of the Absent One" and reconstructing the narrative of carnival, the two spectators disrupt the continuity of the documentary through a selection of individual scenes which are analysed in order to reveal the way the BBC projects a Eurocentric definition on carnival: i.e., the depiction of blacks as noble savages. (Ibid, 197)

Blurring techniques are also employed in Mohabeer's work to comment on the impossibility of racial representation. In one particularly striking sequence, while Hopkinson comments on how the black female body appears in film as an exotic spectacle, Mohabeer blurs Hopkinson's image, leaving the audience with a series of psychedelic impressions. This blurring suggests that even in watching Hopkinson and Fontana deconstruct black fetishism, we may reproduce the decerebralising gaze[10] that often informs acts of racialized looking (Carby 2004). These moments of rupture implicate the audience, filmmaker and camera in a history of spectral violence through which visual technologies have been used to fix colonized bodies.

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[10] The term "decerebralisation" was first used by Frantz Fanon in relation to the ways in which racism strips subjects of humanity. For an excellent discussion of the ways in which this gaze operates within visual cultures, see Hazel Carby, "A Strange and Bitter Crop: The Spectacle of Torture", *Opendemocracy* (October 10, 2004), http://www.opendemocracy.net/media-abu_ghraib/article_2149.jsp. Accessed: December 12, 2008.

Where coolies became 'cool': A reliance on a Black British tradition

Mohabeer's connection to Black British film also relates to her place within a queer Caribbean film tradition. Discourses of Canadian multiculturalism often use the term "South Asian" to refer to brown bodies, thereby enabling certain articulations of South Asian diasporic subjectivity in popular and public cultures (Handa 2003). Within the Canadian context Indo-Caribbean identity is often lost between an India-centred South Asian community and an African-centred Caribbean community. The equating of Caribbean with Blackness also speaks to the narrow lens through which the region as a whole is imagined within Canadian popular culture. According to Rinaldo Walcott,

> Caribbean in Canada, then, is really a pseudonym for blackness. The trope of the Caribbean in Canada denies many of the complexities of Caribbeanness and therefore belies complex understandings of the place. (Walcott 2001, 128)

While similar debates and tensions exist in the United Kingdom, Black British cultural production comes out of a decidedly different discursive and political history.

Early Indo-Caribbean artists in Britain were often able to make their works intelligible and visible under a broader "Black British" identity which included British Asians. For example, filmmaker Roshini Kempadoo discusses the home she found within early Black British art communities. Kempadoo, like Mohabeer, is a mixed race woman with Indo-Caribbean origins. However, while Mohabeer discusses how she was often alienated from predominantly Afro Caribbean and South Asian artistic communities, Kempadoo argues that she was able to identify easily with Black British culture.

Kempadoo writes as follows of her documentation of the lives of "Black" British subjects whose migratory routes to Britain were disparate:

> I was…documenting specific everyday events and experiences of Caribbean and Asian communities in Leicester, Birmingham and Coventry. The general lack of visibility of black communities and the stereotyped images in the popular media were of immediate concern, particularly in the context of the riots of the early 1980s. The social documentary genre—its relationship to historical and archival material and to contemporary celebration—played an important role, highlighting the different lifestyles of Britain's black populations, while inscribing a personal authorship that situated the black photographer behind the camera. (Kempadoo 2007, 203)

Kempadoo's experiences producing art within the Black British arts scene share similarities with the Canadian context around this period. As with Canada, there appears to be a focus on using genres of documentary to celebrate and document various communities. However, I would argue that there are striking differences as well. Firstly, Kempadoo aligned herself with a Black British arts community in ways that Mohabeer argues Indo-Caribbean identified people have not been able to in Canada, often being

identified as being part of the South Asian diaspora despite their more immediate links to the Caribbean. Secondly, I believe that this access to a Black British arts movement and identity has allowed Indo-Caribbean and British Asian artists to make more highly politicized works. The Black British arts movement seemed to be constantly grappling with issues of systemic racism in Britain. This context seems markedly different from dominant Canadian multicultural cinema made by South Asian artists that often politicises issues of culture and inter-community violence at the expense of salient discussions of "race" and racism. Therefore, Mohabeer's alignment with the Black British context is not only fitting but speaks to the limits of the fixation on "culture" as opposed to "race" within Canadian multicultural discourse (Handa 2003).

Further similarities lie in Mohabeer's use of avant garde aesthetics to comment on and resituate political discussions. Hall and Bailey argue that rather than focus on documenting the "truth" of a community or a people, Black British artists have worked to challenge the terms of racial representation themselves. On the subject of photography specifically, they state as follows:

> Where documentary photography carries a claim to truth, with the meta message of this is how it really was…a number of black photographers began to explore questions of identification, the issue of how best to contest dominant regimes of representation…This mode goes against the grain of realism: indeed it opens up realism and exposes it as a particular genre and privileges instead non-realist modes such as formalism, modernism and surrealism, which can be grouped together under the rubric of avant-gardism. (Diwara 1996, 192)

Similarly, rather than offering a series of positive realist images to counter the false representation of Caribbean queers[11] (Hall 1997), Mohabeer's work uses avant garde aesthetics to disidentify with static notions of authenticity, rationality, and truth.

Melancholia as a site of production: A necessary grief

It is important to touch also on the psychic resonances of Mohabeer's deeply emotional works. *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass* begins by quoting postcolonial academic Edward Said who writes that, "'Exile is strangely compelling to think about, but terrible to experience." This duality of the compelling reflection on exile, and the painful experience of displacement runs throughout Mohabeer's films. Her works negotiate both of Said's understandings of exile, that of the thoughtful and artistic reflection and that of the lived pain of being alienated from one's home. However, for Mohabeer and her characters, alienation is not simply solved by physical return, since the returning queer mixed race body continues to be exiled by the nation state's demands for racial purity and sexual conformity.

[11] Stuart Hall problematises strategies of "positive" racial representation, arguing that while positive images of Blackness may reverse racist stereotypes, they do nothing to shift the binary and static ways in which we are made to think about and visualize "race." See Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

Jose Munoz has argued for a reconceptualisation of mourning in relation to the works of queer artists of colour. He examines the place of melancholia in the work of Black queer artists Robert Mapplethorpe and Isaac Julien wherein, he argues, is represented a sense of collective grief which is part of marginalized subjectivity. Munoz states as follows:

> Melancholia, for blacks, queers, or any queers of color, is not a pathology but an integral part of everyday lives. The melancholia that occupies the minds of the communities under siege in this film can be envisioned as the revised version of melancholia that Freud wrote about in later years. It is this melancholia that is part of our process of dealing with all the catastrophes that occur in the lives of people of color, lesbians, and gay men. (Munoz 1999, 74)

Writing with reference to Isaac Julien's film *Looking for Langston*, Munoz argues that,

> Julien's melancholic signifying on these two different photographies of mourning supplies a necessary history to collective struggle. This history comes in the form of identity-affirming "melancholia," a melancholia that individual subjects and different communities in crises can use to map the ambivalences of identification and the conditions of (im)possibility that shape the minority identities under consideration here. (Ibid)

Mohabeer's films, which as I have argued above, share a great deal in common with the Black British context, also use strategies of melancholia to negotiate the ambivalence of queer racialized subjectivity in her works.

There is a sense of grief that haunts both *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass* and *Blu in You*. Mohabeer discusses the personal difficulties she had in returning to Guyana to make *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass*:

> That was the first time I went back to Guyana. That was what was difficult for me with that film because I left when I was 12 and that was the first time I went back as an adult. It was very difficult for me to be in that space because I'd really grown up here and it was difficult just being there. Also going during the election. In Guyana, Indians and Blacks are pretty much pitted against one another. And there was all this looting and burning of Indian shops and all these slurs on both sides. And I was called different names…So the film was very difficult to make emotionally. (Mohabeer 2008)

The emotional difficulty of making a film like *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass* is not simply the individuated melancholia that Freud wrote of (Freud 1917, 237–258). Rather, it resonates with Munoz's notion of collective mourning. The grief of Mohabeer's works is a collective mourning of a queer racialized diasporic subject who does not simply mourn a nation, but an idea of home that may never have existed, that is, a home in which racial minorities and sexual dissidents are treated neither with contempt nor as invisible.

Again, Mohabeer uses aesthetics to signify the communal melancholia of racialized, queer, exiled subjectivity. The film begins with a shot of the narrator who is the figure of exile that guides the film. There is a vivid beauty to the image and yet also an emptiness to the scene. Mohabeer states that, "The tide has gone in and the landscape looks so eerie and there is this idea of surveying history." (Mohabeer 2008) The history that is being surveyed is one of the deep melancholic loss brought about by colonialism, and postcolonial queer exile. The landscape signifies histories of imperial pillage and plunder, a Caribbean sea haunted by the ghosts of the Middle Passage, the bodies of slaves and indentured labourers brought to Guyana in the service of imperial expansion. This landscape is also haunted by the loss of home experienced by the queer female exile who cannot claim this space because of the homophobia of postcolonial nationalism. This dual sense of loss, born out of both colonialism and homophobia, is also felt in the next scene as we see women being taken from India to Guyana. It is a loss firstly of indenture, of the displacement of the conscripted labourer. However, it is also a loss of possible desire. The closeness of the women, the potential for dissident, untranslatable desire is resignified within the postcolonial nation as criminalized queer desire.

Unmasking an indignant gaze: The return of the oppressed

Mohabeer's work also uses film to comment on the psychic trauma experienced by racialized queer female bodies. In one striking sequence, the narrator takes on and off a series of masks as the voice-over recites various racial slurs and epithets that are hurled at the body of queer women of colour. This scene of masking and unmasking hearkens back to Frantz Fanon's seminal work on the psychically alienating effects of racism, *Black Skin, White Masks.* (Fanon 1967) Mohabeer states that in taking on and off the masks, the narrator/exile "exposes all of these layers of things that have been thrown on her and she throws them off her as well. And at the end she does that gaze, that idea of returning the gaze—looking back and reclaiming that moment." (Mohabeer 2008) This scene evokes Fanon's idea of the indignant gaze that racism casts onto the racialized body (Fanon 1967). However, in using an Indo-Caribbean woman to return the gaze, Mohabeer subverts Fanon's masculinist and homophobic tendencies and gestures to possible resistance on the part of racialized queer subjects. She states that this returning of the gaze "is what I find to be most powerful about this scene…because you never see an Indo-Caribbean woman doing that." (Mohabeer 2008)

Blu in You also evokes ideas of trauma and melancholia in relation to histories of slavery. What is central to the film's commentary on the haunting effects of colonial trauma is its play upon notions of time. The film jumps across time periods, providing a rich filmic genealogy of how Black female bodies are rendered as spectacle. Juxtaposing images of the Hottentot Venus with modern images of Josephine Baker and contemporary representations of Black women in hip hop, we see how traces of colonial fetishism haunt the Black female body.

Mohabeer also states that her shuffling of time serves to comment on the unattainableness of recapturing colonial history in a linear fashion. She states that "Time is always shuffled and jumbled which for me is how colonialism and colonial history took place

and how we interpret it as well because a lot of it is lost as well in that it's left to people's imagination, left to conjecture, left to analysis." (Ibid) Mohabeer uses techniques of film to trouble notions of linear time that not only informed colonial epistemologies, but informed how these histories were told (Bhabha 1993).

The rupturing of time also elucidates the psychic effects of colonization on its subjects. Again, Mohabeer makes reference to Fanon stating that "Fanon is very interesting in this regard because of how he invokes trauma, how he invokes memory—there is a certain kind of real lifeness. He invokes real life situations and then turns them and does this whole analysis of it." (Mohabeer 2008) Here, Mohabeer reflects on how Fanon takes seemingly innocuous experiences such as the racism of a child or the banal images in Tarzan and Jane films and points to their colonial resonance (Fanon 1967). He invokes the past to explain how racialized psyches are traumatized not simply by immediate experiences of racism, but by the historical trauma that these instances evoke. The buried trauma of colonialism is a collective melancholia that haunts the body of postcolonial subjects (Ibid). Like Munoz's reading of Julien, melancholia in Mohabeer's work is a necessary grieving that is not repressed or lamented but becomes a site of creative and productive tension.

Cautiously queer: A final warning regarding spectatorship and desire

While I have offered a largely celebratory reading of Mohabeer's films, I want to avoid romanticizing the "queer diasporic person of colour". A significant body of scholarship has emerged recently that centres this subject as occupying a vantage point from which it is possible to unmask the homophobia of postcolonial nationalisms and the racism of mainstream white queer communities. However, this work and the omnipotence of this idealised subject should be critiqued. While the queer person of colour in the diaspora might occupy a position across borders and carry the ability to speak in an array of syntaxes, I would argue, however, that such a position is one of great privilege. The subject who is positioned as "knowing enough" about marginality to speak about it while also knowing enough to commodify Otherness can both implicitly and explicitly support neo-colonial agendas, as mentioned in the previous discussion concerning native informants (Ansari 2008).

The diasporic subject can and often does enact a violating gaze that constructs those "back home" as "backward", while using the slippery language of identity politics to claim a right to do so. What is Mohabeer's relationship to queers who still live in the Caribbean? How do her films offer a sense of both nostalgia and disdain for diasporic queer subjects that can negate the nuanced ways that sexualities in postcolonial contexts are expressed, and change over time? Unfortunately, constraints of time and space do not permit full exploration of these tensions, which will hopefully find a place of expression in forthcoming works.

Similarly, issues of audience reception have not been fully explored in this work and deserve more consideration in forthcoming writings. A final note of caution should be offered regarding the ways in which audiences can seize upon artistic works, particularly those that employ avant garde techniques which can easily be misinterpreted. While

Mohabeer may intend to offer aesthetically complex and politically challenging works that disrupt succinct ideas of linear time and sexuality, these intentions can be misinterpreted in a climate of racism and homophobia. For Western audiences that receive these works, Mohabeer's films might tap into latent racist and ethnocentric ideas about countries in the global south as being sexually regressive and uncivilized. The rhetoric of the "homophobic Caribbean" can easily be used to make sense of these films in ways that recirculate trite colonial metaphors regarding the untutored manners and mores of non-white, third world bodies (Ibid). Similarly, the fact that Mohabeer is a diasporic subject could cause audiences in the global south and specifically the Caribbean to view her works as "Western", thereby locating queer desire outside of the region in ways that reinforce dominant nationalist scripts of heteronormativity. However, as I have tried to demonstrate throughout this piece, while avant garde aesthetics can be misread and simplified, they offer all that good art can usually offer—possibility. Mohabeer's films offer a possible rupture from dominant scripts and the languages in which they are told.

Putting the 'Cool' in Coolie: What's so great about art anyway?

Art has the potential to disrupt. It is a potential not just to disrupt the status quo by offering up another set of grand pronouncements; rather, by questioning the very terms through which truths are told, art can trouble fixed realities themselves. Mohabeer's work puts the "cool" in coolie by transcending the binaries of pathologization and celebration that often structure discourses of identity politics. Mohabeer does not celebrate a romantic Indo-Caribbean identity or community in ways that hearken back to a mythical pre-colonial past or fail to note the sexism and homophobia that exist within all communities. Similarly, her work refuses an easy alignment with "gay pride" narratives that must willfully deny the ethnocentrism and racism of narratives of queer liberation. Instead, she uses the skills of cinema to question how these stories of diaspora and sexuality are told.

The "cool" in coolie is a disidentification with dominant nationalist scripts that imagine the Indo-Caribbean woman to be anything but "cool" and instead throw her into the flames of sexist, homophobic violence in the name of antiquated, colonial ideals of nation and honour. The "cool" in coolie is also a disidentification with the hype of mainstream white queer popular cultures that are more often than not decidedly Western and steeped in the logic of late capitalism (Puar 2007). In Mohabeer's work, what becomes "cool" is how art is used to articulate desires and bodies that are often inaudible and unseen.

Conclusion: The queering of colonialism through avant garde art practice

Flickering images on screen are rarely understood or taken seriously as radical anti-colonial politics. Yet, in discussing how Mohabeer disidentifies with dominant discourses of heteronormative Caribbeanness and white, Western queerness, I hope to have demonstrated the value of her work and the work of other queer postcolonial artists.

Frantz Fanon ended his seminal treaty *Black Skin, White Masks* with the words, "Oh my body, make of me a man who always questions!" (Fanon 1967, 222) Years later, born

out of a markedly different time and space, through the tilted lens of a queer Guyanese woman, we are left with a series of films that do just that.

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Queerness in the Transnational Caribbean-Canadian Diaspora

Amar Wahab and Dwaine Plaza

Abstract

January 29, 2008—A mob of 20 men broke into the home of three young men in Kingston, Jamaica. According to reports, the machete-wielding attackers badly beat and severed limbs of one man who is in critical condition in hospital. A third victim is still missing. Witnesses say he jumped off a cliff to his death (*Gleaner* January 30, 2008).

May 12, 2008—Under pressure from gay rights groups and a sponsorship boycott of live dancehall shows by local beer giant Red Stripe, some Jamaican dancehall stars are offering free performances to events at which no Red Stripe products are sold or consumed. …Last month, title sponsor Red Stripe pulled its financing from the major live shows Sting and Sumfest, which it has sponsored for six and seven years respectively, in what it says is a response to the continued use of violent and anti-social lyrics during performances… "We have noticed that there is a negative trend that has been creeping into some of the music...This is very damaging to our culture, the music and to our country as a whole," corporate relations director Maxine Whittingham told reporters. Red Stripe's initiative comes on the heels of an ultimatum issued to the Jamaican government by Canadian human rights group Egale Canada[1]. The organization has successfully

[1] Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere. Egale Canada describes itself as a national organization advancing equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-identified people across Canada.

lobbied for the removal of some popular reggae songs from iTunes' North American store. The group has also given the Bruce Golding-led administration until May 17 to announce plans to repeal the country's anti-homosexual legislation. If its demands are not met, Egale Canada says it will launch a campaign to ban Jamaican goods in the international marketplace as well as promote a boycott of its tourism. Not all gay rights groups are agreed on the strategy that should be used. The Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG)[2] has rejected Egale Canada's ultimatum and says it does not support a boycott—although it has criticized the new prime minister for refusing to take up the issue of anti-gay violence (Neufville, 2008).

[2] The Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG) estimates there were 30 homophobic murders in Jamaica between 1997 and 2004 (JFLAG Blog Post).

Introduction

More than a half million people living in Canada trace their origins to the Caribbean. Many were born in the Caribbean and migrated to Canada in the period from the mid-1960s to the present following fundamental changes to Canadian immigration rules. To date, much of the research that has been done on Caribbean immigrants in Canada has centered on the migration, settlement patterns, living arrangements, family structures, schooling achievements, and income levels of the "mainstream" within the group[3]. Research on the more marginalized groups within the Caribbean-Canadian population is very sparse[4]. Queer[5] Caribbean-Canadians represent one of the most invisible and often neglected in the mainstream migration literature because their presence is often regarded as a taboo topic. To date, much of the research on queer Caribbean-Canadians has come from a limited concentration of pioneering scholars such as Silvera (1991), Crichlow (2004), Alexander (2005), and Walcott (2006).

In much of the circum Caribbean, lesbians, gay men, and transgendered people are on the front lines, targeted for repression and violence. The Caribbean, broadly, and some places, particularly, such as Jamaica—as is evident from the newspaper accounts above—have a long and deeply established homophobic cultural tradition. It is promoted by a literal interpretation of Christian texts condemning sodomy. Male homosexuals, especially in Jamaica, face constant threat from organized homophobic gangs. They risk physical harm and even death if they publicly reveal their sexual orientation. Lesbians are frowned upon but not subject to the same violent repression. In contrast, Canada has made strides toward greater acceptance of homosexuality, at the same time that these moves have further complicated debates about sexual identity and citizenship. Gays and lesbians within the Caribbean-Canadian community are therefore often caught between two very different cultural traditions. Those within the Caribbean-Canadian community who "come out" and publicly declare their sexual orientation have tended to mobilize around a combined anti-racist and anti-homophobic agenda, seeking to build bridges with

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[3] See: Ramcharan 1976; Head and Lee 1980; Richmond 1993; James 1990; Henry 1994; Ramcharan 1982; Birbalsingh 1989, 1993 and 1997; Plaza 2001, 2004, 2007, Simmons and Plaza 2006.

[4] Over the past thirty years there have been some notable studies such as Calliste's (1994) which looks at Caribbean women; Preibisch's (2007) on agricultural migrant workers; Silvera's (1989) on domestic workers; Flynn's (2008) on Caribbean nurses; and Plaza's (2006) on the second generation.

[5] The term "queer" is under constant debate and contestation as to its positioning vis-à-vis mainstream definitions of heterosexuality, as well as vis-à-vis dominant interpretations of categories such as "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," and "transgendered." For a more nuanced discussion of the various angles of engagement and contestation in this debate, see chapter 1 of Ian Barnard's *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Racial Politics of Queer Theory* (2003). For the purpose of this paper, the term "queer" is used loosely as an umbrella category that is not meant to assume a unitary positioning and knowledge consciousness, but as a term that politicizes differently from dominant heteronormative categories. The authors are aware that while the term "gay" is more popularly identified with in the Caribbean region, the term "queer" gives more latitude to a range of non-heteronormative identifications, which might also accommodate the framing of such discourses from the perspective of the diaspora. It is also important to note that "queer" does not always neatly coincide with categories such as "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," and "transgendered," and might in certain circumstances be constituted in direct opposition to these categories, as a way of accommodating further ambiguities and complexities of sexual identity.

broader anti-racist and anti-homophobic movements that are both local and transnational. Some have made progress in gaining greater tolerance within the Caribbean-Canadian community.

While the Caribbean community in Canada is perhaps less violent in its stand against homosexuality, it has not for the most part abandoned its opposition. Attitudes within the Caribbean-Canadian community are shifting slowly, and this puts transnational pressure on locations like Jamaica or Trinidad to change their views on homophobia. Being a queer first, second, or third generation Caribbean-Canadian has both advantages and disadvantages compared to living in the Caribbean. In Canada, there are some conditionally safe spaces in major cities like Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal for queer Caribbean-origin people. In order to live lives with less persecution, queer Caribbean-Canadians sometimes join the "mainstream" gay ghetto communities in major cities while others "front" or "live on the down low" in their own community. Joining gay communities in places like Toronto is often problematic because there are different degrees of racism, sexism, and class differences which keep queer Caribbean-Canadians feeling marginalized in two communities.

It is within this complex environment that this paper explores the lives of ten queer Caribbean-Canadians who live in Toronto. The paper provides insights into the ways in which queer Caribbean-Canadians arrive in Canada, cope with marginalization from family and community once they come out, and deal with racism, classism, and sexism from both within and outside of their community. The paper also describes the ethnic differences within the community and how that affects treatment. The generational and social class differences within the queer Caribbean community and what this means for acceptance and marginalization is also highlighted. Finally, the paper comments on the transnational activities that connect queer Caribbean-Canadians with human rights advocacy groups both in Canada and in the circum Caribbean region.

Overview of the Queer Caribbean in Canada

There is a paucity of sociological investigation into the historical and contemporary realities of queer Caribbean people in the Caribbean region, as well as in Canada. Wesley Crichlow makes the following observation:

> There is a rich literature on white, gay, and lesbian cultures in Canada, yet very little has been written on the lives of buller men and batty bwoys, so very little is known about how these men negotiate their identities in Canadian and other North American societies. (2004, 32)

While there is some degree of literary and filmic engagement with the queer Caribbean community in Canada, exemplified in the works of authors such as Dionne Brand and Shani Mootoo, and filmmaker Michelle Mohabeer, few sociological studies exist that investigate the macro-sociological issues that shape the queer Caribbean and its diaspora. Published studies by queer Caribbean sociologists in Toronto such as Wesley Crichlow (2004) and Rinaldo Walcott (2006) remain seminal, though each re-politicizes the queer black Caribbean experience in Canada from different angles. Crichlow's *Buller Men and*

Batty Boys investigates the realities and experiences of black Canadian gay men, predominantly those with Caribbean backgrounds. His published doctoral dissertation focuses on the issues that plague queer black Caribbean men within their diasporic communities in Canada. He points out that, "In Canada, bullers experience a triple form of oppression: racism and heterosexism within white society; racism and the sexualization of racism within the white gay community; and heterosexism within the Black community" (2004, 32). While Walcott's work acknowledges these dimensions of the queer black Caribbean experience, he is concerned with problematizing the ways in which the hyphenated category of "queer black Caribbean" is socially constructed by the mainstream white gay community in Toronto and the subversion of these dominant scripts by queer black men. The work of both scholars illumine the double disciplining of queer black Caribbean men through the racist practices of white gay men and the homophobia within their own black Caribbean-Canadian community.

These regulatory currents are reinforced by the social construction and state management of homophobia in the Caribbean region itself, and inform the ways in which queer diasporic subjects orient and manage their identities and politics when they arrive in North America. In *Pedagogies of Crossing*, Jacqui Alexander reminds us that all states have an investment in heterosexualization and that categories such as citizen, patriot, and immigrant carry ideological heterosexualism. Alexander points to a number of critical imperatives made all the more urgent by contemporary manifestations of neoimperialism and neocolonialism. She focuses on state regulation in the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago to reflect critically on the neocolonial state's role in regulation of sexual citizenship. Alexander claims that the weight of immorality placed by the heteromasculine state on homosexuality, in the name of shoring up hegemonic and heteronormative versions of the nation, is disproportionately borne by Caribbean lesbian and queer women in particular. The state's conflation of heterosexuality and citizenship normalizes a spectrum of violence against women in general, but even more so, against lesbian women who are constructed in legal discourse as outlaws. Alexander states that "Both in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Bahamas, state laws conflate lesbian identity with criminality" (2005, 27). Yet, Alexander underscores the binaristic maneuvers of the heteropatriarchal Caribbean state as follows:

> The state works to reinvent heterosexuality by, on the one hand, creating a class of loyal heterosexual citizens and, on the other hand, by designating a class of subordinated non-citizens including lesbians, gay men, prostitutes, and people who are HIV infected, thereby reviving the myth of the apocalyptic destruction of Sodom by an oversexed band of non-procreative non citizens (2005, 29).

Implicated within this discourse, Alexander insists, are neocolonial arguments on both sides of the diasporic circuit that at best, complicate the notion of home for queer Caribbean diasporic subjects. On the one hand, the state and normative Caribbean community regard homosexuality as a "Western decadent incursion" (2005, 47) that they conveniently fit into their convoluted and highly paradoxical anti-colonial agenda. On the other hand, this denial is conveniently plugged into by the metropolitan queer community

that activates colonial logics to claim the metropolitan's political cache. Alexander calls on the queer diaspora to "challenge prevalent metropolitan impulses that explain the absence of visible lesbian and gay movements as a defect in political consciousness and maturity, using evidence of publicly organized movements in North America as evidence of their original status in the West and their superior political maturity" (2005, 28). These two logics of denial powerfully discipline the queer Caribbean-Canadian community, forcing their struggles to coalesce around discourses of racialization at the same time that they politicize sexual citizenship across the diasporic circuit.

Contesting the 'queer' mainstream in Canada

Migrant and second-generation queer Caribbeans in Canada are compelled to fit into dominant i.e. white definitions of queer citizenship. According to Walcott (2006, 124), black men in general are the "willing and unwilling canvases" onto which society symbolically projects its desires and fantasies. Black queer Caribbean men are also folded into this discourse, though with specific nuances within the dominant white gay community. While they are viewed as hypersexual studs within the dominant metropolitan gay imaginary, this system of symbols denies their humanity, agency, and unique experiences as differently positioned gay men. In particular, Canadian gay urban discourse has been historically constructed as one in which terms such as "queer" and "gay" have been metonymically associated with whiteness, in which other, and in this case, racialized definitions of these categories are either completely muted or selectively digested into the dominant definitions. This system of racialized ranking of experiences within the categories "queer" and "gay" not only positions gay men of color in particular ways, but also regulates them and denies their autonomy to self-determine.

Walcott claims in the case of Toronto, that "gay ghettoes attempt to confine and produce a racist/sexist black body within its already minoritized space from which the struggle over community proceeds. Black queers find themselves still relegated to struggling against what appear to be old yet resistant forms of discrimination, both in queer communities and other communities" (2006, 125). He adds that even when black queers are made absent in the mainstream white ghettoes, they are very present as "silent backdrops" against which the metonymy between "gay" and "white" is further naturalized. This context produces multiple posturings on the part of the black queer community that strengthen the case against thinking about a unitary black queer experience, and by extension a queer Caribbean diasporic experience.

For Walcott, the labor of black drag queens (some of whom are of Caribbean background) in Toronto's gay ghetto represents one critical response in which a non-normative configuration of blackness contests and resignifies the formulation of metropolitan blackness within mainstream gay/white ghetto cultural politics. This symbolic maneuver, according to Walcott, is more about the decentering of whiteness as the most constituent force of the gay urban imaginary. Another response that Walcott points out is the way in which diasporic affiliations are increasingly registered in events such as Gay Pride that have historically been represented as white, gay, and male. His

discussion of Blockorama[6] during pride celebrations reflects the influence of Caribbean cultural forms on black and mainstream queer life, and the efforts to imprint these struggles onto the space of the gay ghetto that claims to be multicultural.

Contesting 'Caribbean' in Canada: Positioning within the diaspora

Wesley Crichlow's study provides an overview of both the structural and agentic dimensions of black queer Caribbean experience in Toronto, especially foregrounding marginalization processes within black heteronormative Caribbean communities in Canada. Like mainstream white Canada, racialized communities also enforce heteronormative constructions of masculinity, reducing homosexual racialized masculinities to weak or diseased masculinities. Crichlow finds that black gay men are viewed as race traitors who deviate from normalized codes of black sexuality (i.e. heterosexuality) by adopting "western sexual perversions"—a normative discourse that rationalizes why "bullers and batty bwoys" are seen as disease-ridden and prone to AIDS (2004, 37). He stresses that these oppressive discourses operate due to the absence of real dialogue between black dominant heterosexual and black same-sex communities. The latter is often forced to dangerously rely on the limited and stereotypical offerings of the dominant white gay community for some measure of visibility and affirmation. Because the categories "black" and "gay" (white-centric meaning) are seen as irreconcilable within the dominant black Caribbean consciousness, queer black Caribbeans suffer a sense of double consciousness that leaves them with feelings of shame and marginalization by their black Caribbean communities that view same-sex desire as anathema to their "racial uplift" in Canadian society (Crichlow 2004, 136). Crichlow opines that "the lack of support in Caribbean communities for people engaging in same-sex practices, the violent attacks on people who seek same-sex agency or identities, and family, community, and religious oppression have made it impossible for people to engage in same-sex practice and be open about it. Caribbean communities have policed desire along the lines of good and bad, clean and unclean, and have imposed very stereotypical roles and expectations on men and women" (2004, 75).

Despite this regulatory regime that institutionalizes homophobia in the name of a unitary black diasporic consciousness, Crichlow's work reveals how black same-sex identities proliferate and challenge celebratory and essentialized constructions of Caribbean-Canadian identity. Queer black Caribbean men have experienced their families and communities as sites of "affirmation and support as well as alienation and pain" (Crichlow 2004, 80). Like the church and other interwoven social institutions, black diasporic families exert pressure on black men who engage in same-sex practices by inculcating feelings of shame, guilt, and self-contempt, which in many cases force queer black men to marry and have children to protect their families' reputation. Crichlow highlights the gravity of this regulatory regime, especially as he points out that "sexuality

[6] An annual party event held during Toronto's Pride Parade celebrations for the past nine years. The official website describes Blockorama as an event that "celebrates the spirit of the black-queer community with performances by artists from throughout North America." Patrons are urged to "Come down to the Blockorama stage for fierceness and family and feel the vibes from all over the African Diaspora, from Trinidad to Ghana, from Philly to Toronto." While the event is lauded for its celebrations of blackness within the queer mosaic, it is also an important site for investigating how specific interpretations of blackness are registered within the mainstream queer community.

in Black life is not a private affair" (2004, 85). As a result of this systemic and community pressure for black men to conform to normative codes, many remain within the closet of married life and risk suffering various configurations of alienation, psychological torment, and even violence. Crichlow outlines a geography of violence, fear and hypermasculinity that polices black same-sex desires and relations in Canada's black communities, especially in ways that forestall support and solidarity among queer black men. At the community level, queer black men are denied visibility as a legitimate site of blackness and suffer a sort of psychic torture as a result of the oppressive consequences of their investment in black communal solidarity. These oppressive experiences support Crichlow's finding that "Black heterosexist families and Black diasporic nationalists have failed to take into account the underrepresentation and oppression of Black bullers and batty bwoys" (2004, 105).

There has also been some meditation on issues facing the queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadian diaspora as well, while this limited engagement must take into account the fact that contemporary queer theory has not sufficiently thought through intersections of gender, sexuality, and race. These limitations are due in part to undertheorized South Asian gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) subjectivities—compounded by a queer canon overwrought with the East/West or tradition/modern binary—which renders queer South Asian as a monolithic homogeneous category with little or no agency (Kawale 2003). The South Asian-Caribbean-Canadian GLBTIQ community members find it enormously difficult to construct fluid identities within the available GLBTIQ discourse in Canada. Reflecting on queer Asian subjectivities in the United States, Kamashiro (1999) has highlighted a discursive lattice of "queered Orientalism" that positions queer Asian American men as sexually hyperdesirable and undesirable at particular moments. It is within a similar symbolic scale that queer Asian (South and East) diasporic subjects are made to weigh in on a certain kind of symbolic import in the Canadian queer imaginary. Queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadian bodies are by default compelled into this larger discursive framework that regulates queer brown bodies and sexualities. Yet, as we shall see from the work in this article, queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadians struggle to perform distinct identities that resist the erasure of difference, while at the same time being selective about how their distinctive politic is framed and manipulated in relation to the larger queer South Asian Canadian diaspora, to the larger queer Afro-Caribbean-Canadian diaspora, and to white mainstream queer Canada.

Gayatri Gopinath has addressed these tensions regarding diasporic South Asian subjectivity by making a distinction between conventional diasporic discourse and queer diasporic discourse, which in the case of the latter, acknowledges the "contradictions and the violences of multiple uprootings, displacements, and exiles" (2006, 4). Michelle Mohabeer's film *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass* traces the uneven valences of Caribbean-Canadian lesbian experience and points to these contradictions as she flirts with the nostalgia of return to Guyana, despite the traumatic discourse of exile that has forced her to become a queer refugee in Canada[7]. Her narrative is even more complicated by the

[7] Mohanty (1988) notes that the failure of Western feminism to properly and critically theorize Third World women opens a space in which a monolithic subject (or object) of knowledge is constructed. Naheed Islam (1998), in her seminal study about South Asian women who love other women, finds that her

legacies of colonial oppression. Trinidadian-Canadian writer Shani Mootoo underscores this tension underlying lesbian diasporic subjectivity in *Ceres Blooms at Night*, complicating how home is always a site of struggle and habitation, questioning what we might expect in the concept of a queer home in the diaspora, when in fact the conventional orientation of diaspora has been constructed as heteronormative (Gopinath 2006, 187). These debates are illuminated from different angles by the respondents in this study, at times with different intensities and politicizations. They all warn of the danger of theorizing the queer Caribbean diaspora without grounding abstract ideas in experience—a challenging task that makes sexual citizenship and the framing of cohesive identities quite contentious.

Data and methods

This paper is based on data collected during the summer of 2008 in Toronto, Canada. Data was gathered using interviews and a content analysis of both Internet websites and newspaper/magazines published in Toronto. The main source of data comes from ten semi-structured life history interviews with men and women who are LGBTQ self-identified Caribbean-Canadians, both first and second generation, living in Toronto. All interviews were conducted individually in various locations across the Greater Toronto Area. A variety of locations were chosen to conduct the interviews primarily as a convenience for the interviewees. The respondents came from various Caribbean-origin ethnic groups, which included African, Indian and other mixtures. It was important to have representatives from these ethnic groups because families who originated from the Caribbean are heterogeneous. A purposive snowball sample was used in which participants were selected through their acquaintance with the researchers, through references provided by friends, colleagues, relatives, and the participants. All the interviews were audio taped and took between two and three hours to complete. Unlike most conventional in-depth interviews, the life history approach seeks to capture the longitudinal changes in a person's life by including its rhythm, cycle, and the changes that occur. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the strategy of the "constant comparative method of analysis," a strategy of data analysis that calls for continually "making comparisons" and "asking questions" (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Interviews were coded and sorted according to emerging themes which were then compared to each other for generalizablity. According to Patton (2002, 56), inductive analysis allows for "categories or dimensions to emerge from open-ended observations as the inquirer comes to understand patterns that exist in the phenomenon being investigated." Essentially, as Patton (2002) notes, this type of analysis involves identifying categories, patterns, and themes in one's data through one's interaction with the data. After this analysis, similarities and differences were documented based on our personal understanding, professional knowledge, and the literature. As is common to studies using a smaller sample size, questions of reliability and validity arise. Given that our respondents were recruited through personal relations and the strict protocol of confidentiality was adhered to, we are convinced that our respondents had no reason to provide false information.

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respondents reject the term lesbian. South Asian-American women who sought lesbian organizations and communities, primarily defined by white lesbians, felt they were marginalized and exoticized because of their differences.

The study is supplemented by a non-random content analysis of Internet websites which were created by queer groups in the Caribbean. The sample is a convenient and judgmental one in that we looked at six websites constructed and maintained by Caribbean-Canadian or Caribbean-based queer organizations. A Google search for Caribbean queer organizations was carried out on November 13, 2008, and yielded 23,900 hits. We selected a sample from among these Google hits by using two main criteria. First, to be included in the sample the organization had to be based in the Caribbean but be doing work that involved queer issues that were relevant to the Caribbean-Canadian population. Second, the organization had to have a website that was active within the past year. The unit of analysis for this part of the study is Caribbean queer organizations' individual websites, the frames created within each site, text, blogs, sound files, active hot links, and any images found at the site.

The study was further supplemented by an additional content analysis of newspaper and magazine publications that were created by queer groups in Canada. The sample is again a convenient and judgmental one in that we looked at two publications that are maintained by queer organizations in Toronto (*Xtra* and *Fab* magazine). To be included in the sample a newspaper/magazine story had to include coverage of an issue that pertained to queer Caribbean-Canadian or queer Caribbean issues in general. We selected only those stories that were published within the past three years. Our analysis consisted of examining (n=35) articles or stories which pertained to the queer community of Caribbean origin in Canada. Another set of articles was located on the recent campaign of "Stop the Murder Music".

The qualitative analysis which follows offers rich data on both the macro and micro level of queer Caribbeans both in Canada and in the transnational diaspora. The particular individuals who were interviewed give us a unique perspective on their life, their cultural values, and their social norms. The data do not, however, allow us to generate information which can be subjected to quantitative analysis nor can they be used as a basis for making sweeping statements about more general conditions. Given that little previous data have been gathered about queer Caribbeans in Canada, this methodological approach enabled us to ask open-ended questions and to gather more detailed information than would have been possible through a survey methodology administered to the Caribbean community with close-ended questions.

The strength of these interviews and the content analysis lie in the fact that they offer us an exploratory view of how queer Caribbean-Canadians arrived in Canada, cope with marginalization from family and kin once they come out, deal with racism, classism, and sexism from both within and outside of their community, and the ethnic differences within the queer Caribbean-Canadian community. The paper also examines the generational and social class differences and what this means for acceptance and marginalization. The paper ends by commenting on the transnational activities that connect queer Caribbean-Canadians with human rights advocacy groups both in Canada and in the circum Caribbean region.

Characteristics of the respondents

In the next section we provide a socio-demographic overview of the ten respondents who were interviewed (see table 1). Six of the interviewees were women and four were men. All ten of the individuals had parent(s) who were born in the Caribbean. Four of the respondents were classified as being first generation Caribbean living in Canada. Lisa and Roger arrived in the mid-1970s during the first brain drain of Caribbean professionals. Brandon and Vishnu arrived in the 1990s during the second brain drain of graduate skilled professionals. The individuals classified as second generation were either born in Canada of Caribbean-origin parents or they migrated to Canada before the age of four. No one in our sample was considered as third generation—that is someone who was born to parents who were second generation Caribbean-Canadian migrants (Zhou 1999).[8] The oldest person interviewed was sixty-six years, while the youngest was twenty-three. The average age of the respondents was thirty-five. Three of the interviewees were born in Trinidad (Nisha, Lucy, and Vishnu) and two were born in Jamaica (Lisa and Roger). Three were born in Canada of Caribbean parent(s) (Robert, Crystal, and Vanessa). One was born in England (Angie) and one was born in St Lucia (Brandon). Angie's parents were of mixed ethnicity. One parent was born in Trinidad while the other was born in Sierra Leone. The two met in England while attending medical school, got married, had two children and then moved to Sierra Leone. The entire family subsequently moved to Canada in the late 1970s.

Only one respondent (Lucy) described herself as transgendered. Lucy was biologically a woman but presented as masculine. The other nine respondents had a binary male or female self-identification. Ethnic self-identification was an interesting issue among the respondents. Six of the ten interviewees described their background as having some African origin. Only two (Nisha and Vishnu) described their ethnic background as Indo-Caribbean or Trinidadian. Three of the respondents who were born in Canada (Crystal, Vanessa, and Nisha) used Canadian in their ethnic description of themselves. Only three interviewees (Angie, Lucy, and Brandon) referred to themselves as being of mixed ethnicity. For them, they felt that this gave them an "exotic" appearance and allure to others.

All ten of the respondents self-identified their social class as being middle class in some way. Some interpreted the question to mean their growing up experience or their current status. Three (Lucy, Nisha, and Robert) felt they were currently lower middle class. Brandon, Angie, and Roger felt that they were upper middle class based on their family

[8] In this paper, we classify two immigrant generations within the Caribbean-origin cohort in Canada. The second generation includes those persons who are either Canadian born or born in the Caribbean but arrived in Canada at pre-school age (zero to four years). The first generation includes those who were born in the Caribbean but who arrived in Canada over the age of eighteen and went directly into the workforce. The inclusion of Caribbean-origin children who arrived at very young ages into the second generation is based on the assumption that these children share many cultural and developmental experiences similar to those of the Canadian-born. Although scholars may vary in their ways of defining the new second generation, they have generally agreed that there are important differences between children of different cohorts, particularly in their psychological developmental stages, in their socialization processes in the family, in their schooling experience, and in their treatment in the society at large, as well as in their orientation toward their homeland (Zhou, 1999).

backgrounds. Only three of the respondents felt they were from the middle class (Lisa, Vanessa, and Vishnu). One of the limitations of our study is the fact that we were unable to locate working class queer Caribbean-Canadian people in Toronto. The difficulty in locating these individuals is that many of them live on the extreme down low. Our sample is therefore biased towards the views and experiences of middle class Caribbean-Canadians.

With respect to current occupations in Canada, three interviewees were university students (Vanessa, Crystal, and Nisha), while one was a university professor (Vishnu). Two were social workers or community advocates (Angie, Lucy, and Brandon). Two were involved in the medical profession (Roger and Lisa). One (Robert) was an artist in Toronto. Once again our sample shows a bias in terms of perspective these individuals would have been able to share with us. Their views reflect a liberal, white collar perspective that one might consider fairly high profile.

None of the interviewees was currently married. Their living arrangements did vary somewhat from being closeted (Lisa and Roger) to being out and proud (Angie, Lucy, Crystal, Vanessa, Brandon, and Vishnu). These differences clearly seemed to reflect the different generations within the queer Caribbean-Canadian community. Those older members like Lisa and Roger tend to be more likely to be closeted or still living on the "down low." The younger folk in the community tend to be more confident in their status and less concerned about what others think about them. Hence, they were more likely to be living outside of the closet. Another bias in our sample was not capturing the views of the third generation. This cohort consists of men and women who are the children of second generation Caribbean parents. This group is under the age of twenty and by all reports tends to be out of the closet at a very young age—normally their teens. This group contrasts with the first generation who are living on "the down low" or closeted. Despite this, the first generation tend to be politically involved in the queer community on an intellectual basis. This is in contrast to the third generation who tend to be visibly out but very apolitical in their activities in the queer community. Most are reportedly more concerned with issues like "fashion and dress" rather than gay marriage rights.

Only one of the interviewees (Robert) gave his orientation as being bi-sexual. Two of the interviewees did indicate that they had children from previous heterosexual relationships. Lisa had two boys and a girl while Robert had a son. Some of the interviewees did indicate that in the future they might want to have their own children (Nisha, Crystal, Vanessa, Lucy, and Brandon). Most were not averse to using new reproductive technologies like surrogate mothers or artificial insemination from an anonymous donor.

In terms of current living arrangements, half of the interviewees lived alone without a partner (Lucy, Brandon, Vishnu, Robert, and Vanessa). Almost all the interviewees did, however, say that they were in a relationship with a partner although they did not live with them. Interestingly, half of the interviewees were currently in a relationship with a white Euro-Canadian person. Only two interviewees indicated having a current relationship with someone who is of Caribbean ethnicity (Crystal and Roger).

All of the interviewees reported that they continue to have close relations with members of their family. Most said that their relationship with their mothers was the closest. Few mentioned their fathers being in the picture or having any relation with them. Some did have siblings to whom they were close. The pattern of having a close relationship with family even after having come out seemed to be fairly common among individuals in our sample. This pattern seems to reflect the improving level of tolerance for queerness within the Caribbean-Canadian community.

All the interviewees had made at least two holiday visits to the Caribbean in their lifetime. Some have made multiple (five or more). Roger, Crystal, and Lucy all report having made at least one, sometimes two visits, each year to their respective places of origin. Two interviewees (Angie and Lucy) moved back to the Caribbean and lived for an extended period of time (longer than six months). With respect to the interviewees' desire to move back to the Caribbean to live and work in the future, no one in the sample had that dream or aspiration because all felt that the region was not a safe place to be openly queer. Violence, persecution, or repression for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gendered or queer) people in the Caribbean region was more the norm than the exception.

From the above socio-demographic profile of the ten LGBTQ Caribbean-Canadians in this sample, it is quite a heterogeneous mixture of individuals who nevertheless had a common ethnic Caribbean background, high levels of educational attainment and the experience of having lived in Canada for more than ten years. As a consequence of the sample size being small and non-randomly selected, it is difficult to make strong claims of reliability in the findings that follow. The life experiences of these ten individuals can however, give us a valid picture of the way first and second generation queer Caribbean-Canadians who live in Toronto adapt and negotiate a space for themselves both within the Canadian and Caribbean communities.

Migration and settlement: Unsettled diasporic subjects in a white settler society

The migration stories from our respondents were typical of many young Caribbean-Canadians now in their early thirties. Some came to Canada to join their parents, often mothers, who had left them years earlier (DaCosta 1976). Others were born in the early 1980s to first generation Caribbean migrants in Canada and subsequently spent their entire lives in one location. What we are now learning, beyond the research of the 1970s and early 1980s (Anderson and Grant 1975; D'Oyley and Silverman 1976; James 1990), is how some of these second generation children fared as a result of their settlement and acculturation experiences. For some second generation Caribbean-Canadians, their determination, high educational aspirations and performance made them academically successful. This was the case for most of our interviewees (Angie, Lucy, Nisha, Crystal, and Vanessa). For others, poor academic performance, school absenteeism and dropout made it difficult to realize their own and their parents' aspirations for them. This was marginally the case for one interviewee (Robert) who has not been very successful academically. He has, however, excelled in the arts. Richmond (1993) notes that young Caribbean immigrants who arrived when they were in their teens did less well at school and this ultimately affected their future employment opportunities. We speculate that these young teenagers may have had greater problems because of their cultural

differences, shorter time resident in Canada, skin color, and ethnicity differences which made them more susceptible to being a target for greater discrimination.

From our sample, it seems that all the interviewees experienced some feelings of alienation or some degree of discrimination while growing up or since moving to Canada. These feelings and experiences had nothing to do with their sexual orientation in Canada. The extent of their feelings of being "outsiders" to Canadian society seemed to vary by ethnicity and skin color. There were notable differences voiced between men and women in terms of their exposure to the ugliness of racism while living in Canada. Men seemed to be on the leading edge of the hostile racism both in terms of physical attack or verbal attacks. Women also experienced racism and it manifested itself in physical and verbal attacks but more often it seemed to come in the form of the eroticization and objectification of women of color. Women faced the double jeopardy of both sexism and racism by the dominant culture. Almost all our interviewees in this study indicated that a racist cultural milieu in Canada is the main factor that makes them feel like outsiders in Canada. Those who were in the second generation recalled desiring to be "Canadian" but persistent marginalization over time caused some to reach back into their Caribbean roots as a form of resistance. Our first generation interviewees voiced these sentiments the strongest. Having lived in Canada for 45 years, Roger noted that he never felt like he was treated fairly even as a highly qualified medical professional. He states as follows:

> Racism has plagued me my whole life in Canada. It took me a long time and up till now I still can't understand what racism really is. I know what it's supposed to be, it's I white, you black. But I have a lot of white friends, more white friends than black friends and I relate to them a little better. In Jamaica you are a first-class citizen in your own country so nothing stops you from achieving anything. When you go to a dominant society and this society happens to be white then you are not a first class person as you think you are. And you have some little things that will hold you back. (Roger)

Not surprisingly most of our informants who grew up in Canada (Nisha, Robert, Crystal and Vanessa) described their childhood years as a time often characterized by ambiguity, tension, and uncertainty about who they were culturally. Again, this feeling had nothing to do with their sexual orientation but had more to do with being a non-white immigrant trying to feel like they belonged in the Canadian milieu. The four interviewees spoke of schools and other public spheres as locations where they were pressured into being a "Canadian." They also spoke about being encouraged to make Canadian friends in order to learn about the culture and to adapt but on the other hand making too many Canadian friends meant that, in their parents' eyes, they might have been losing their roots. In those households where multi-generations all lived under the same roof this seemed to be more magnified because older relatives gave them reprimands to remind them not to be too Canadianized. The sense of being on the margins of two cultures was perplexing to their identities. Under these conditions, young Caribbean-origin men and women grew up equating Canadian-ness with "whiteness." As children and even as adolescents, the four interviewees (Nisha, Robert, Crystal and Vanessa) reported that they tried to be Canadian

by acting white in order to fit in with peer groups. Yet as they grew older, most became increasingly aware that regardless of their efforts they would not be accepted as completely "Canadian." This was certainly the case for Nisha who was born in Trinidad and arrived in Canada at age three. She recalls going through the "marginal man[9]" stage in her primary and secondary school and then realizing in young adulthood that she had developed a sense of identity which was full of contradictions and uncertainty. Her life became even more complicated when she came to the realization that she was queer and living in a non-white immigrant body. She says:

> I went through a stage in high school where I denied who I was. I didn't want to think I was brown. Yes, when I was with my family I considered myself Indo-Trinidadian-Canadian, but when I was with my friends I considered myself Canadian. When I was in university—I still didn't know who I was but my friends were all white girls. It's hard when you grow up in a school where you are pretty much the only culture there. My parents would say we are Trinidadian and then I said, well you should have left me in Trinidad and that was that whole issue for debate...Another complication in my identity came when I was at university and I was coming to my sexual identity. (Nisha)

Since the early 1970s studies have examined the mobility opportunities of Caribbean-born immigrants to Canada (Richmond 1988; Ramcharan 1976; Head and Lee 1980). Like most immigrants arriving in Canada, Caribbeans had the intention that they would experience the "mobility dream." In Canada, the mobility dream is directly linked to the American ethos of being "the land of opportunity" where any person willing to work hard can "make it" regardless of color, ethnicity, or place of birth. The central tenet of the mobility dream, which made it especially appealing to earlier waves of Caribbean migrants, was that every immigrant was the architect of his or her own fortune, because equal opportunity was available to all. The reality of life for most Caribbean immigrants to Canada, however, has rarely matched these ideals. The opportunity to be upwardly mobile in Canada has never been evenly distributed among all the talented or ambitious in the population. The mobility "glass ceiling" has continued even into the second generation of Caribbean-Canadians. These barriers occur despite the fact that the second generation now speaks without an accent, have Canadian schooling and experience, and most know the mannerism of what it means to be a Canadian in terms of social and cultural capital (Plaza 2004).

Caribbean-origin people continue to be differentially incorporated into Canadian society (Henry 1994). Moreover, Caribbean-origin immigrants, compared to other ethnic groups in Canada, express more dissatisfaction with their lives and their opportunities for mobility (Model 1991). The major barrier preventing the incorporation of the Caribbean-origin immigrant population seems to be the feeling of blocked mobility (Pool 1989).

[9] Initially conceptualized by Robert Park and later formalized by Stonequist, the "marginal-man" situation is one in which the individual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture and makes a satisfactory adjustment to another, then finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither.

Employment discrimination and blocked upward mobility was voiced by all our interviewees in one way or another. In her work as a nurse in Toronto, Lisa told us that she continues to see racism in the hiring and recruitment process of friends. She says:

> You have to understand why they are not letting you in to get the good work—its plain and simple racism!!… straight racism is why they are not letting you in… They cannot afford for a white person to walk into a bank on Bay Street and somebody like you sitting in their boardroom it means eventually you are going to be controlling their money right? I mean they are paranoid about your education. You can come here educated and they ask if you have Canadian experience. How are you going to get experience if they don't bring you in? So that's why we have so many qualified nurses in Canada cleaning bed pans, sweeping floors or cleaning homes. They cannot catch a break because they have the wrong skin color. (Lisa)

This section outlined some of the challenges and complications for queer Caribbean-Canadians from the perspective of their racialized diasporic identities within Canada as a white settler nation. It presented the base layer of alienation which diasporic subjects experience, and which sets the stage for their double alienation as a result of their sexual identity. The implication of these base narratives of diasporic experiences is that while queer Caribbean-Canadian subjects share the above experiences with their non-queer counterparts in the diaspora, they are often cast as atypical or non-members of the Caribbean-Canadian diaspora because of their non-normative sexual politics. By refusing to recognize this commonality of experience regarding overt and structural racism in Canadian society, queer Caribbean-Canadians are often denied a stake in the design of community solidarity.

Family and community responses in the Caribbean and Canada

The living arrangements that Caribbean immigrants have established in Canada are the result of a combination of factors which include social class transformations, period of arrival, and transplanted customs (both Creole and Indian). These are all factors that have their origin in the Caribbean and seem to be played out in Canada for our interviewees. The importance of family in Caribbean-Canadian households was voiced by all the interviewees. The family continues to be the lynchpin which grounds and connects Caribbean-Canadians of all generations to something that is "solid and reliable," according to Vanessa. The family is the institution that helps Caribbean-Canadians psychologically deal with the ups and downs of friends, employment, intimate relationships, schooling, and the feelings of alienation and marginalization in a hostile environment. The Caribbean-Canadian family therefore gave a feeling of agency to an otherwise atomized first and second generation population in Canada. From all our respondents we heard the same sentiment about fearing the loss of connections with family in Canada and abroad. Robert reflected on his extended family in Canada and their importance while he was growing up. He also told us that it was a hard decision to come out to his mother because he feared losing his main family support mechanism. His mother was very religious and Robert was very concerned that she would abandon him once he told her that he is bisexual. He tells us:

> I was very close with my extended family up until about 18…. When we were growing up any time there was a wedding, birthday or family event we all attended…you meet the other families; in that sense there was the sheltered kind of thing and there was the support growing up…We had our other cousins we always talk to and because on my mom side at least we are around the same age it made us really close… my dad side I did not know. Growing up I could always connect with someone in my family and say I am having a problem can you help me out and there would always be support…. Deciding to come out to some members of my family was a hard thought because I felt I would lose all of that support… I felt that if I told my mom she would tell me that I am committing a sin against God… It took me two years to tell her, but when I finally did she and my brothers and sisters just accept it and now we don't talk about it because they think I will find my way and choose the love of a woman in the future. (Robert)

All the respondents spoke strongly about the ways in which their families and communities in Canada and the diaspora respond to their queer identity, and the ways in which this is central to their positioning and self-management in relation to the mainstream queer community in Canada. According to Brandon, there are many homophobic and transphobic assumptions and practices within the Afro-Caribbean community in the region and in the diaspora that structure a culture of silence and denial, especially within more middle-class segments of the community.

Families, we heard, often regard homosexuality as a shame that cripples their respectability in the wider community, which polices sexuality in the name of state and church-sanctioned moral citizenship. Another family response is denial, in which parents especially refuse to focus on their children's sexual identity, viewing it as a temporary abnormal condition or "phase," and in many cases refusing to recognize queerness as constituting a coherent identity. For Brandon, this meant he could not talk about dating with his parents. For Vishnu, this meant that he censored his practices so they would not embarrass his family. For Nisha, this meant that her partner was always awkwardly referred to by her parents as a "friend" and that she came out only to her immediate rather than extended family. For Lucy this also translated into some degree of family shame on the part of her mother.

While Lucy and Nisha perceived Caribbean mothers as more tolerant and fathers as more vigilantly policing, Vishnu expressed that this was the inverse in his case as the responsibility for moral policing is asymmetrically burdened on mothers in Caribbean society. All respondents felt that queer (especially feminine) males are subject to much stricter policing than queer females, especially transsexuals, many of whom are automatically severed from family networks. In cases such as Brandon's and to some extent, Vishnu's, their exilic positioning outside the region is in response to what they

feel is a homophobic hyperpolicing within the private sphere that complicates their meaning of home and family and troubles any idyllic nostalgia for return.

Virtual communities: Networking and self-affirmation

Berger and Mallon (1993) found that social networks are extremely important in the lives of young queer people, often serving in place of their family when their biological family is unable or unwilling to provide positive support. Gauthier and Chaudoir (2004) found that the Internet serves as a virtual community center, a gathering place for exchange about medical, social, legal, and economic issues, aspects that when understood and optimized, lead to greater positive personal growth. Unlike most other minorities, queer Caribbean-Canadians often find themselves in a position where they cannot rely on information from relatives about queer culture and ways to cope with societal prejudice. Most of them need to find others with whom they can discuss their feelings. This can be a difficult and possibly dangerous situation within the Caribbean-Canadian community where stigma and isolation often exist for men and women who come out and declare their sexual orientation to be queer. Fear, prejudice, and isolation from the Caribbean community kept both Lisa and Roger living closeted for all their lives in Canada. However, the majority of our respondents use the Internet as a way to help them find more information about the queer community in Toronto and network internationally. This virtual queer imagination has provided queer Caribbean-Canadians with a sense of community and self-affirmation that helps to buffer the material dimensions of homophobia. Crystal noted that she used the Internet to "find other second generation Caribbean-Canadians like myself… to discover support groups… to overcome social and psychological isolation… to find out information which was going to help me in my coming out experience in Toronto." Similarly for Robert, the Internet websites he visited while coming to terms with his "sexual orientation allowed me to deal with the fact that there was a chance that my family and friends may disown me once I disclosed my bisexual orientation to them." For Lucy, having come out more than ten years ago, she says that she now uses the Internet to find other transgendered people. To these virtual community members Lucy feels she can disclose her feelings of being "different" (being biologically a woman but presenting as masculine), can share her own experiences and learn from others, which has ultimately enabled her to "build self-esteem, gain emotional and motivational support, and feel less isolated" (Lucy).

Other interviewees like Brandon report using the Internet for more transnational organizing. Since he only recently moved from St Lucia to Canada he still monitors queer websites maintained by queer political organizations in the Caribbean such as the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), the Barbados Gays & Lesbians Against Discrimination (BGLAD) and the Caribbean Forum for Liberation of All-sexualities and Genders (CARIFLAG). By having these transnational connections, Vishnu felt that queer Caribbeans in Canada can also connect with comrades in the Caribbean in order to form a "transnational support group." This is particularly relevant he notes for "individuals who find themselves outside of what society defines as heteronormal." These sites allow diasporic subjects like Vishnu and Brandon to know in real time what the conditions are like in the Caribbean for queer folk. Brandon feels that these sites, although at various stages of development, help the local queer populations to

reach out and link with the diasporic queer community. Evidence of this comes from the blog postings and the hyperlinks on various queer websites. At the J-FLAG site for example, there is information about asylum cases in the UK, US, and Canada for all sexual minorities. According to Brandon, such information puts pressure on the Jamaican government to improve its human rights record in regard to sexual citizenship. Local police also have to be more vigilant in checking their human rights abuses of sexual minorities as the Internet keeps them under a microscope. This strategic mobilization and organization of a queer transnational web of surveillance helps to make state organizations and their practices more accountable to human rights concerns. Brandon also noted that having hyperlinks to other queer communities in the region and around the world gives Caribbean sexual minorities a chance to foster solidarity with the international struggles that are going on. On the J-FLAG site for example there are hyperlinks to the Rainbow project in Namibia, Pro-Gay site in the Philippines, Gay men of African Descent (GMAD), and South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA-NY). These are all organizations that have well-developed websites which provide additional information on health, immigration, and human rights issues to anyone who visits them.

To many younger queer participants of this research, it seemed that the Internet is a means to an end. The Internet was used as a tool to discover venues, events, and organizations that would enable them to meet and connect with people in face-to-face situations. Nisha reported that she uses Facebook and MySpace to keep abreast of the queer friendly parties and social events taking place in Toronto. By having access to these sites, Nisha felt that she could immerse herself in "queer safe space in Toronto thus avoiding the ugliness of sexual harassment or feeling awkward if my partner and I decided to display intimacy in a public space." This was a sentiment we heard in virtually all the interviews. Everyone wanted to avoid feeling awkward and embarrassed when they were out in Toronto with friends or lovers. For Nisha, this was the triple jeopardy of being a woman, queer, and a person of color in a public space.

Some of our older respondents such as Roger and Lisa said that they did not use the Internet to gain up-to-date information about the queer community in Toronto. Roger and Lisa were more likely to be drawn to the printed newspaper or magazine publications that had information on the queer community. Vishnu told us in great detail how he used the *Xtra* and the *Fab* magazines as a source of information while he was coming to terms with his sexual orientation. His curiosity about the queer life led him to eventually visit the "Barn" night club because "it had the biggest advertisement in the newspaper." His first visit to the "Barn" alone was a "shock" because it was the first time he had witnessed "males dancing with males." He later psychoanalyzed his reaction and concluded that his initial response was due to his internalized homophobia that he was socialized to feel. For Vishnu, however, the newspaper and magazines produced within the queer community was the catharsis that opened the door to his sexuality, though he also highlighted the racialized biases of the mainstream queer media. Radio stations, weekly print newspapers or magazines as information sources about the queer community events in Toronto were more typically utilized by the older interviewees in our sample. Both Lisa and Roger reported that they had only recently logged onto the queer scene available on the Internet. Both of them, however, said that they did not

embrace the media because the technology was daunting. Roger noted that he did not like the proliferation of "easy hook-ups" or the "anonymous sex scene opportunities" which have now become very much part of the Internet queer culture in Toronto. The Internet for these two went against their idea of living quietly on the margins where you remained hidden. Getting involved in the queer scene in Toronto via the Internet was regarded by both as a way to make oneself susceptible to being identified and therefore vulnerable to being taunted or exploited.

Racism in Toronto's mainstream queer community

Like many other racialized groups in Canada, the Caribbean diaspora is affected by and resistant to multiple forms of overt and systemic racism. This marginalization is intensified within the mainstream white queer community, which has historically equated categories such as "gay," "lesbian," and "queer" with white-centric definitions and histories. All respondents spoke out about racism within the white queer community in Canada, giving numerous examples of the ways in which queer Caribbeans in Toronto, in particular, occupy a unique position in the racialized queer hierarchy. Brandon and Lucy mentioned the differential treatment of queer Caribbeans within the mainstream queer community. Their issues and political struggles are often peripheralized and treated as trivial to any renovation of Canadian queer citizenship.

Brandon recollected that a radio call-in program on Proud FM (Toronto's gay radio station), during which he and other queer Caribbean-Canadian activists were discussing the Stop Murder Music campaign, was met with hostility from white gay callers who felt that the issue was not a Canadian, but Caribbean one. Editors of the gay village newspaper also felt that this was a Jamaican (i.e. not Canadian) problem that should be handled by an international organization, rather than Egale Canada. This culturalist argument located within the white gay male community underscores the dominant discourse that regulates the tabling of issues that serve as proxies for queer citizenship. Vishnu also extended this analysis in which homophobia in Jamaica is taken up by the mainstream queer media in Toronto, more so as a reference point for claiming a more liberal and superior Canada and hence as a strategy for prioritizing white subjects for queer citizenship.

The hierarchy of issues that are considered to be relevant to the queer community in Toronto is therefore white-centric and directed. For example, Brandon lamented the unfortunate elevation of the gay marriage discourse that really benefited upper-class gay white males above discourses of poverty and racialization within the queer community. This selective focusing apparatus at times brings invisibility to queer Caribbeans in Canada and the issues that they feel are unique to their diasporic and transnational projects. Afro-Caribbeans in particular are made especially invisible and only digested through the stereotypes that are circulated and maintained within the mainstream Canadian community. For example, Brandon reported that Afro-Caribbean gay men are often approached for drug purchase or hook ups at the gay clubs in the gay village. He also cited fear on the part of the mainstream queer community in Toronto, of queer blacks congregating on occasions such as the gay Pride parade, as this has connotations of violence and unrest. In fact, he mentioned that the annual Afro-Caribbean gay Pride

party, Blockorama, was moved from the village to a parkette at the periphery of the village, symbolically marginalizing the queer Caribbean community as a way of cleansing the village space to reflect a predominantly white version of Pride. These material forms of discrimination against racialized queer Caribbeans are also compounded by the village politics of representation as the mainstream queer media, controlled by the Pink Triangle Press (*Xtra* Newspaper, *Fab* Magazine, *Pride* Magazine) that is narrowly accountable to the white queer community, continues to deny alternative political platforms and constituencies in the queer community and reproduces racialized interpretations of queer people of color.

The response to this sort of regulation is multiple, often determined by many issues, one of which, according to Lucy, is that the younger generation of queer Caribbeans is more vociferous and intolerant of racism as it is of homophobia. Lucy also cited transphobia in the lesbian community as a real problem facing lesbian and transsexual Caribbeans. However, she felt that factional identity politics has thinned the grounds for solidarity amongst the black community; a problem that provides de facto leverage for racism from the more solidly organized white lesbian community. Interestingly, Lucy cast the disjointed black community, not only against the white queer community, but against what she felt are more organized and cohesive groups of queer ethnics such as Filipinos and South Asians. This tactic of comparing political bargaining power among ethnic constituencies is reflective of the ways in which a competitive model of Canadian multiculturalism dominates the organizing of difference within Toronto's queer community. Yet, the disaggregation of queer communities of color is a salient problem according to Nisha, who felt that it results from a coerced absorption into the white queer community that determines the frame of visibility of queer identity. While this affords conditional inclusion, Vishnu expressed anxiety about the ways in which white gay men become the gatekeepers of access to queer community status and social capital, at times traded for an acceptance on the part of some queer people of color for the stereotypical categories through which they are afforded such visibility. Whiteness therefore becomes the central organizing feature of in/visibility, and the conditions under which queer people of color can claim visibility.

Ethno-sexual boundaries and relations[10]

Especially in intimate relationships, the framing of difference is so personalized that it becomes privatized instead of seen as a political matter of queer public discourse. Reflecting on biracial relationships between queer Caribbean-Canadians and dominant queer white Canadian bodies, the latter often considers the former as a project to be

[10] Nagel (2003) notes that ethno-sexual contact across ethnic boundaries is not always a long-term affair, and it is not always a welcome advance. Recreational sex and sexual abuse of members of other ethnic groups are the specialties of ethno-sexual adventurers and ethno-sexual invaders. These forms of hit-and-run adventuring are very common in the colonial history of the world. Ethno-sexual adventurers and invaders are less likely to be penalized or stigmatized for having sex with sometimes reviled ethnic others since they often keep their border crossings a secret, they deny their liaisons, or their acts officially are overlooked. Ethno-sexual adventuring depends to a great extent on stereotypes of the sexual talents or characteristics of members of particular races, ethnicities or nationalities. Such ethno-sexual mythologies include visions of ethnic others with large or exotic genitals who are in possession of unusual sexual prowess, skill, or who are exceptionally attractive or beautiful.

shaped and molded into the proper gay subject, often underlined by white/bourgeois-centric assumptions and practices such as going to high culture events (e.g. opera), and based on neocolonial fantasies in which white gay men position themselves as the rational civilizing subjects of gay men of color. These white gatekeepers are often the ones who introduce Caribbean-Canadians to the queer scene at "Church and Wellesley Street" according to Robert. For Vishnu, this was certainly the case. He met John, an older white male, who became his "gatekeeper" to the queer community. John was a white male who had lost his sexual cachet in the queer community because of his age and declining physical appearance. John befriended Vishnu and proceeded over time to introduce him "to gay culture and the village." This included "queer art, expensive dinners, some very stereotypical stuff," according to Vishnu. "I became a project for John …who wanted to make me into a proper gay person." In the village, John would be regarded as a "chocolate queen" because his relations were with predominantly brown men. These were men John felt that he could dominate due to his cachet of ethnicity, social and cultural capital.

Brandon viewed this dynamic as one that especially Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men would be predisposed to, as they are exoticized and feminized within the mainstream queer community. Both these representations sharpen the visibility of Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men in the mainstream, while compounding the consumptive power of an especially bourgeois brand of white gay masculinity. For example, older white gay men who desire men of color (labeled chocolate queens in village vocabulary), might find younger Indo-Caribbean gay men appealing, as the trade-off is access to exotic feminized property and youth for the former, while it is access to privilege and power for the latter. Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men, similar to their South Asian Canadian counterparts, are therefore important to the investment of what might be termed sexual capital in the mainstream gay community[11]. According to Vishnu, while such a situation is definitely indicative of the criss-crossing of social vectors in the village identity power grid, it again points to the precarious existence of members of the queer Caribbean community who at times feel they have no choice but to engage, renovate, and manipulate the very imprisoning racialized stereotypes. This suggests that any account of the queer Caribbean-Canadian community should reflect the convoluted politics embedded in biracial relationships, a different experiential base for politicization than that of those members whose experiences are outside this configuration.

Having so few queer Caribbean-Canadians living out of the closet is one reason why so many queer Caribbean-Canadians find themselves initially with partners who are White Euro-Canadians. Brandon, Nisha, Vishnu, and Lucy, who are all from relatively middle-class families, reported that their own families respond differently to their queer identity based on the race and class of their partner. White partners are always seen as less threatening, possibly compensating through race privilege for what is seen to be

[11] Drummond (2005) notes that a South Asian gay man's body and overall "looks" play a significant role in determining his cultural status and sex appeal to white Australian men. The look of the Asian body has the capacity either to attract or deter potential sexual partners; such is the image-driven gay culture in Australia. Undoubtedly, the body becomes a central point around which gay South Asian men in Australia develop and ultimately exist.

threatened sexually. Race and class combined can therefore serve as buffers from the more overt expressions of homophobia on the part of families and communities. Nisha's response about her Indo-Caribbean family in Toronto captures the preference for white partners even within the family structure. She states as follows:

> My parents are really racist when it comes to my partners. Although they were both brought up in Trinidad, I can tell by their tone and body language that they prefer me to be with a white woman rather than a black or worse yet a dark-skinned butch looking black woman. Don't get me wrong, they would prefer if I was not attracted to women at all, but since they don't have a choice they would prefer that I bring home a white lipstick fem partner (Nisha).

A similar sentiment was heard by Lucy who reflected on her own personal preference for white women. Lucy felt that some of her own bias came from the strict color and class boundaries that existed in Trinidad while she was growing up. Lucy grew up as part of the mixed high brown population in Trinidad who distanced themselves from dark-skinned individuals. She tells us:

> As a trans-gendered male-identified female, I only find myself in relationships with white Jewish women since I came out. This is the only group I feel most attracted sexually to. I would be considered high "red" in Trinidad and so this has sunk deep in my psyche. I think because of this upbringing I harbor a white supremacy socialization where all things white are "good" while all things and people black are unattractive and untrustworthy. Quite sick when I think about it! The effect of colonialism on the mindset of even us progressive queers is quite sad! Fanon and Albert Memmi really had something to say that was right about our sick minds! (Lucy).

For Brandon, this further exacerbates the tension between black gay men, as such relationships register as a double liability for the community that responds with overt disgust. Partners must therefore bring to queer Caribbean-Canadians some measure of race or class privilege or leverage with which to counter the homophobic disciplinary tactics of their heteronormative families and community. Brandon hypothesized that, depending on the age of coming out of queer Caribbeans in Canada, families might customize their responses. For example, he felt that there were different levels of homophobic control of younger out sections of the community, as opposed to older sections that are still in the process of coming out. Especially for bisexual men i.e. "men on the down low" in the queer Caribbean-Canadian community, Brandon felt that they are able to perform both queer and straight identities depending on the spaces that they inhabit. While these men are able to position themselves in the queer community, their ambiguity and slippage across identity locations offer some degree of protection from their families and the community.

This was also the case for Roger who had lived in Canada for more than forty-five years. Roger found a niche for himself by playing the part of the eccentric and flamboyant doctor who could never find the right woman. As a member of the Jamaican upper class and having received a first class education in his lifetime, Roger was not harassed or taunted by members of the Jamaican community for not marrying or having any children. His actions were seen as acceptable within the context of his profession and class eccentrics. Roger tells us:

> Since moving to Canada from Jamaica in the 1960s, I have always had to live on the down low…on the margins of the Jamaican/Canadian community. Everyone just refers to me as the oldest bachelor at Jamaican or family social events… but it's like tongue and check because I know they know I am a queer man who loves the arts, opera, or symphonies and I still live with my mother! My profession and social class background however has insolated me and always given me the wiggle room to be quite vocal but at the same time avoid the ugliness of being called out as a batty man or buller man. I get respect so long as everyone continues to respect me for my profession and my Jamaican class background.

Stratification within the queer community

At the same time that queer Caribbeans are engaged in multiple acts of positioning vis-à-vis the white queer community, they also politicize in reference to other ethnic groups within the queer community. The experiences of queer Caribbean-Canadians are also different based on the ethnic relations within this community, especially between Indo and Afro segments. The sexual eroticization of these two segments positions them at opposite ends of the symbolic spectrum (Indos as feminine and Afros as hypermasculine), which implies different (though not always exclusive) experiences and political projects, with the potential for exacerbating the tensions between Indo and Afro segments of the queer Caribbean-Canadian community. A case in point is the effect of the post 9/11 racialized regulation in Toronto's village life, where the emerging category of "brown" into which queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadians are easily collapsed by the mainstream, has expanded the repertoire of signs through which this group is managed. Both Brandon and Vishnu commented that "brown" gay men such as Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men, are now viewed with suspicion and fear. For Vishnu, this stigmatization was evident in the village bathhouse practices, where he was treated as a sexual liability rather than the exotic commodity he had come to expect from the pre 9/11 context. This paradoxical positioning of "brown" as ultra feminine (unthreatening), or dangerously masculine in the post 9/11 context, makes the experiences and politics of Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men even more unique and ambiguous. This makes issues of solidarity and community even more fraught across the spectrum of queer Caribbean-Canadians.

Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men in particular have attempted to harness some degree of visibility within the queer community, even though this struggle for an authentic space is countered by the mainstream culture of fetishization (one way in which Canadian multiculturalism is supposedly operationalized within the queer community). For

example, Vishnu illumined that although there is one entertainment club event that caters to the needs of the queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadian community (Mela), this event emerged as queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadians attempted to mark themselves as distinct from queer Afro-Caribbean-Canadians and queer South Asian Canadians, both categories in which their unique identificatory markers are collapsed and rendered invisible and tentatively inauthentic. Vishnu also observed that the competition among queer groups of various ethnicities is enmeshed with the ways in which the mainstream queer community, co-opted by a corporate agenda, seeks to selectively commodify (or erase) queer ethnicities in ways that reproduce and compound the power of the mainstream.

For example, while South Asian culture was commodified during a Fashion Cares HIV fundraiser (Bollywood Cowboy in 2005), reggae, soca, reggaeton, and dancehall music were banned at a major village club as it was felt that the patrons (predominantly Black lesbians) who listened to these genres of music were not inclined to spend much money at the club's bar. The assumption was that Afro-Caribbeans in particular were not spending lavishly on alcohol as the rest of the mainstream queer community. Angie also reported that one of the lesbian clubs on the outskirts of the gay village would only play dance hall and reggae music late at night when their white patrons were intoxicated. There were complaints about this music if played before midnight. Vishnu also strongly criticized the racialized regulation of village club culture in Toronto, which heavily edits out any black music for fear that it might attract too many queer people of color. The flip side of this, according to Angie, is that Afro-Caribbeans are only made present in ways that are deemed useful to the mainstream queer community, especially as eroticized fetishes. Angie also lamented the systemic denial of black queer achievement in the white queer media, which did not reflect the political stance taken by queer blacks during the 2008 Pride parade celebrations. Visibility for queer people of color therefore is conditioned by a series of checks and balances that cannot threaten, but only reinforce the dominant logic of whiteness as it configures the legitimate expression of queer citizenship.

Queer transnational networks and activism

Queer Caribbeans in Canada have not only carved out a political space for contesting and reorienting the mainstream queer Canadian community, but some have been able to use this political platform to network with Caribbean-based queer and human rights organizations within the region. Carefully negotiating around any neoliberal and neocolonial assumptions of enlightenment and aid, the Caribbean-Canadian queer community has intervened on certain platforms and moments within the region's ongoing and increasingly visible discourse about queer rights. Via Egale, activists in the Caribbean-Canadian queer community, have been able to create linkages for ongoing dialogue with the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), the Caribbean Forum for Liberation of All-sexualities and Genders (CARIFLAG), the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD), and other queer activist organizations in Guyana, Trinidad, and St. Lucia. While this diasporic community has organized and channeled its activism and solidarity through mainstream queer Canadian activist organizations such as Egale, the Caribbean-Canadian queer community remains convinced that local groups must take more ownership of the change process.

Yet, queer activists in the diaspora insist that their Canadian activism must have an impact on the change process in the region. Positioned in the diaspora, respondents like Brandon claim, "I could not justify living in a country (St. Lucia) that criminalized same sex acts unless I wanted to fight to change those laws. I prefer to do my work from Canada." Brandon's activism against homophobia in the region is expressed in a punitive discourse that connects homophobia and the economic livelihood of Caribbean economies. In Jamaica, which he considers to be the epicenter of homosexual violence in the region, Brandon suggests that withholding the tourist dollar is one way of putting pressure on governments that continue to condone homophobia overtly and institutionally. He adds that a Canadian boycott of Jamaican goods and services will also produce similar pressures. Of course, these strategies of battling one form of oppression with another can have ambiguous consequences, especially for groups that are underrepresented, and especially for the resident queer community that might not be afforded any access to representation. In fact, they might become even more target-prone as a result of such pressures. Brandon's suggestion points to the frustration of the Caribbean-Canadian queer community and both the possibilities and limits of the current transnational network.

At the same time queer transnational networks that derive some impulse from the Caribbean-Canadian context are making progress in politicizing the issue as a human rights issue in the Caribbean region, which is countered by a new transnational wave of the religious right. Conservative religious groups in Canada and the United States, which are losing ground in their own liberalizing countries, are increasingly focused on the Caribbean, trying to depoliticize any dialogue about broadening sexual citizenship, advocating for intensified homophobic social regulation and producing a reactive regime policed by hyperconservative attitudes. As an activist within Toronto's Caribbean queer community, Brandon felt that Canada is positioned to play a more positive role by reflecting on some of its supposedly progressive laws and how these might be translated into foreign policy. However, he stressed the need for the queer organizations in the region to have sufficient capability and capacity to approach such a process with tact.

One example of queer transnational networking and activism between Canada and the Caribbean that stands out concerns a campaign that was started in 2007 by the Working Group of the Canadian Caribbean Human Rights Group in conjunction with Egale, called Stop Murder Music.[12] Activists claimed that the songs of anti-gay dancehall artists such as Sizzla and Elephant Man "violate the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act by inciting violence and murder against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified (LGBT) communities."[13] The campaign, supported by a total of twenty human rights organizations in Canada and the Caribbean, called for the removal of the artists' work from music store shelves in Canada and the denial of entry visas to artists espousing hate lyrics against the LGBT communities. This organized effort not only helped to strengthen

[12] For more information on this group's articulation of the campaign and its solidarity network, see http://www.egale.ca/smm/docs/070910_Minister.pdf, downloaded 01/19/09

[13] See Egale's Web site highlights on "Stop Murder Music" http://www.egale.ca/index.asp?lang=E&item=1374, downloaded 01/19/09

solidarity between the marginalized Caribbean-Canadian queer community and the mainstream Canadian queer community by transnationalizing the local Canadian queer discourse, but it also brought more teeth to the regional movement that seemed limited in its power to affect the material violence of dancehall music. The Stop Murder Music campaign which challenged homophobic and transphobic music involved a broad spectrum of international organizations and coalesced around other transnational networks (e.g. Caribbean British) under a human rights discourse.

While the campaign was multipronged in terms of advocacy for legal change, improved networking, financial strategizing, and so on, in Toronto, one of the milestone outcomes of the increased visibility of homophobia in the region as a human rights issue was the successful attempt by Caribbean-Canadian queer activists (via Egale) to obtain refugee status for Jamaican gay activist Gareth Henry in Canada. Henry became the international grand marshal of the Gay Pride parade in 2008 in Toronto. Interestingly, his iconic presence was interpreted by the mainstream white queer media as an indication of a liberal and benevolent Canadian nationalism (the same one that allowed white queer subjects some measure of claims to human rights two decades earlier!), rather than symbolic of the strides of the Caribbean-Canadian queer community to recast and repoliticize the category of "queer Canadian" as one that was not only not white, but at the same time transnational.

At the same time the intervention of Caribbean-Canadian queer activists in the region's queer politics via Egale raises issues about the "colonialistic flavor" of the queer Caribbean diaspora in Canada; it also illuminates a different "Caribbean" that is at stake for the diaspora itself, and which is significant to its identificatory and political discourses within Canada itself. While activists in the diaspora like Brandon acknowledge that they are relatively in a position of privilege, they feel that they are also accountable to their members in the diaspora to politicize salient issues; for example, by debating whether or not the queer diasporic dollar should be invested in homophobic spaces. These activists recognize that their activism and political discourse activate often conflicting tides of change—on the one hand neocolonial tendencies, on the other, transformative anti-homophobic practices. The effect of change is therefore one that the queer diaspora faces with some degree of contention that is even more complicated by the fact that some activists, such as Lucy, insist on the powerlessness of the gay community in places like Trinidad, compared with a supposedly more progressive queer politics in Canada. At time same time, Lucy attributes this problem to the power of the religious right as well as the dominance of an unpoliticized mixed race middle-class queer culture in Trinidad. These strands in the argument enliven transnational queer discourse, as a shared, though at times asymmetrical process, producing a dynamic mix of ambiguities and progressive strides that complicate the very discursive categories of the Caribbean *and* Canada.

Conclusion

This exploratory investigation illumines some of the main issues of study and debate regarding the queer Caribbean diaspora in Toronto, Canada. While it is by no means representative of a homogeneous group of queer Caribbean-Canadians, the data suggests

a complex and uneven matrix of positionalities, politics, and experiences that dot a relatively invisible area of investigation. Yet, these experiences primarily highlight the problems of dealing with sexuality and racialized social disciplining and regulation in Canada and the Caribbean. As a sub-group within the diaspora, this paper shows that these respondents cannot only be viewed as subjects apart from the wider Caribbean diaspora, as they are vulnerable to the multi-faceted workings of Canadian anti-immigrant racism in its most overt and systemic manifestations. However, the respondents also suffer from an added degree of racism, positioned within a sexual minority category in which they are made tentative members on the grounds of their racialized identities.

This double racism as it is effected in the mainstream queer community affects material livelihood issues such as employment access as well as those concerning access to symbolic citizenship, not just in terms of inclusion, but also regarding the entitlement and power to renovate the dominant meanings of "Canadian." The testimonies of the queer Caribbean-Canadians in this paper point to racialized regimes of representation and regulatory practices within Toronto's queer community, which is primarily controlled by the white bourgeois gay male community. The absence of racialized queer bodies and politics in the queer media emerged as a major issue hindering organizing and solidarity. Another important issue that emerged was the politics of race in interpersonal relationships in which queer Caribbean-Canadians are constituted as naïve, subordinate, and undeserving queer citizens, whose membership in Canada's queer community is licensed by white gay male citizens. The urgency of further investigating this much underexplored area of biracial relationships and ethno-sexual adventuring, involving queer Caribbean-Canadians and white queer settler Canadians, should not be read within a discourse of making the former more palatable for integration. Rather, it should be seen as a tense axis about which competing claims to sexual citizenship require critical engagement and re-engineering.

Respondents' emphasis on the gay ghetto's club and entertainment culture and its political events such as the annual Pride parade also illumined the regime of race management in the mainstream queer community, in which various unpalatable aspects of queer Caribbean-Canadian life and politics are edited out, so as to keep this group visible on the margins of queer Canada. The implication is that racialized queer subjects are made absent in mainstream queer spaces, and forced to seek refuge in the closet or in alternative queer spaces, an issue that requires further investigation. This materialist mapping of queerness, while cognizant of the hegemony of whiteness, should also contemplate beyond the binary, to look at the ways in which different racialized and ethnic sections of the queer community frame and activate each other, if even to the end of reifying mainstream social dynamics.

At another level, the paper also identifies the different ways in which Afro and Indo-Caribbeans are positioned by the mainstream queer community, which further exploits ethnic tensions and militates against solidarity. The cursory insertion of queer Caribbean-Canadians into the mainstream fabric of queer life in Toronto therefore reflects the hegemonic ideologies and practices of white gay males' control of queer citizenship,

rather than a modernist metanarrative of rational (white gay male) subjects civilizing helpless racialized queer subjects.

The other jaw of disciplining queer Caribbean-Canadians concerns the regulatory practices of the heteronormative Caribbean community in the region and within the diaspora. Respondents illumined a range of family responses such as shame, denial, exclusion, accommodation, and so on, that moderate and broker membership status. These responses echo Crichlow's (2004) extensive analysis of the ways in which the Caribbean community in Canada polices and regulates same-sex relations in the name of a more morally digestible version of the diaspora in Canada. This paper also illumines how this homophobia serves to prevent solidarity among queer Caribbean-Canadians, instead strengthening their dependence on and therefore vulnerability to the white LGBTQ community. Coupled with racism, homophobia within the Caribbean-Canadian diaspora serves to hypermarginalize queer Caribbean-Canadians to the point where many are forced to live fractured and incoherent realities, living at once in and out of the closet (e.g. men who have sex with men), to manage the atrocities of racism and homophobia combined.

Much more exploration is needed about the everyday lives of queer Caribbean-Canadians to reveal the range of survival practices across classes and ethnicities. While this exploratory investigation illumines the complicated lattice work of identity politics across particular intersecting sites of race, gender, sexuality, and class, the authors recognize that this paper only partially reveals the ways in which issues of social inequality in the Caribbean translate into the diasporic context in Canada. The limited sample size, while spotlighting a more middle-class spectrum, challenges future research to address the discursive construction of working-class and upper-class queer identity by possibly expanding the sample size and investigating issues such as poverty and status in constructing categories such as "queer," "Caribbean," and "Canadian." In addition, though the paper identifies biracial constructions of queer politics, further investigation will be needed to deepen an understanding of the role of white Canadian partners in conditioning these aforementioned categories. It is perhaps by using a more symbolic interactionist approach that it is possible to illumine the micro-level interactions and relations that work against any attempt to impose a unitary category of experience, identity, and political consciousness on queer Caribbean-Canadians.

On a more encouraging note, this paper has highlighted the ways in which some queer Caribbean-Canadians constitute their politics and distinguish themselves as a transnational diaspora. The Stop Murder Music campaign is one such site through which this group is able to canvas support for anti-homophobia activism in the Caribbean, at the same time, attempting to renovate the boundaries of what legitimately qualifies as "queer" and "Canadian." While these circuits of activism are riddled with several complexities and contentious entanglements, some of which concern complicity in neocolonial and neoliberal discourses, they help to activate and energize the activism of LGBTQ groups within the Caribbean. The politics of managing transnational solidarity and activism therefore remains an area of investigation with the potential to transform the actual and experienced realities of those whose very survival depends on it.

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Table 1. Characteristics of the Participants in the Queer Caribbean Canadian Study

Interviewee Pseudonym	Age	Generation	Gender Self-Identified	Ethnicity Self-Identified	Social Class	Occupation	Country of Birth	Length of Time in Canada	Orientation Self-Identified	Living Arrangement	Family Structures
Angie	37	2nd	Female	Mixed African Caribbean & African	Upper middle class	Social Worker	England	25 years	Out Lesbian	Lives with white partner	Close connection to family No children
Lucy	35	2nd	Transgendered biologically a woman presents masculine	Mixed Red African, White	Lower middle class	Lawyer/ Social Worker	Trinidad	27 years	Out Butch Lesbian	Lives alone white partner	Close connection to family No children
Brandon	33	1st	Male	Mixed African Chinese/ Syrian	Upper Middle class	Community Advocate Lawyer	St Lucia	11 years	Queer Man	Lives alone no partner	Close connection to family No children
Vishnu	36	1st	Male	Indo-Trinidadian	Middle class	Professor	Trinidad	9 years	Queer Male	Lives alone white partner	Close connection to family No children
Nisha	28	2nd	Female	Indo-Canadian-Trinidadian	Lower Middle Class	Graduate Student	Trinidad	28 years	Questioning Lesbian	Lives with parents white partner	Close connection to family No children
Robert	23	2nd	Male	African Caribbean	Lower Middle Class	Artist	Canada	23 years	Bisexual Male	Lives alone no partner	Distant connection to mother & sibling Has a son
Crystal	27	2nd	Female	African Jamaican-Canadian	Middle Class	Graduate Student	Canada	27 years	Proud Lesbian	Lives with Jamaican partner	Close to mother distant from sibling & relatives No children
Lisa	47	1st	Female	Jamaican	Middle Class	Nurse	Jamaica	25 years	Closeted Lesbian	Lives with children has white partner	Close to mother living in Jamaica Has three children
Roger	66	1st	Male	African Jamaican	Upper Middle Class	Retired physician	Jamaica	45 years	Closeted homosexual man	Living on the down low with mother	Never married Close to mother No children
Vanessa	21	2nd	Female	Canadian-Dominican	Middle Class	Undergrad Student	Canada	21 years	Out Lesbian	Living alone no partner	Close to mother & sibling No children

Note: All names used above are pseudonym's. We have tried to keep the interviewees anonymous when constructing the matrix. All First generation interviewees are born in the Caribbean and migrated to Canada after age 12. All second generation were born in Canada of Caribbean parent(s) or arrived in Canada before age 4.

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Queer Returns: Human Rights, the Anglo-Caribbean and Diaspora Politics

Rinaldo Walcott

Abstract

> This history breeds the need for activating an ethical imperative atrophied by gradual distancing from the narrative of—progress colonialism/capitalism. This is the argument about cultural suturing, learning from below to supplement with the possibility of the subjectship of rights (Spivak 2004, 551).

In the spring of 2008, Thomas Glave published the anthology *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. The book has been greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm, and rightly so; its reception has been hailed as a singularly important moment in the politics and debates of Caribbean non-heterosexual identities and practices. Glave has been meticulous in documenting the responses to the book, which reportedly took him about six years to compile, with some works translated into English for the first time. *Our Caribbean* is a pan-Caribbean anthology; most of the languages of the region are represented in the book and it consists of prose fiction alongside critical essays as well as personal essays.

Introduction

For full disclosure, I contributed an essay to the anthology. [i] All authors are given a nation-state designation in the book even if they have not resided in that nation-state for most of their life (for example Dionne Brand, Trinidad; Makeda Silvera, Jamaica; while some authors are given two or three designations which seem to be based on the geo-political territory their writing covers, but also hints at nation-state belonging (Walcott, Barbados/Canada; Audre Lorde, Grenada/Barbados/US) and therein lies the first set of basic difficulties with the work of such an anthology. How does such an anthology negotiate diaspora and in particular second order diasporas? Despite such difficulties, difficulties that I consider significant even if basic, reviewers have generally glowed about the anthology, mostly seeing it as a very important "coming out party" for Caribbean queers. The book is read as an important plank in the struggle for rights in the region.

For example, Dr. Cathie Koa Dunsford (2008) wrote a glowing review of the anthology calling it must-read material and urging colleagues to take it up as a course text.[ii] Most importantly, she understands the anthology as taking up Audre Lorde's work and project and extending it into our present conditions of human existence. Dunsford's review champions the anthology as a subaltern truth-telling that brings to the table voices of those not often heard and sometimes never heard. Her one caution is that the anthology would have benefited from more local regional voices—that is, voices in place in the region currently—and fewer "expats", in other words, the anthology suffers from the usual problem of those in the diaspora speaking back to "home". Dunsford's claim points back to the difficulty of how second order diasporas are placed in such conversations and relations. But still she reminds that the anthology now sets in place an important foundation for those still living in the region to build on. A kind of developmental model is immediately present in her comments and yet her comments also point to the difficult politics and ethics of the undertaking tackled by Glave. In other shorter and less nuanced reviews, the developmental model is explicitly clearer.[iii] It is the twin problematics of ideas of development and its metaphors and the ethics of queer returns "home" that I try to probe in this essay. I want to suggest that my argument is more complex and complicated than who gets to speak and especially what they get to say.

Thomas Glave has emerged as an important figure in Anglo-Caribbean queer organizing and politics. He quietly helped to found J-FLAG (Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-sexuals and Gays) and then published a quite trenchant and daring letter calling out Jamaica on its nationally instituted homo-hatred ("Toward a Nobility of the Imagination: Jamaica's Shame [An Open Letter to the People of Jamaica]").[iv] More recently he has again challenged the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Bruce Golding, on homophobic comments made in Britain (Calabash Literary Festival, May, 27, 2008). Glave cuts an interesting and arresting figure—a soft-spoken, dreadlock wearing artist/intellectual who would easily pass as the embodiment of the stereotypical hyper-sexual Rasta man, were he not gay. But important for my purposes here, Glave is also a second order diasporic figure—born in the US of Jamaican parents and having lived in Jamaica and the US, he travels between both and mostly seems to claim a Jamaican identity (Jamerican). I have spent this brief time on Glave as a form of personal analytical distancing in an attempt to

think through the working of diasporic ethics and the claims of those belonging to the diaspora to participate in "home" affairs. I see my own ambivalent participation as similar to, if much more limited and circumscribed than, Glave's and many others' deep involvement in the region. It is at the moment of participation and the types and modes of participation that something crucial happens to how place, identity, politics and ethics are constituted, played out and positioned or articulated.

My own forays into working around queer sexual politics have proved equally troubling, perplexing and complicated. For example, recent involvement with Stop the Murder Music Campaign (Canada) serves as a backdrop to both participating in activism surrounding the region and simultaneously to challenging North American queer racism that seeks to imagine both the invisibility of black gays and lesbians and our incapability of speaking and acting in our own interests.[v] But even with a campaign like Stop the Murder Music one finds oneself inhabiting a Caribbean authenticity that might or might not be legitimate depending upon the various contexts of invocating Caribbean-ness to substantiate speech and actions. I thus speak as an ambivalent "extension" of the Anglo-Caribbean collectivity conditioned by a diasporic experience in North America positioned between resisting racism, homo-hatred, and white homonormative racism on the one hand and attempting to frame lives beyond those dynamics on the other. And in this regard I speak among others whose practices, desires and politics inform my own. Yet, I want to acknowledge the trip wires of speaking from here to there and to sound out what a possible ethics of speech when sounding off might sound like.

This essay then is informed by a particular politics of representation that moves beyond studies of representation of identity to query the representation of arguments and claims made on and in behalf of subordinated identities, in this case queer Anglo-Caribbean identities. Insofar as I query the claims of rights being made on behalf of Anglo-Caribbean queer identities, I also attempt to point to the trouble of speaking as a Caribbean person not living in the region and simultaneously to the ways in which my speech and thus my queries are informed by a politics of speaking back to white queer homonormativity in North America. This essay lies somewhere between the claim to speak in concert with Caribbean queers both in and out of the region and with black North American queers who must refuse the idea and or notion that we are in need of queer development from white queers. Put another way, this essay is about the ways in which ideas, in particular my own, are caught between white queer homonormative racism and Anglo-Caribbean homo-hatred, at the same time that I attempt to offer a critique of rights discourse. In short this is tricky but necessary business if progressive political struggles seek to do more than produce proliferations of identities and instead work towards the production of nation-states where life is livable on terms which produce human-ness in all its complicated diversities without state judgment and or sanction.

In this essay then I move from North America to the Anglo-Caribbean and back to North America as an indication of the ways in which both the experience of diaspora and an ethics of diaspora might provide a space from which to speak and make a politics present and/or appear. In this regard I draw on the queer ideas of Èdouard Glissant (1997) to articulate what I call homopoetics. This homopoetics allows me to read across various

spaces and texts and to make some truth claims. More specifically, homopoetics allows me to draw on regional and diasporic flows to engage discourses of homophobia and "rights talk" as those discourses and ideas circulate in different sites, building a narrative of the queer Caribbean and a homophobic Caribbean simultaneously.

Further, I am influenced by the work of Sarah Ahmed's (2006) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, in which she writes the following: "Now in living a queer life, the act of going home, or going back to the place I was brought up, has a certain disorienting effect" (11). Her insights on phenomenological experiences in terms of queer orientations help me to problematize how returns home inform my practices and politics of queerness in the diaspora. Significantly, this work is about how a queer diasporic Anglo-Caribbean might speak to the project of "rights talk" and homophobia, as a displaced subject backwards and forwards, in and out of the region. Put another way this essay is in part concerned with the ethical responsibilities and dilemmas of diaspora subjects as subjects who also speak back to somewhere from another and certain place. Like Ahmed, this speaking back for me is disorienting, but simultaneously it is an ethical orientation of what a diaspora subjecthood, location and position might contribute to a politics of the possible and the future—dilemmas notwithstanding. The privilege of being a North American queer who can claim the region, speak within it and with it and remain on the edge of it poses an ethical dilemma in the face of numerous political desires, especially when one questions the limits of rights.

Queer returns

Since the eruptions around dancehall signalled by Buju Banton's "Boom Bye Bye" in the 1990s (1993 to be exact), the Anglo-Caribbean has been cast as one of the most homophobic places in the world—with Jamaica as its epicentre. In the midst of this homophobia, Anglo-Caribbean queers have found themselves the objects of rescue fantasies, both real and imagined, around the Western world.[vi] Between the vulgar homophobia of verbal harassment and actual death in Jamaica, and the milder ridicule in other places of the region, which requires queerness to always appear queer and or act out of the ordinary, thus affirming heterosexual as ordinary, a certain kind of urgency for activating a queer politics and movement is now present. But that present also has a past.

I have written elsewhere, in concert with Kobena Mercer's (1996) claim that "sexual politics is the Achilles heal of black liberation" (116), that Fanon's claim of no homosexuality in the Antilles opens up possibilities for thought on the subject.[vii] Mercer's insight is an attempt to wrestle with Fanon's claim of the absence of homosexuality in the Antilles, as Fanon is positioned in the politics and narratives of black liberation struggles. My rejoinder in concert with Mercer is, at the least, to point to how Fanon notices homosexuality among Antilleans in Paris and attempts to think it originates there. So if no homosexuality exists in the Antilles it can still be acquired when movement or travel happens. Such an acquisition does not make the acts of homosexuality and being Antillean any less valid. But what it does open up is what can and must be accounted for once the status is seen or acknowledged. Fanon (1967) finds and is able to recognize homosexual Antilleans in Paris; he knows the signs of homosexuality if only we are to believe that he learned them only in France. But he

already undermines such generosity by alerting us to, at the least, gender trouble coded as potential non-heterosexuality that he terms "godmothers" in his famous footnote number 21 (180). Were we to read Fanon in ahistorical terms his comments open up the possibility for second order diasporas to be the authoritative speakers on Caribbean homosexuality since it is acquired abroad. However, there is much evidence to prove Fanon faulty in his thinking on this topic. What Fanon does not consider in his footnote are the modes of suppression (heteronormativity) and the modes of expression ("men dressed like women") in defining or at least marking homosexuality in and out of the Antilles.

Moving to Caribbean extensions or diaspora by another name, in Hilton Als's (1996) memoir *The Women* he offers a richer interior perspective of the ways in which some Caribbean people approach non-heterosexual expressivity. He writes: "Being an auntie man enamored of Negressity is all I have ever known to be" (9). He further states: "I have expressed my Negressity by living, fully, the prescribed life of an auntie man—what Barbadians call a faggot" (9). Als writes into being his queerness as an expression of his Barbadian family's circumstances in 1970s New York. Concerning his mother he writes:

> She had one friend who was an auntie man. Unlike other women who knew him as well, my mother didn't find her friend's sexual predilection confusing or anger-provoking. Besides, auntie men were not mysterious beings to her; in Barbados, most ostensibly straight men had sex with them, which was good, since that left women alone for a while. During the course of her friendship with Grantly the auntie man, she focused on him. Had she had access to other people besides her children, lover, employer, doctors, she might have been a fag hag, fond of auntie men, music, movies (29).

The auntie man occupies a very specific place and function as long as his masculinity is recognizable as a specific type of "queer" masculinity. Als recalls the insult of faggot in his family as a disciplinary practice or what Sylvia Wynter (1995) calls "behavior orienting practices"[viii] to keep him in line as a product of contradictory and ambivalent forces in Barbadian and Caribbean social relations, in particular the disciplinary control of matrilineal family structures and the fear of women not adequately raising boy children to be "real men". The insult in this case is a disciplinary orienting reminder of normative manliness. Importantly, too, Als's work calls to mind how the Anglo-Caribbean travels and how it hybridizes and changes in different spaces, even when specific and recognizable insults continue. The work of the insult is crucial to understanding some of the claims about Anglo-Caribbean homophobia I would assert.

Extending the above view, in *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, Didier Eribon (2004) suggests that insults work to constitute queer community. His insight is premised on a reading of the insult that is both internal and external to queer communities. Eribon points out that one subset of insults is caricature in its many forms. As Eribon concedes, and I think that he is correct in his assertion, "gay identity is always forced to remember its origins in insult" (79) which means that queers are never able to leave the insult

behind. I would argue that what contemporary "rights talk" desires is to leave the insult behind, but the insult as function and practice might be the orienting device that queers require to turn identification into community. The work of the insult then separates and disciplines, but it is also community constituting. Thus, the work of the insult can also be orienting, to recall Ahmed.

Let us turn to Wesley Crichlow (2004) for another orienting moment. In his essay "History, (Re)Memory, Testimony and Biomythography", he in part charts his personal history of coming to terms with being a "buller man". With a nod to Audre Lorde and her use of Zami, Crichlow details the double-edgedness of reclaiming buller man as culturally specific to tell a story of pain and humiliation (186); his use of the term, by speaking to the ways it is an insult or meant to humiliate, is at the same time powerful as he claims it to render himself a powerful speaking subject in Caribbean culturally specific and historical terms—a powerful act of self-naming. What is useful about Crichlow's insights is the manner in which across a range of social, cultural and institutional practices he plots in a manner similar to Als the attempts to make a Caribbean masculinity that is counter to anything that the "buller man" might represent. The type of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity that Crichlow details makes the visibility of the assumed buller man's presence in the culture clear and present as its other. But that Crichlow is able to mobilize and use against its intent (an intent to harm) the buller man to critically engage Anglo-Caribbean culture is in part Eribon's claim above.

Without suggesting an apology for homophobia in the Caribbean and its extensions—there exist places in the European West where Queer Theory and queer bodies meet hostility, even if there is a sense of gay and lesbian "rights talk" put into play in the governmental sphere at the level of the state. I return to Didier Eribon (2004), who writes as follows:

> In 1995, the year of the first enormous French Gay Pride, editorials in the press, from the right and the left, gave free reign to sentiments that can only be qualified as phobic. Gay Pride, they said, was a danger to democracy; the homosexual "separatism" that such events revealed threatened to "destroy the architecture of the nation,"…Newspapers went on to…insult the field of lesbian and gay studies, which apparently represented a danger to knowledge, to culture, to thought and to the university (xv).

Eribon's chronicling of such French responses to mass public expressions of homosexuals in the public sphere is, I repeat, not an excuse for the Caribbean. It is rather a challenge for all of us to think differently about the question of state institutions and "rights talk" for queers. Yet there are no rescue missions launched in and on behalf of French queer development from the rights-loving West.

For me then insult is an opening to a conversation of sorts in the Anglo-Caribbean and their extensions. The insult is, as some Bajans put it, in refusing to utter or say the word "homosexual", which works to help to produce a kind of queer subjecthood. Some men

and women in Barbados are thus said to be "that way" or "so". In the poetics of such speech acts is an opening up of a poetics of language, of talk and of thought and thus the origins of a homopoetics rooted in the queer modernities of the Caribbean region. Furthermore such unspeakability is in part the acknowledgement of a presence and a presence that is understood as occupying a place among other kinds of presences, even if not spoken as such. To be "so" or "that way" is to be poetically called into existence—ambivalent though it may be.

Homopoetics: Lives in-between

The work of diaspora and or Caribbean extensions outside the archipelago and the ethics of speaking from "away" can draw on the poetics of the region to speak back in ways that ethically inform a politics of the possible there and here. In *Caribbean Discourse*, Édouard Glissant (1989) writes the following: "I define as a free or natural poetics any collective yearning for expression that is not opposed to itself either at the level of what it wishes to express or at the level of the language that it puts into practice" (120). Glissant begins to formulate a notion of poetics that I find useful for beginning the work of formulating a black diasporic homopoetics within the Americas. I am interested in the ways in which theories and studies of queerness, discourses of sexuality—especially gay, lesbian and bi-sexual—work within Afro-American society to constitute conversations which work at the level of the ephemeral so as to produce communities of sharing and political identifications across a range of local, national and international boundaries of desire and sex.

I am thus similarly interested in the bodies that circulate across and within the Atlantic and Caribbean zones of the Americas and the places and spaces those bodies occupy—imaginary and otherwise. I am interested in how these circulations get re-cast as rights talk and what might be at stake in such re-castings. This interest in thinking the black homosexual of the Americas or what I will call "the homopoetics of relation" is particularly urgent and sensitive as HIV/AIDS comes to be a significant defining feature of the region of the Americas we call the Caribbean, simultaneously alongside the global claim of the region's exaggerated homophobia, as exemplified in Jamaica's dancehall global reach. At the same time, this homopoetics is concerned with the relation and non-relation between the epidemic of HIV/AIDS among African Americans, its devastating impact on the African continent and its increasing impact among black Canadian and African Canadians. In other words, Africa's diaspora and the imagined homeland are both at stake. Glissant is interested in movement, and I am too. I do not seek to queer Glissant, instead I work with Glissant's rather queer theories and insistences to make links, if also ephemeral, concerning the relation or non-relation of thought as an exercise in making the political appear.

Specifically, Glissant (1989) claims two kinds of poetics: natural and forced. He proceeds to more fully define natural poetics as follows:

> Even if the destiny of a community should be a miserable one, or its existence threatened, these poetics are the direct result of activity within the social body. The most daring or the most artificial experiences, the

> most radical questioning of self-expression, extend, reform, clash with a given poetics. This is because there is no incompatibility here between desire and expression. The most violent challenge to an established order can emerge from a natural poetics, when there is continuity between the challenged order and the disorder it negates (*Caribbean Discourse*, 120).

Glissant offers in his articulation of a natural or free poetics a method for "reading" and debate that might be useful for thinking blackness, queerness and claims of homophobia within and across black diasporic communities in the Americas. His natural poetics is an orienting device of sorts. It is a method of movement, it is a method of relation and it is a method of thought. The movement is not merely one of bodies but ideas as well. The relation is not merely one of identity, it is politics, and it is ethics. The thought is not merely one of ideas and speech acts, but it is a queer insistence or as Glissant puts it in another sense, it is a "that that" (*Poetics of Relation*)—which means it is an incitement to discourse.

The archipelago of the Caribbean is not merely a geographic space, but the Caribbean as an entity extends beyond its geography as a global reality—it is an extension in time and space, into other places and spaces. For those of us who have any relation to the region (and that is all of us in the postcolonial modern world), which Sylvia Wynter (1992) has called "the archipelago of poverty", commitments can be complex and contradictory.[ix] Significantly for those of us who are non-heterosexual, those commitments and identifications pose difficult dilemmas concerning political expression and demands, cultural desires and identifications and relationships between place, nation and space—especially in the extensions.

For example, Jacqui Alexander (2005), a long-time commentator on questions of Caribbean sexuality and the state, best articulates the relation of place, space, politics, expression and placement from or in a Caribbean extension. She writes in the essay "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: Feminism, Tourism, and the State in the Bahamas":

> I write as an outsider, neither Bahamian national nor citizen and thus outside the repressive reach of the Bahamian state, recognizing that the consequences of being disloyal to heterosexuality fall differently on my body than on the bodies of those criminalized lesbians in the Bahamas for whom the state has foreclosed any public expression of community…I write as an outlaw in my own country of birth… (*Pedagogies of Crossing*, 27).

The sentiment that Alexander so cogently articulates is one that begs for an interstitial analysis, an analysis of the between and the afar, one of movement. Alexander admits that she writes in the company of a regional and global feminist movement and political formation of which Bahamian and Caribbean women are a part. This claim of Alexander's is an important one because it pushes beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and more specifically the state, to bring into sight different political formations as it

simultaneously confronts the state's management and criminalization of certain sexual practices. It is from the between and the afar that Relation is possible and that a homopoetics might be uttered. Diaspora furnishes one aspect of the structure of Relation as a moment of the afar that enables the political speech act of homopoetics that might bring us near or into Relation.

The *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant (1997) claims is an extension of *Caribbean Discourse*, "a reconstituted echo or a spiral retelling" (16). I read both texts as the impossible unspeakable spoken of the creole Americas. The impossibility of speaking the creole Americas is more about US regional imperial hegemony than it is about either a conceptual claim or an empirical material reality. Glissant in my view, not unlike his critics the creoliste (Confiant, Chamoiseau), comes closest to uttering the Truth of the Americas and its creoleness. Similarly, one might make the leap from Glissant's creoleness to arguments about queerness as a relation of non-relation to Africa, the colonial legacy and the postcolonial condition of imposition and disappointment and its sexualized orienting behaviours.

Why the queer ideas of Glissant? He writes as follows:

> Creolization, one of the ways of forming a complex mix—and not merely a linguistic result—is only exemplified by its processes and certainly not by the contents on which these operate…We are not prompted solely by the defining of our identities but by their relation to everything possible as well—the mutual mutations generated by this interplay of relations…

In his ideas rest the links to help us think about the melancholic morass of Caribbean homophobia and simultaneously its assumed heteropatriarchy along with "rights talk". The debates taking place in the region and its extensions concerning homophobia are only so banal in that feminist insights, many of them homopoetic (just recall Lorde's Zami or Crichlow's buller man, or Als's auntie man), still occupy an edge in politics and thought—in political thought and organizing. My surprise that feminism occupies the edge in the queer "rights talk" debate in the Anglo-Caribbean and its extensions tells me something about the work to be done and Dunsford's desire to see Lorde's work carried forward in Glave's anthology.

In the extensions much is possible including the production of what Glissant terms "the chaotic network of Relation and not in the hidden violence of filiations" (*Poetics of Relation*, 144). Are Caribbean cultures and their extensions more homophobic than others? The obvious answer is no. Yet, as one reads the Human Rights Watch Report (2004) "Hated to Death: Homophobia, Violence and Jamaica's HIV/AIDS Epidemic", the question hovers for me like a hammer about to strike. In such a context, questions of liberation and rights seem clearly crucial. And, significantly, identities also appear to be at stake since the violence unleashed is specifically targeted at identities called into being through the very violence that seeks to make them non-existent. Glissant writes: "The ruins of the Plantation have affected American cultures all around" (72)—and such

violence animates the complexities of identification on questions and practices of liberation. So, for example, every August 1, I hover between Toronto's Caribana celebrations in honour of Emancipation Day and Montreal's *Divers/Citié* celebrations in honour of contemporary queer subjecthood. I am caught between "the pleasures of exile" and the ethical demands of diaspora privileges to utter truth claims concerning black and queer identities and possibilities, and their conjoined existence in my life; which is to hover in the gaps, spaces and crevices of the Caribbean's multiple and contradictory inheritances of its queer formations, queer realities, materialities, identities and sexual practices.

Against Rights: A revision of sorts

The story of the last forty years of queer organizing in the West is one that has now been fundamentally reduced to a story of rights. What Miriam Smith (1999) calls "rights talk", the phrase I have been using, has dominated the ways in which queers think about themselves within the nation-state.[x] But "rights talk" has also become the model upon which the template for queer "liberation" across the globe now unfolds. The year 2009 marks the fortieth anniversary of Stonewall, the now mythic signifier of the modern gay and lesbian movement in North America, which has come to be characterized as the origins of the contemporary movement for queers globally. While the impact of North American and Western European queer organizing cannot be denied, its global impact as a template for liberation needs to be cautiously and suspiciously viewed, especially among its Western poor cousins in the Caribbean basin. Stonewall as an origin story works as a narrative in a very specific fashion. The narrative goes something like this: first there was queer repression; second there was gay rebellion and liberation; third there was rights talk; and now we/queers in the Western world are free and full citizens (with marriage in Canada, Spain, etcetera."[xi]

Such normative queer history posits gay liberation as infancy and rights talk as adulthood and maturity. In such a trajectory people of colour, Caribbean people, people from the global south are, according to the Western historians, sociologists, political scientists, cultural critics, literary critics and so on, still at the sexual liberation stage (if even there)—at the childhood stage. The undertones of some reviews of Glave's anthology hint as much. This developmental understanding of the place of people of the global south in the modern lesbian and gay movement is modelled on a notion that they/we are just now "coming out" and therefore still exist in some Neanderthal state of sexual repression and underdevelopment—a progress narrative if there ever was one. Thus in book after book that chronicles the queer history of the movement over the last thirty years, people of the global south arrive at the literal end of the discussion as the last set of persons and bodies to come into their queer-ness. This enduring coloniality of queer life deliberately positions queers of the global south as needing a helping hand from the North Atlantic that is most times not about genuine struggle to build community but about as Spivak (2004) puts it in "Righting Wrongs", "that they must be propped up" (542).

I want to convey my ambivalence about rights talk as a mode of citizen-making for sexual minorities and non-heterosexuals. But I also want to point to a certain kind of

insidious language of tolerance and niche-making that robs social movements of their potential to more deeply transform the nation-state and the disciplinary apparatus of citizenship. In liberal democratic societies, citizenship is the terrain over which governing is most aptly contested. Thus any real and sustained changes to citizenship have an impact on all regardless of gender, sexuality, class, and so on. Queer rights to citizenship, then, must and should be a fundamental priority, but how those rights are attained are crucial for their sedimentation and cementedness to the nation-state. How these rights are attained have become crucial for what kind of human we might and can become beyond the present expansion of what Wynter (2003) calls the "ethnoclass" of Western bourgeois society.[xii]

While Stonewall is credited as the origin story of the modern gay and lesbian movement—and it is clear that Stonewall represents a significant and fundamental shift in queer self-assertiveness in North America—I want to offer a slight but different shift in reading the history of the movement. In my slight revision, I want to suggest that the advent of HIV/AIDS is the moment that captures the real energies made possible by the outpouring of the carnal pleasures that Stonewall unleashed. Stonewall was queer sexual liberation, alongside heterosexual liberation, but HIV/AIDS was citizen-making; the distinction is important. HIV/AIDS worked to produce a very particular and specific queer subjecthood. It was a subject who was sick and diseased in a fashion different from how homosexuality as illness had been previously conceived (even though in some people's view one illness led to the other) in the "eventful moment" of AIDS. Thus it is in the realm of sickness and death that a very specific queer subjecthood comes into being. This queer subject also becomes a rights-seeking subject. It is my argument, then, that Stonewall was not the central route through which a modern queer citizenship took hold. Rather it was in the initial impetus/moment of AIDS in which a "proto-queer citizen" was forced to react and respond to the "stealing" of his carnal pleasures that rights talk and citizen-making became a queer project of self-hood and thus state citizenship. It is in that moment and distinction that my ambivalence lies in relation to rights talk concerning sexual minorities and non-heterosexuals.

Similarly, in the Caribbean region, rights talk is being produced in the contexts of HIV/AIDS programmes and services. Death and its aftereffects are playing a significant role in the desire for "rights". Let me pose a few questions. What does it mean to claim rights in a moment of crisis? What does it mean to claim rights in the context of death? What does the claiming of rights under such conditions do to the exercise of those rights? What kinds of subjects are made when rights are claimed under such circumstances? While I cannot answer all those questions I must say that we can glean a cautionary tale from what rights talk has produced for "post-rights" queer people in North America. These "post-rights" queer people measure their citizenship in the exact and minute terms of heterosexual citizenship. Any deviation from the heterosexual state norm is considered a lack in equal citizenship. Thus, the production of homonormativity does not just mirror heteronormativity, it also constitutes a knowable and therefore consumer population or niche that is and can be internally and externally policed and governed. This is something we must all think very carefully about, since I would argue that equality as a concept does not necessarily mean same treatment same measures.

Tracy Robinson (2003), much like Alexander, raises the question of rights as a question for Caribbean feminist thought and practice. In her discussion, rights citizenship comes under close scrutiny and Robinson contends as follows:

> The renewal of a meaningful discourse about citizenship in the Caribbean will show that, notwithstanding the gender neutrality of many citizenship laws in the Caribbean and the language of equality implied in Caribbean constitutions, men remain the paradigm of citizen and, in significant measure, women are included as citizens through their relationship to men (232).

Such feminist insights on citizenship have much to lend to conversations and debates on queer citizenship. It is my contention in the remainder of this essay that North American lesbian and gay citizenship has mirrored that of heterosexual citizenship but that even to achieve such it had to produce itself as a consuming and white male citizenship, at least in the popular imaginary. Robinson's discussion of how rights and citizenship both congeal and at the same time part ways is useful for debates concerning gay and lesbian citizenship as well. As she writes "the liberal version of citizenship as a bundle of rights, are misconceived if in the first instance we view rights as having some indubitable meaning, stabilized in law, that we can then quantify in degrees of personhood" (242). Nonetheless, Robinson "does not disavow rights discourse" (242) and I would suggest that my argument that follows is not disavowal either but a caution about rights and identities or what she calls personhood.

Rights talk then tends to reproduce the big "S" state with its various inequalities. By this I mean that rights talk provides space for elites within states to self-express; in the global liberal democratic south such self-expression is definitely viable as well; but it might be argued that rights talk does not work for the poor; rights talk often works to produce and police sexuality on singular terms forcing sexual minorities into a one size fits all model; rights talk will often produce space for those who are mobile in this newer version of globalization to enjoy their privileges across different spaces (as we see with the continuing controversies about queer cruises throughout the Caribbean); in short, rights talk comes with benefits, but those benefits in no way threaten the hegemony of state organization nor force the state to change its fundamental disciplinary apparatus of citizenship. Instead rights talk most often asks that queer citizenship mirror heterosexual citizenship. Heteronormativity and homonormativity collude in policing sexually desiring bodies, practices and communities in a tacit "sexual contract" with the state. A homopoetics of selfhood is not possible under those terms. The complexities of creole selves must be forcibly submerged, discredited and even deemed deviant.

The Canadian queer sociologist Gary Kinsman (2001) provides a nuanced reading of how the nation-state can work for and against sexual minority political desires. Kinsman analyzes the various ways in which state policies and narratives create complex and shifting positions of exclusion and inclusion. Simultaneously, he is also clear that much queer organizing in the Canadian context reproduces the inclusion/exclusion model for a

range of tolerated and not tolerated identities and sexual minority identities. Kinsman points out that a systematic study of state formation would point to the ways in which various forms of oppression are embedded in the making of the state. Drawing on queer legal theorist Carl Stychin, Kinsman writes about conceding to some state practices in a war of position: "According to his insightful investigations of the intersections of nation, sexual identity, and rights discourse, … state formation may be able to address social differences through its recognition of difference and tolerance of diversity" (209–210). However, Kinsman is intent on proving with caution how modern state formation is an anti-queer project even when it appears to include queers. He adds the following:

> This does not mean, however, that lesbians and gay men have not been able to exert agency and win gains within these state relations. Hegemony has never been total or secure. We have made important gains, but these gains have been limited (210).

Kinsman's analysis is informed by a radical critique of the ways in which the market or late capitalism has had an impact on the formation of the nation-state and thus the sometimes partial toleration of once reviled identities. Dennis Altman's (2002) celebration of the "global gay" is often a tourist/consuming queer.[xiii] Such a queer keeps colonial capitalist relations in place. Kinsman's analysis suggests that toleration, rights talk or the social and political gains that have been made are not sufficient. Thus he concludes as follows:

> In the end, we need to organize against the state form itself, which is based on constructing a series of relations that stand over and against people in our everyday lives, and that actively prevent us from gaining democratic control over the social circumstances of our lives (227).

Kinsman's insights on Canadian nation-state formation as a practice of oppression that is often mirrored in lesbian and gay political organizing itself, is important given where I write from and the ways in which such lesbian and gay organizing has often happened in the face of ignoring critiques from queers of colour.

Conclusion: After rights, what?

Thus, if we return to the developmental model we see that what is at stake is an assumption on the parts of both heteronormative and homonormative constituents that the extension of rights is the primary way in which queers might enter full citizenship. While many are familiar with the problem of rights and how rights work, the desire for them still remains a modern phenomenon. Rights must not only be granted but the granting of rights must be enforced. And even when rights are enforced there is no guarantee that attitudes will change. Thus, what we get in the context of the juridical reordering of queer life is a wholesale acceptance of the status quo of social, political and cultural organization of the society. But this should not surprise us for queers are as desirous of the heteronormative dream as anyone else. Thus, in effect homonormativity comes to mirror heteronormativity not primarily in its organization but in its desire to reproduce

the privileges of the colonial/imperial nation-state in its various manoeuvres to retain its hegemony globally.

But the truth of the matter is that public reaction to queers, as an imagined constituency—that is a population—remains volatile, even hostile.[xiv] Toleration can very quickly turn into intolerance. Thus toleration is dependent upon pleasing those who have extended it to you. But what is most important for me is that the global south remains conceptually outside the category of lesbian and gay as articulated in the North Atlantic. Thus the insinuation that queers in the global south are still in the infancy of the movement is not as surprising as it might at first appear. Such a conceptual framework in the literature runs parallel with the popular representation of queers generally as white, middle class and Western. And yet it is queers of the global south who continue to keep sexuality in flux, often offering some of the most provocative ways of re-imagining what sexual minority practices might look like and what kinds of politics might be required to secure those practices: think of the much maligned down-low as one such case of keeping sexuality and its attendant identities in flux.

The question becomes: Under what conditions might social movement happen? As I suggested earlier, the contemporary gay and lesbian rights movement in the North Atlantic owes a debt to the enormous tragedy of early AIDS deaths. Those deaths were characterized by a public sphere backlash to the carnal pleasures of the late 1960s and 1970s sexual liberation movements. In the moment of backlash politics and the threat and misunderstanding of HIV/AIDS, queers were forced to secure methods through which they would not be forced back into "the closet". The range of instances, which can be catalogued as health care assurances, insurance policies and health benefits, estate law and partner/civil agreements, all combined to make use of death and illness to reform state practices. All those reforms however mirrored those of heterosexual-state sanctioned practices. These reforms did not launch any profound rethinking of the role of the state in sexual matters. Thus queers emerged as a marketing niche for a range of capitalist and state practices. Rights through illness are a tricky business. It is no wonder then that most often queer rights in the North Atlantic are linked to consumption and the mythical pink dollar. The question remains: can or should this method of rights talk work as a template for the Anglo-Caribbean? Queers became tolerated as a market not as sexual beings. As Wynter (2003) would put it, merely a new genre of the human[xv], which can only be but dissatisfying in terms of how modernity and its motives have structured human life.

While a case can be made and has been made for the Caribbean as the engine of Western modernity—its plantations, the modes of freedom and unfreedom that characterized the region, the multicultural citizenry of the Haitian revolution, the post-Emancipation shifts in racial demographics and cultural forms, sharing, borrowing and mixing on numerous levels (to name a few)—the Caribbean remains shut out of the West as a contributor to rethinking modern citizenship and the work citizenship does, both pleasing and disappointing at the same time. Let me suggest that as the Anglo-Caribbean queer movement hitches its future to the promise of rights that the liberal democratic nation-

states of the region currently deny, the conceptual and actual flaws of modern nation-states become even more searingly apparent.

If, as I have suggested, HIV/AIDS is a central organizing dynamic of contemporary Western gay and lesbian rights talk and its institutions, the Caribbean case might both advance this claim and cause rights to be even more deeply problematic as a vehicle for liberation. As Kamala Kempadoo (2004) notes in her assessment of various studies on Caribbean sexual practices in the time of HIV/AIDS:

> It has, however, carefully raised the issue that homosexuality or gayness is not an uncommon feature of Caribbean societies—that Caribbean men engage in a variety of sexual activities with other men as well as women. These findings taken together with widespread practices of informal polygyny and transactional sex, have led to analyses of complex sexual networks through which multiple men and women are seen to be sexually connected. (170)

Following up on Kempadoo's observation, one might argue that sexual practices in the Caribbean are so far removed from the call to an identity that even mobilizing around HIV/AIDS as the means towards rights is a limited endeavour if founded on the North American model. In the Caribbean, the subtle refusals of heterosexual monogamy do not provide a model for a Caribbean homonormativity to mirror, thus creating a "queer" niche market and all of the other constitutive elements that make a community knowable and identifiable. This is counter to the North American and western European model of sexual citizenship and the extension of rights as a group benefit by identifying one's self individually and collectively as a known quantity for citizenship. Thus, the Caribbean situation poses an ethical dilemma for the North American model. Second order diasporas can best contribute to the ethics of the situation by being both cautious and sceptical about what rights and the experience of gay and lesbian rights have meant for their sojourns in North America and the European west.

Citizen practices and their state bestowal call for knowable identities—that is how the managerialism of citizenship works. However, sexual practices both multiple and varied, as we all know, do not require a manageable identity for their practice. Contemporary human rights are based on a claim to identity—a knowable identity. The ethics of the situation calls for rights without identity claims, a much more difficult set of politics to actualize. As Spivak (2004) writes: "Indeed, the name of 'man' in 'human' rights (or the name of 'woman' in 'women's rights are human rights') will continue to trouble me" (564). Sexual practices without attendant identities and a move that advances such a claim can pose new and important questions for the remaking of the late modern state. The Anglo-Caribbean queer movement has the potential to make such a contribution to our sexual politics in the 21stcentury.

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NOTES

[i] Glave has consistently chronicled, collected and sent out to the contributors any reviews of the book that he has come across. Additionally, the book recently won a Lambda Literary Award.

[ii] "Re-membering our Caribbean connections: An Indigenous Maori Response to Thomas Glave's Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles". http://www.apwn.net/index.php/news/more/review_of_our_caribbean_a_gathering_of_lesbian_and_gay_writing_from_the_ant/

[iii] See for example the opening paragraphs of M. Cornelius's review in *The Bloomsbury Review*, September/October, 2008:19.

[iv] *Words to Our Now*.

[v] This work does not seek to deny or occlude the multi-racial and multicultural realities of the Anglo-Caribbean. Rather since I identify as a black Canadian of Caribbean background and my scholarship has largely centred on the dynamics of blackness in North America I refer to black people in this text, as a formation of peoples that I know best. However, it might be useful to appreciate that in many North American spaces when the Caribbean is invoked the blackness is also the first thing that is fundamentally imagined. However, it is important to note that many have called such imaginings into question (myself included).

[vi] For developments of this line of thinking see Neville Hoad's *African Intimacies* and Joseph Massad's *Desiring Arabs*.

[vii] Walcott, "Black Men in Frocks: Sexing Race in a Gay ghetto (Toronto)".

[viii] "1492: A New World View".

[ix] "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes Towards Deciphering Practice".

[x] Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada*.

[xi] The recent debacle with Proposition 8 in California and the initial reaction to the Yes side victory in which the No side blamed black and Latino/a voters is another way in which it is assumed that black and other globally south people are in need of development when it comes to questions of queer sexuality. In many of the debates right after the election one would have found it impossible to image black and Latino/a peoples as queer subjects as well. It was eventually disproved that blaming any particular racial group made no sense since proving it was not statistically possible.

[xii] "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom".

[xiii] Altman, *Global Sex*.

[xiv] Rayside, *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions*.

[xv] "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom".

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Politics & Passion:
A Conversation with Gloria Wekker

Andil Gosine

Abstract

In *The Politics of Passion* (Wekker 2006), anthropologist Gloria Wekker broke new ground in presenting an analysis of Mati Work, a surviving historical practice among Afro-Surinamese working-class women who create families from relationships that are not limited to blood ties, or a choice between heterosexuality or homosexuality. Her account offered a rare, thoughtful consideration of a complex Caribbean sexual culture, and continues to challenge conventional knowledges and practices of researchers, rights advocates and policy makers engaged in the struggle for sexual justice. In April 2009, Professor Wekker and I met at her home in Amsterdam—where she is both Chair in Gender and Ethnicity Studies at the Faculty of Arts at Utrecht University and Director of the Centre of Expertise on Gender, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism—and shared our thoughts about some contemporary debates and questions her work informs and inspires.

Sex and sexuality are still not easily spoken about in Caribbean Gender Studies, despite contributions like yours and M. Jacqui Alexander's that have invigorated the field. Why do you think that there is still not a broad and engaged conversation about sex among Caribbean feminists—especially one about same-sex sexualities, heteronormativity and sexual rights?

GW: I think it's broader than just Caribbean feminists, because I think it's also true for African-American feminists. Hortense Spillers' observation in the early 1980s that black women are like "the beached whales of the sexual universe", that they're not speaking, but awaiting their verb, still holds true. Since that time I really don't think that we've had much scholarship filling in that huge gap. Recently, I was looking at the book *Longing to Tell: Black women talk about Sexuality and Intimacy* (2004) by Tricia Rose. But this is a bunch of interviews with women of different ages talking about their sexual experiences but it doesn't really theorize anything. The same is true for *Tongues on Fire: Caribbean Lesbian Lives and Stories*, edited by Rosamund Elwin (1997). However much I appreciate those stories—and there is a lot of pain in them—but it doesn't go very deep. I think Darlene Clark's insights are correct when she talks about how come it became so important for black women to don a cloak of asexuality because of the history of black women being raped, black women being defined as unrape-able, always already ready to have sex. So black women decided they had to be asexual, to perform asexuality. I think that has played a huge role for a long time.

When I think about the Caribbean specifically, I think there is also some of the same processes going on there. Religion also plays a part in making it not decent, not a decent topic to talk about it. There is still very much a sense that "nice girls don't like sex, and nice girls don't talk about sex." We find more of a sexual voice in literature, in fiction, but not so much in academic, scholarly work.

The Politics of Passion **provided a sexual voice for Afro-Surinamese women in academic literature, for the first time in this way.**

GW: And the book has sometimes been received in a hostile manner because of its representation of sexuality. While *Politics* has been warmly and enthusiastically embraced by many different constituencies, I would say—in some of the talks I've given— for instance, for the Caribbean Studies Association, some men have a very hard time dealing with the study because it depicts women in a way that doesn't make them victims. *Politics* gives agency to women, and describes how they ordered the world sexually. On some other occasions when I have given talks where the audiences largely were women, there has also been a hostile reaction. At one talk in Barbados, very religious women, middle-class women, for whom it was also very difficult to talk about sexuality, found it difficult to hear it addressed. In a limited sense, there's truth in Peter Wilson's thesis that "men go by reputation, and women go by respect." And then there are, of course, the Afrocentric constituencies, who deny that same-sex sexualities are an African thing, so that all in all there are lots of different reasons for some hostile reactions to my book.

How were you able, then, to resist this contention, this pressure, in undertaking your own work?

GW: First, I am coming from the Netherlands, coming from a sexual culture that has been very open in Amsterdam. I was socialized in this kind of cultural space in the 1970s and 1980s. Here, sex was very openly talked about and people were experimenting with new forms of being a sexual being. There was so much experimentation that jealousy was out of the question! When I then pursued my PhD in the United States, some people weren't enthusiastic about my topic, and several people really implored me not to write so openly and centrally about sexuality—even some members of my committee. Rather than sex, they wanted me to focus my work on other ingredients that were also there, that I had collected data on: the economic side, how did women survive, etc. But I felt like and insisted that sexuality is what I wanted to study. I came all this way to the United States because I couldn't do it in the Netherlands, because there were no Black studies [t]here, and hardly any lesbian studies. But it's this particular combination that enabled me to do this study, to produce a theory to think about black sexuality in the diaspora. I'm doubtful that I would have gotten the money and the mentorship that I got in the US. But the kinds of questions that I asked, and the fact that I was able to do that, put all the ins and outs of the issue on the table, so to speak—that is my Dutch background.

Your comfort with speaking about sex and sexuality is made known to readers quite early in *The Politics of Passion*, when you begin to describe your relationship with the text's main subject, Juliette. Whenever I have used this book in graduate courses, students always linger on this aspect of your study, with some of them quite clearly anxious about it. Why do you think your frank and transparent explanation of your relationship generates this kind of response?

GW: Well, a combination of reasons. One is of course there is still a positivistic atmosphere in which we operate. We are still not supposed to have any personal biases, we are not supposed to show the "I" that is doing the research. The "I" should be bracketed, should be kept out of sight. In *Politics*, the "I" is not only showing herself but also really claiming that if you are transparent about the ways in which you position yourself, including the sexual positions you occupy, that you produce better knowledge. I think I'm showing that—that I couldn't have known all the stuff that I've come to know about the Mati Work if I wouldn't have had this relationship with Juliette.

It's the positivistic climate that still surrounds us, and surrounds those students and produces us, but there is also a specific division of labour in which women anthropologists can talk about gender, but male anthropologists can talk about sex. So I'm breaking through those binaries in that I'm talking about sex. Men have always been allowed to talk about sex that they've had in the field—starting with Malinowski, for instance. Other men have had the possibility to be sexual beings in the field. But when you look at some of the books that came out, let's say, in the 80s about self and gender and sex in the field—the books that anthropologists read to get to know more about how their colleagues act in the field, what it is like do field work, whether you are allowed to be a sexual being, this is the message that you get—you better not be sexual as a woman

because you will be put down as a "field groupie." You will be seen as someone who is not serious, even while there is much more space for men to explore that, and be taken seriously.

Lesbian Studies and Gay Studies also maintain this binary. That's why the grouping of the two has been called an unhappy marriage, by Ellen Lewin in *Out in Theor*y (2002). As she points out, Gay Studies has engaged with sexuality, but Lesbian Studies has engaged more with gender. And so whatever it is that lesbians do sexually, we don't get a very clear view of it. I'm pretty much doing away with all these binaries, which keep repeating a particular way of looking at the world and I think that's what upsets [some] students.

This gendered division extends beyond the classroom, beyond scholarship.

GW: When I think of some of my white gay male friends, they have been very enthusiastic about the way that I describe my relationship with Juliette. They told me they wanted more sex! (I replied that this was the best I could do!) And again I have come across women, both white women and women of colour, who found it difficult to deal with. And also religious women who have had difficulty dealing with the fact that I openly discussed my relationship with Juliette. There is a bunch of difficulty involved in acknowledging how women can be sexual persons, and acknowledging same-sex relations makes it even more difficult, especially in a Caribbean context. You know all those painful images that are out there circulating about black women are still haunting us.

Do you think we have really begun to grapple with the way in which those images haunt us, the continuing effect—the damage—of colonialism in shaping our sex and our ideas of sex and sexuality?

GW: Absolutely not, I think that would be a very necessary next step to take. The work that I started to do after *Politics* examines the Dutch cultural archive, but I absolutely feel that comparable work that goes deeper into the Caribbean cultural archive really needs to be done. The ways in which race, gender, sexuality, nation, class, have gotten deposited in our archives. I'm talking about "cultural archive" in the sense that Edward Said uses it in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), as a structure of feeling, a structure of knowing, of affect. Layer upon layer of images have gotten deposited in that cultural archive, and we never have looked closely at them, at how those images and knowledges have formed us. I think it's absolutely necessary to look into how they are not serving us, not serving us at all, as Audre Lorde would say. The austere ways in which sexuality is often dealt with, is often coloured locally. In different places, they have different forms. For example, I'm always struck by the punitive ways in which people with HIV/AIDS are treated in black communities like in the US, but also in the Caribbean. People with HIV/AIDS are told "you brought it on yourself"; that " you must be gay" or "you must have swung both ways"; that "you have been drug using". They are told: "however you got it, it's your own fault" for making an immoral choice. That's a very prominent discourse which

exposes the lack of generosity that we have toward ourselves, and toward particular ways of expressing oneself sexually.

We would also seem to continue to respect the parcelling work of colonialism. I am struck by the commitment of even very critical and interrogative scholars to ethnic and racial compartments, at the expense of recognizing the dynamic present and history of the Caribbean. A lot of the emerging studies of Caribbean sexuality, for instance, leave completely unconsidered the experience of Indo-Caribbean people and indentureship.

GW: What you suggest is so true. We have been so taught in Caribbean studies to look at the different population groups in this kind of way, and not to look: "well but what did they develop amongst themselves and how did they interact?" It's so reductive to only look like this. We have been missing out on a lot as a result.

In *Politics,* you were primarily concerned with the experience of Afro-Surinamese women and in relation to an on-going set of questions that consider the African diasporic experience, but yet you stumbled into Hindu women who were also engaged in Mati Work. Have you given more thought to how these women, and perhaps indentureship, informed sexual cultures like Mati Work?

GW: I was trained in the old-fashioned way in Caribbean studies that I was going to look at Creoles, not at other groups. So I stumbled across these other groups in looking at the Creoles. What I've been thinking about is that, as I understand it, there was a time when Hindustani women, when they first arrived in Suriname, many of them came independently. They came, for instance, to escape undesirable and oppressive relationships, or they came with their lovers. They may even have come in a group of girlfriends, who knows? I'm imagining that, but I'm thinking that the grounds would have been very fertile for women to say "we're not just going to put up with any kind of relationship that we may have had in India. We have not travelled all these 5,000 miles to come to Suriname and to again be involved in oppressive relationships." So there is some material that points that out, that points to the desire on the part of Hindustani women to be independent, or to be in loving relationships with men, not to be under the foot of men, like they perhaps had been. This is evident for instance in oral histories that women tell, oral histories that their grandmothers or great-grandmothers have told them. I think that is such a fertile ground to go looking into further. This again is about their cultural archive that is very specific that also has to do with the history that they had in Suriname, how they had to do labour in the fields and so on and so forth. And when I'm looking now to those people that I know who are in relationships with women of other groups, I see some mixed relationships between Creole and Hindustani women, and I think that that would be a very fertile ground to explore. Also Creole and Javanese female same-sex relationships. There are also other sexual areas that deserve more attention, when you are going to adopt that horizontal approach—the phenomenon of the outside woman and homosocial cultures, for example. In Suriname, masculinity hasn't been studied at all, nor have bisexuality and male same-sex relationships.

Besides the way in which *Politics* provides a foundation for thinking about sexual cultures of the Caribbean, it also lays out a number of challenges and provocations to an emerging global gay culture, and transnational advocacy for sexual rights.

GW: I think I've just begun to scratch the surface really. I focused more closely on how women themselves construct their sexuality, how that goes way back, what kind of principles they use to give form to their sexuality and how there is a diasporic flavour to the way that those sexualities are put together. But I certainly think that there is a lot more work to be done, and I am also wondering whether these notions of global queerness are really going to help us to do that work. What I have seen so far of that work is that it tends to homogenize much too much. I find that whatever we find in all these different local environments on the ground is very carefully put together and a very dynamic configuration of global and local phenomena. In Suriname people may talk about themselves as gay or lesbian, but there is a very thick influence of the local repertoire in which people have been thought to think about same-sex behaviour. I didn't write about that in *Politics*, but in 2001 there was a Miss Gay contest in Suriname, with men competing for the title. What was really interesting was that during one round they had to present themselves as they would most like to see themselves, how they would like to present themselves to others. It was very striking that seven out of eleven contestants showed up wearing those elaborate skirts, you know, that Surinamese women wear—with headdresses, basins with fruits and shrubs on their head. I thought this was so amazing, you know, that even while they may be calling themselves gay, that the grammar in which they express it is totally local. For me to sanction this idea of there being only one-way traffic, one way of gay identity that is being transported, or exported, all over the world, just doesn't make sense at all.

You certainly see this complex dynamic—this "hybrid, messy, on-the-ground" phenomenon, as you put it (Wekker 255)—happening in many other places, especially so in the creolized space of the Caribbean. But there is at the same time often a rejection of the part of this negotiation that is not Euro-American. I am talking about the gay men and gay organizations that insist on mimicking a San Francisco model of gay identity and culture, of the young women you mention in *Politics* who claim the name lesbian and are derisive about Mati Work.

GW: I know exactly what you mean. But the thing that is also striking is that they are not the only ones who think that. They are repeating something on cue, from the cues that they get for instance from the Dutch State. The State also wants that kind of identification practice. If you pronounce that you are a lesbian, then maybe you will get a permit to stay in the Netherlands. The State is perplexed by anything outside of this; it asks "What is this Mati?" It instructs: *if you say, and fashion yourself after the dominant mode of being a lesbian, then that is something we recognize*, so there is a very strong force emanating from that. I find the workings of the State in … sorting out people according to modernity and traditionalism even more detrimental than when these young girls are doing it, you know. We shouldn't endorse that either. Of course it's not something that I would want to endorse. I try to explain to them what is at stake in doing that, but I do find that when the State is doing it, it carries infinitely more consequences.

What we sometimes see, I also think, are gay and lesbian champions of sexual rights who are brave and revolutionary, but who are also working within—and not challenging—a teleological narrative, the "global imperialist script" as you put it (255).

GW: Absolutely. I'm really wanting to get people to think more about repeating such seemingly automatic binaries, like what they conceive of as tradition and modernity, which is so evident in so many things. Why is it that we are so willing to give up on this culture that has survived for many centuries and that has shown its resilience through so many difficulties and through many migrations, why are we so prepared to give up on it? And to embrace another way of being in the world, that for all I know, you know, also has its costs attached to it? I find that there are certain costs attached to embracing this identity.

But there are resources too. I don't want to be this nostalgic old woman. But there's a certain way in which I want to point out that the Mati Work has seen a lot of women through, it has seen a lot of men and women through, and has made it possible for them to survive and to form communities. We shouldn't be too quick about tossing it overboard, really in terms of community. I think there's a lot there.

Are the LGBT organizations from the global North, who are becoming increasingly interested in sexual struggles in the South, advancing a global imperialist script of sexuality? Among a great number of them—from Canada to Sweden to Holland—there seems to be a sense of "fait accompli", that they have now finished the task of achieving sexual liberation, so now they must free gays and lesbians in the South too.

GW: I find it deeply, deeply problematical, and I should say that has not been one of my angles, in which I looked at Mati Work. But I can certainly say a thing or two generally about this issue, or organizing, or even when we talk of collaboration. I'm often struck by the unproblematic way in which Dutch people, Dutch NGOs, the Dutch State, engages with countries from the South as if it's totally clear that they have left a colonial or neo-colonial mode behind them. It is not clear to me at all that that has happened, especially when you look at Dutch history. For example, when the Netherlands lost Indonesia—the "jewel" in the Dutch crown—the next day all those colonial officers became development collaborators. That was done by the State. Suddenly they were somebody else, they weren't the colonial power anymore but—from one day to the next—they supposedly were on an even cue with the people in the Third World, in the South. As well, there is that attitude so deeply ingrained in us that we are not racist—that race is not an issue in the Netherlands, it is everywhere else but it is not here. And because there is no self-reflection and hardly any impetus to look at who the South is, you find all these nasty and ugly things in the way that Dutch NGOs deal with the South, so there's no problem at all to see them as agents who are not as far yet. There is what has been called a "rhetoric of the family", vis-à-vis Third World organizations, whether you look at development or HIV/AIDS programming. It is oftentimes done in a mode of, "well we have figured this

out, how this works, and we're going to help you get to the place where we are at, because you don't have the resources to figure it out for yourself." And this is a strong attitude, which is also backed up by resources.

I'm very interested in a number of other phenomena, which sort of structure the relationship between the North and the South. In terms of the inegalitarianism of the resources that are available, I've come to understand that a lot of the sex lines in the Netherlands—the "09 lines", as they are called—offer an incredible array of sexual services that are being offered to people. All kinds of different kinds of sex: sex with young girls, with young boys, sex with fat ladies, with black men and women. There's incredible specialization on these 09 lines, and a lot of these telephone sex lines are being operated from the Dutch ex-colonies, they are being operated in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. This is one of the new phenomena that I would really be interested in exploring further, because these people speak Dutch—Dutch is often their first language. But they get courses in speaking Dutch without a Surinamese or Antillean accent. By local standards, these phone sex workers make a lot of money, and for these operators it's of course much cheaper to have these people work from the Antilles and from Suriname. Here you see a new field where sex has settled itself, has inserted itself.

A second place where North and South interact is that a lot of connections are being set up between white gay men mostly in the Netherlands and in Belgium, and gay boys in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. And, though I'm not saying that it's totally absent in a female to female sphere, but this is a very marked phenomenon in male same-sex relationships, so all kinds of inegalitarianisms that already exist are replicated in how Dutch NGOs and activist groups deal with groups in the South. It's disconcerting that these structures really remain in place even though they take on new forms. New forms but still the old inequalities raise their head.

Sexual desires are surely imbued with power—are no doubt informed by anxieties about race, sex, gender and class through and through—but how do we exercise a kind of non-punitive approach about the consensual kinds of sexual choices people make with a simultaneous critique of oppression and commitment to sexual and social justice?

GW: I think we should not be innocent about our relationships. We haven't been given the tools—maybe there hasn't been much impetus to develop those tools—but I think that the time is really ripe to develop those tools and to disseminate them so that people can stop being innocent about their personal relationships. I feel quite strongly about this. There are many different formats for having a personal relationship, and we happen in the West supposedly to be into egalitarianism along a number of dimensions: we are supposed to have the same background, same level of education, same income and class and so on. All of those things appear to be very important, but I'm also convinced that there is an undercurrent which has a lot to do with our cultural archive that I spoke about earlier. It speaks of unconscious or barely conscious desires which are also very present and which shape us and our desires, which shape who we feel attracted to. It is not enough anymore to be totally flabbergasted by those desires, that they overtake you and

you can't do anything about it. We can't simply accept that "it's just there" and not consider, for example, desires by white men for only young Surinamese boys. Let's not be so innocent about that and let's try to discover what is behind those desires. Let's recognize that they are not individual desires but patterns that are cultured. It's what our culture, 400 years of it, has prepared us to feel. Instead of being so politically correct about our desires and to say that our desires are all clean and not messy, we must acknowledge that they are pretty messy and that we need to delve deeper and historicize those desires. That is what I would like to do in the next project. I think that that is reconcilable still with wanting to have a society, in which there is social egalitarianism and recognizing that desire doesn't work in such a simple way. It sounds a bit cliché maybe but I do not want it to be the case that blackness remains so firmly tied up with sexuality in the minds of many people of the dominant group without them having to think about it and to become aware of that.

My last question is about your own desires: what did you learn about *love* from your experience of Mati Work, and your relationship with Juliette?

I am so humbled by that encounter. Juliette and I came from such different worlds but apparently we found each other and a middle ground in which we really met, in which we really saw each other. It's the least likely of things to happen and yet it happened, and so when you ask me "do you believe in love, and how do you see love?" [laughing], I might at this point already say, "This is love!" You encounter it in the least likely of places when you allow yourself to be open to it and it comes with many different faces and many different disguises, but when you do allow yourself that exchange of feelings and that meeting of spirits, that is what it is. I believe strongly in that, that way of seeing people as Juliette explained to me. She often said she saw me being carried by Amerindian spirits, spirits that love gregariousness, love people around them. She said that I was being carried by those spirits, and that she felt attracted to that because she also had those spirits. I think it's such a lovely way to look upon people which is so much richer, allows so much more, than if we think "ok, so I'm meeting this person, what kind of education has this person had, what is her income?", you know, stuff like that. I'm very happy that I have encountered a different way of looking at loving and being loved.

I learned that I fall in love when this person has a lot of knowledge. That knowledge is not necessarily academic knowledge. That clearly was the case with Juliette, she was sitting on a tonne of knowledge, carried around so much knowledge about different things in her head; I found it absolutely mesmerizing. I have written about how that relationship at times seemed like a therapeutic relationship because I was learning things about myself that I had not heard before. I also learned about that there can be a large age difference between partners, and I thought that was also so fascinating. Juliette showed me a whole new way of thinking about the sexuality of older people, who we often insist should be asexual: *They've had their time, eh?* That is such a punitive attitude, to equate sex with youth and being attractive in a particular way, having a good tight body. I think the Mati Work does away with all of that. A lot of the ideas that we have around love in the West are in a sense so commercialized and so pre-packaged about what is attractive and what is the time in your life that you can lay claim to having this attractiveness, it's

very reductive really. It opened up a lot for me to be part of the Mati Work, to become part of the Mati Work.

When you ask, "what does love mean to you", I think of Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, which offers precisely the understanding of love I experienced in my relationship with Juliette and in those relationships which have felt good, liberating, not incarcerating me. When the prophet is being asked to talk about marriage, he says:

> *Love one another, but make not a bond of love.*
> *Let it rather be a moving sea between*
> *the shores of your souls.*
>
> *Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.*
> *Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.*
>
> *Sing and dance together and be joyous,*
> *but let each of you be alone,*
>
> *Even as the strings of a lute are alone*
> *though they quiver with the same music.*
>
> *Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.*
> *For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.*
>
> *And stand together, yet not too near together.*
> *For the pillars of the temple stand apart,*
>
> *And the oak tree and the cypress*
> *grow not in each other's shadow.*

That's what I believe about love, and that's also what I think that the Mati Work has made me see clearer. It's much less of holding each other, so that you kind of strangle each other, but like you are standing tall like this. I love this phrase about oak and cypress do not grow in each others' shadow. So you stand on your own and you are deeply different from the loved one, but you give each other stuff, you give each other something or maybe you walk a while in the same direction, but you are your own person.

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Chutney to Queer and Back: Trinidad 1995–1998

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Abstract

In December 1995, I arrived for the very first time in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, to study chutney music——a fusion of Hindi religious folks songs and calypso and soca rhythms. From what I had been reading, the emergence of chutney music in the 1980s and '90s reflected the growing cultural impact of East Indians (or Indo-Trinidadians as I will also refer to them) as well as their desire for national belonging even as it claimed particular Indian cultural difference at its core. Basdeo Panday, the first Indo-Trinidadian Prime Minister, had just been elected, and it was also the 150th anniversary commemorating Indian arrival in Trinidad. Over the next month, and again for several months in the summer of 1996, I conducted interviews with any chutney musician who would meet with me—Chris Garcia, Ramraji Prabhoo, Rikki Jai, as well as with industry insiders such as the producers of the Indian cultural competition Mastana Bahar, radio station owners, music store managers, and chutney music promoters. I went to chutney performances all over southern Trinidad—Chaguanas, San Fernando, and many smaller towns in between—as well as the occasional event in Port-of-Spain.

Introduction

As it turned out, chutney music inadvertently became a "cover" (and ironically, a closet as well) for my socializing in gay and lesbian circles and what eventually became my dissertation project. On this first day in Trinidad, along with listening to chutney music for the very first time, I had also called on the uncle of a Trinidadian acquaintance who lives in San Francisco. My acquaintance had said to me: "I think he might be like us, but I am not sure, so don't say anything to him, but see what happens." I proceeded with great caution. During these initial visits, I found myself traversing back and forth between areas in the south of Trinidad to attend chutney performances, competitions, and carnival events, only afterwards to rush back north to attend gay and lesbian community parties and gatherings. I experienced a huge discrepancy in what it meant to be Indian in Trinidad against the grain of what gay and lesbian lives were like in Port-of-Spain. I moved through the demands of these different spaces very confusedly, often unsure as to whether to reveal details about where next I was headed—not just to the predominantly heterosexual Indo-Trinidadians I met, but also to the predominantly Afro-Trinidadian gays and lesbians I started to befriend. Finally, after a year of research visits, I abandoned my study of chutney. Deflated by the relegation of chutney to a highly defensive form of cultural nationalist politics and its flagging cross-over potential, I also could no longer effectively sustain these transversal movements across divergent and dichotomous terrains.

Out in the field?

By this point I had had regular contact with folks in the "gay and lesbian community" as it was then hailed, and had amassed carefully sought knowledge of events, organizations, hangouts, and people over the past year—information that now could be instantly googled or binged. I decided to trace and document the emergence of a gay and lesbian movement in Trinidad, one linked to international, regional, diasporic, and sub-national formations and agendas. The only publication to result from this work, "Global Circuits" (2001) was informed by numerous field research trips spanning from December 1995 to October 1998, during which period I interviewed more than three dozen gay and lesbian activists, HIV/AIDS educators, epidemiologists, feminist organizers, and gay and lesbian business owners, performers, and artists. I met current and prior members of the Gay Enhancement Association of Trinidad and Tobago (GEATT), the Alliance for Prevention Trinidad and Tobago (APTT), the Caribbean Feminist Regional Association (CAFRA), the Caribbean Forum for Lesbians, All-sexuals, and Gays (C-FLAG), CAREC, and LAMBDA. I also cavorted and spoke with dozens more folks who hung out at the Pelican, Sidewalks, Peter Minshall's mas, Godfrey Sealy's house, and other more subterranean haunts, places that are now well-known and easily locatable as gay venues via the Internet, but at the time were only traceable through connections and word-of-mouth. Throughout the duration of my research, I constantly navigated polar opposite reactions to my project: those who considered homophobia to be rampantly active and debilitating in Trinidad and those who had never given their gay, lesbian, or bisexual desires a second thought and challenged the relevance of my project. Some insisted that the work could become an important document in the gay and lesbian struggles of the region; others worried about the backlash of visibility that discourses on homosexuality and the visibility of this work might engender, by now a familiar conundrum amongst

LGBTQ organizers in the global south (see Joseph Massad 2007; Tara Atluri's discussion of Massad, this volume); still others steadfastly claimed being gay was "no big deal" and regarded my interest as the product of Euro-American queer theory that attempted to correct its racial and geographical biases by discovering queer theories' Others. I thus became wary about the framing, circulation, and publication of my work, realizing that I was indeed participating in positing Trinidad as a specific actor in the spectrum of global gay identities, mapping Trinidad's "coming out," if you will, of a modernist sort that I would otherwise theoretically argue against. Yet this "coming out" formed the very epistemological ground that I stood on and produced toward and against.

At that time, "queer" was not a word that had much currency, either intellectual or colloquial, neither in Trinidad nor in the Caribbean more broadly. The Foucauldian "act-to-identity" telos was a primary frame through which the globalization of sexual identity was being comprehended. Originally a paradigm informing literary criticism, where a reconciliation of the non-concurrency of acts and identities could happen through textual reading, it became in ethnographies and empirical research a developmentalist temporal narrative re-accorded valence through uneven geographical and spatial circuits. Within historical periodization sexual "acts" marked the pre-modern (and indeed the act-to-identity split reflected nothing less than a designation of primitivism in global gay discourses such as those derived from Dennis Altman's work), while in queer transnational work, these same "indigenous" acts or acts without identities were increasingly signaled as anti-identity, queer, postmodern. In other words, there was now an "act-to-identity-to-anti-identity" telos with which to contend, all in an effort to disrupt the queer as western imperialism versus queer as liberation binary.

All of which is to say, Trinidad did not reveal itself to be the counterexample I had hoped to mobilize against the whiteness of queer theory nor the "global imperialist script" that Gloria Wekker problematizes (interview, this volume). Trinidad was almost always deemed "the best place" to be "out" in the Caribbean, while those who could afford it traveled to Miami to be "really out." Activist organizations were fully embedded in normative neoliberal gay and lesbian human rights discourses which insisted on modernist visibility in order to grieve on behalf of Other subjects, yet simultaneously required the oppression of these very subjects of visibility. As one long-time organizer said to me, "All we have are North American models for organizing, and that's all we've ever had. It can't be a problem." And of course hierarchies of race, class, and gender were rife in gay and lesbian spaces. The majority of organizers with whom I spoke identified as Afro-Trinidadian or Trinidadian, and the majority understood Indo-Trinidadians, especially Indo-Trinidadian women, to be "more oppressed," "backwards," "homophobic," "repressed," and deeply entangled in the demands of rigid kinship structures. Fears of a contaminating (homo)sexuality stemmed less from "the west" or from "whiteness" or "Americanization," and rather more vehemently from the racial conflicts between Indo- and Afro-Trinidadians. And yet, it also seemed the case that those Indians who participated in the Port-of-Spain networks were required to identify as Trinidadian over and above Indo-Trinidadian—a commitment to national identity that was implicitly African or creole was constituitive of the scene. Class tensions were rife, and predictably delineated the lines of political strategy, sometimes more so than racial

divides.

But Trinidad turned out to be something else far more complicated than a counterexample: it challenged singular conceptions of modernity from within Western modernity itself, and deconstructed the binaries of the local/global, imported/indigenous, making these very terms untenable as analytic frames. Here was a very concise example of how the "local" is always already saturated by the colonial archive—any recourse to the indigenous is inevitably framed by the epistemic violence of colonialism, a trenchant transnational feminist intervention that Gayatri Spivak articulates in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1984). Theorists of transnationalism have noted that the fundamental paradox of rapid and increased economic globalization is that as the nation-state is destabilized and its national boundaries rendered economically porous, it must reassert hegemonies of its imagined cohesiveness and geographic boundaries in social terms. M. Jacqui Alexander, one of the few theorists who have examined this process in terms of sexuality, avers that "the effects of political economic international processes provoke a legitimation crisis for the state. It then moves to restore its legitimacy by recouping heterosexuality through legislation" (1994, 9). The process of decolonization happens through the shoring up of heternormativity through the promotion of the "new" and ever self-generating (procreative) nation that must "prove" itself to the colonial father in the face of destabilizing global trends. Stuart Hall, however, reminded us some time ago that the nation mobilizes to recoup itself not only through sameness, but within and through neoliberal capitalist manipulations and accommodations of "difference" (1991, 29).

Thus, as I argue in *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), while it is crucial to examine how, as Alexander notes, the nation "disallows the queer body" (1994, 5), it may well be necessary to ask which nation and which queer bodies, and to interrogate how nations not only sanction but induce certain queer subjectivities over others. Resituating discourses of the nation in order to complicate a repressive versus productive binary foregrounds how "sexual political subjects" (Hanawa 1994, vii) use, appropriate, rely on, and are even produced through (and by), rather than simply oppose, discourses of the nation. Any terms of sexual citizenship, hetero and homo, are racialized, gendered, and class-inflected as well. My work in Trinidad, then, formed the genesis of homonationalism as an idea, one I later theorized in *Terrorist Assemblages*. For it became clear to me that while Trinidadian organizers were navigating a complex constellation of act-to-identity positionings on the global scene, this act-to-identity split was also being used to relegate and demote—pathologize, even—Indo-Trinidadian sexualities. As Andil Gosine (this volume) notes, the emergent field of Caribbean sexuality studies claims a visibility that may well be contingent upon "leav[ing] completely unconsidered the experience of Indo-Caribbean people and indentureship."

The identity categories of "Afro-Trinidadian" and "Indo-Trinidadian" are obviously at odds with a racial ideology attached to creolization and an all-inclusive Trinidadian nationalism (one that often reveals itself to be covertly and sometimes overtly African, yet at other times indicating an upper class-inflected cosmopolitan hybridity). Yet these categories are mobilized frequently on behalf of their constituencies in order to render notions of cultural difference as empirical reality. (See for example Shalini Puri [1995]

and Aisha Khan [1995] on the uneasy co-existence of discourses of racial authenticity/purity and national unity). Given the never-ending debates about which population is greater, Indo- or Afro-, the representational elision of Indo-Trinidadians cannot be dismissed as a minoritized rights-based grievance. If the national image (indeed, the overall image of the Caribbean) still understood itself as inherently African, any right-based claims made vis-a-vis the state on behalf of homosexuals understood those homosexual subjects also to be African.

For example, in her reading of the Sexual Offenses Bill signed into law in Trinidad and Tobago in 1986, Alexander demonstrates that morality functions to align certain sexual acts with homosexuality as well as with "bad" heterosexuality and the perversions of buggery, incest, prostitution. The bill "...represents the first time that the coercive arm of the postcolonial state had confronted the legacy of its colonial trauma..." (1991, 135). Through this act, which borrowed its definitions of morality from British legislation of 1954, "homosexual sex was recriminalized, and lesbian sex became punishable [for the first time] under a new offense called 'serious indecency' if 'committed on or towards a person sixteen years of age or more." (1991, 136).

Yasmin Tambiah's important re-reading of Alexander's work challenges her claim that "legislators felt prompted 'to ensnare and to specifically control lesbian sex.'" But more crucially, Tambiah argues that a temporary cease-fire among racial factions in the service of promoting a nationalist masculinity informed the process of crafting this legislation. She writes, "antagonisms rooted in ethno-racial or religious differences appeared to either have been suspended or mutually accommodated when it came to curtailing women's sexual autonomy and integrity, and to re-inscribing normative sexuality." Alexander notes that "a range of 'native' sexualities were constructed (black/Indian/indigenous), and all colonized sexualities were essentially subordinated sexualities" (199, 11). But clearly, "all colonized sexualities" are not colonized the same. Even while underscoring that the legislation is built on postcolonial ideologies of ruling black nationalist masculinity, Alexander unwittingly naturalizes the state as African in her analysis, stopping short of acknowledging the differential effect of this naming of homosexuality on bodies displaced across a number of social locations, in particular, those of race and ethnicity.

Thus, the heteronormativity of the Trinidadian state is not only an apparatus that regulates sexual norms, but one that also reproduces racial norms. One reason (among many) for this "Africanization" of state-created identities might be attributed, as Selwyn Ryan argues, to the disenfranchisement that East Indian populations experienced in relation to the struggle for decolonization from the British (1995, 9). East Indians surmised that their social and economic positioning was more secure—certainly more predictable—under colonial rule then under what would inherently be African rule in a decolonized Trinidad. These populations therefore could not and/or did not participate in decolonization movements with the same verve as Africans did, given that they did not feel equally interpellated by the possibility of a sovereign state. What impact does this uneven spectrum of state interpellation have on postcolonial conceptualizations of heterosexuality as well as homosexuality?

To further complicate matters, Indo-Trinidadians are not only "improperly" national, they are also "improperly" diasporic. Indo-Trinidadians defy conventional diasporic mappings by suggesting Indianness without India—despite the circulation of Indian musical stars, movies, textiles, and Return-to-Roots tours—historically linked to a diasporic triad with Suriname and Guyana, yet producing diasporic populations that are not always welcomed by South Asian communities in the U.S., Canada, and Britain. Tejaswini Niranjana writes that East Indians embody an "illegitimate modernity" because they, along with other indentured Indian populations, had not "passed through, been formed by, the story of the (Indian) nation in the making." (1999, 232). Further, she writes that "the African" came to represent the first contact with the West that Indian indentured labor encountered: "Exposure to western ways, therefore, came to the Indian through interaction with the Afro-Caribbean rather than through contact with the European." (1999, 237). Thus East Indians are twice the "disavowed double"—-neither measuring up to standards of Trinidadian-ness nor of diasporic Indianness.

Methodological conundrums

Is this domination of Afro-Trinidadian representation and homosexual subject formation the same, or even similar to, the homonationalism I mapped out in *Terrorist Assemblages*, which takes the U.S. as its primary site of interrogation? Certainly not. But the connections between self-proclaimed gay and lesbian identities and non-normative racially pathologized sexualities that may or may not be articulated through same-sex desire seem to be pivotal and necessary ones to make. Wondering about the relative absence of Indo-Trinidadian lesbians on the one hand and the long history of anxieties about disruptive East Indian female sexualities during indentureship, I realized I needed to return to the sites of chutney to examine the kinds of spaces Indian women were navigating through this musical form. The "lewd" public display of women wining "out of control" on stage or in the audience in these shows led to chutney music being criticized by classical musicians as "low grade," with discourses about corrupt sexuality being reflective of anxieties about Indian women's bodies during indentureship and their proximity to blackness. As Tara Atluri writes (this volume), Michelle Mohabeer's re-projection of the Middle Passages between India and Guyana rearticulates this sexual pathologization of Indo-Caribbean women as sites for potential sexual transgression: "forced migration might have ironically created the potential for sexual dissidence." This linkage—-between non-normative sexualized racialization of Indo-Trinidadians (whether queer or not) and the study of queer subject formation that reasserts divisions between Afro and Indo bodies-—goes beyond the reach of a traditional gay and lesbian ethnography (scholarship which tends to centralize "published declarations of sexual identity" [Jacobs 1996,288] and contributes to a modernist hegemony of "out" identity, privileging a homosexual nativist discourse about gay and lesbian anthropologists who are often assumed to be "studying their own"). It is, perhaps, the beginnings of what one might call a queer ethnography.

Why is a distinction between gay and lesbian ethnography and queer ethnography necessary? Some of the concerns I flagged earlier about "outings" of various kinds and complicity with globalizing identities and counter-identities might seem trivial or pedestrian now in light of the proliferation of modes of contact, the voluminous traffic of

information, the explosion of research on Caribbean sexualities in the last decade, and institutional interventions such as the International Resource Network (IRN) launched by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (CLAGS). Yet the epistemological conundrums they initially highlighted remain constitutive paradoxes of knowledge production, and perhaps even more significantly as alliances of power and privilege run horizontally across national and regional boundaries (what Paola Baccheta calls networks of "transnational queerdom" and what others have called a "class" of transnational activists). As Foucault argues in his critique of the "repressive hypothesis," the "taboo" subject of (homo) sexuality has numerous registers of expression; its silences and its visibilities are neither even nor totalizing. However it is an investment in a/the repressive model of sexuality that gives others the "speaker's benefit." In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault notes the importance of situating who "gets" to talk about sexuality, why, and how, arguing against a dichotomy between silence and speech:

> "Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case." (1978, 27)

In noting that the "right to speak about sex" becomes intertwined with the "honor of a political cause" (1978, 6), Foucault is in relative alignment with Spivak's claim that the Western intellectual re-inaugurates himself as the sovereign subject through, not against, the accounting of the Other (just a tad ironic given Spivak's critique of him). The speaker's benefit accrued by the ethnographer of sexuality through perpetuating a regime of confession and articulation as the sign of a subject liberated from silence is endlessly complicit. The (typically white gay male) researcher writing an ethnography of sexuality is a speaker on behalf of (queer) sexual liberation, even as his or her project may purport to problematize such universalisms. The queer ethnographer is in an awkward position, part and parcel of, and beneficiary of, a global network among a confusedly marked and ambiguously bordered transnational community of gays and lesbians, inhabiting the "outness" she seeks to complicate, claim, or refuse for other subjects.

Thus a queer ethnography, along with taking up critical practices of feminist, self-reflexive, and experimental ethnography, (Visweswaran, 1994) shatters the disciplinary policing of what constitutes a "proper ethnography." More crucially, queer ethnographies can resist the assignment of discourse to the silenced subject(s), while simultaneously tracing the epistemological conditions of possibility for a/the/any speaking subject to emerge. It might also decenter the fixation on sexual identificatory taxonomies and sexual object choice, focusing instead on reading practices as the basis of its queerness. In other words, at precisely the moment at which one could easily read toward

the obviousness of object-choice as a distinction, one must read away from it, and situate queerness elsewhere. Such a practice entails microanalyses of signification, sexuality as an affective force, and desire as assemblages of bodies, temporalities, energies, and becomings. Finally, given the prolific contemporary emergence of “queer area studies” and “queer regional studies,” of which Caribbean sexuality studies is one example, queer ethnographies also have the potential to disrupt the normative disciplinary production of yet another modernist knowledge formation.

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Fighting 'Murder Music': Activist Reflections

Akim Ade Larcher and Colin Robinson

Editor's Note: Debates about the meanings of, and how to respond to, "murder music" have raged for as long as some forms of Jamaican dancehall have been afforded this tag for their promotion of violence against gays. British gay activist and OutRage! co-founder Peter Tatchell has been a driving force behind efforts to stop production and distribution of music by artists such as Beenie Man, Sizzla and Elephant Man through the "Stop Murder Music" (SMM) campaign, which has since been adopted or supported by over 60 organizations worldwide. SMM and similar campaigns have been championed by some advocates of social justice and denounced by others as "racist" for their representations of black cultures. For this edition of CRGS, I invited two activists who have been engaged in this work to share and explain their experiences with and points of view of Murder Music campaigns: Saint Lucian-born and now Canadian-resident Akim Ade Larcher, who founded the Canadian chapter of SMM, and Trinidad-based Colin Robinson.—*Andil Gosine*

Akim Ade Larcher

I am humbled to be associated with Stop Murder Music Canada (SMMC). This international campaign has had a far-reaching impact. It has echoed in the hallways of many political buildings, provided a shield for those persecuted for their sexual orientation in the Caribbean, and given rise to a global movement against violent homophobic lyrics.

Stop Murder Music has both addressed homophobia in dancehall music and called attention to the intersections of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, human rights, and popular culture at the forefront of Western LGBT organizations. At its heart, the campaign challenges governments to hold dancehall artists accountable for songs that call for the death and persecution of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans-identified (LGBT) people.

The SMMC campaign not only sheds light on "murder music" being produced in the Caribbean and the fact that it is readily available on the Canadian market, but it also enables many Canadians of different backgrounds to voice their concerns about human rights violations against the LGBT community in the Caribbean. Regardless of a song's genre—rap, punk, rock, pop, or dancehall—if it calls for violence toward or the death of any member of the LGBT community, it undoubtedly affects all of us. The campaign has given the immigrant LGBT population of Canada a voice and a cause, and advances the work and conversations that had already been taking place among the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black Cap), the African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO), and Gays Lesbians of African Descent (GLAD). Conversations about stigma, discrimination, homophobia, and sexual citizenship had been ongoing as we dealt with rising HIV/AIDS infection rates in African, Black, and Caribbean communities.

In the spring of 2007, I attended an ACCHO event that focused on the release of a study about how African and Caribbean communities in Toronto experience and respond to HIV stigma, denial, fear, and discrimination. One of the study's findings was that HIV infection and homophobia are linked in African and Caribbean communities and this association has been fueled by homophobic lyrics in dancehall music. When I left the event, I was highly energized and certain that I needed to act. Later that summer, I formed a coalition of supporters both to bring attention to the violent homophobic lyrics available in Canada and to bring support to queers in Jamaica. After learning of Elephant Man's intention to tour ten Canadian cities, I promptly got in touch with Gareth Henry, who was the Program Director for the Jamaica Forum for All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG) at that time, and also Peter Tatchell of Outrage!

Over the course of the following week, we had discussions in which I made it clear that I believed a chapter of Stop Murder Music must be formed in Canada because many artists who were have problems getting visas to enter Europe or the United States of America were looking at Canada as a lucrative market. After much faxing and many telephone calls, I was able to bring together over twenty-five organizations, which included Egale Canada, Canada's LGBT human rights organization. Less than a week prior to Elephant

Man's arrival, I moved SMMC to Egale's office, where the Executive Director Helen Kennedy provided administrative support for the campaign.

When the numerous letters we sent to the government of Canada went unanswered, we held a press conference to alert the media and public about the fact that the government had failed in their duties to deny visas to both Elephant Man and Sizzla. Denying visas is a procedure that has been used in the past as a way of preventing those who are likely to contravene the Criminal Code of Canada by using hate speech, such as Holocaust-deniers and Anti-Semitic individuals, from entering Canada. We thought the government would have been responsive. However, the Minister of Citizenship has remained silent on the issue to this day. Regardless of the lack of government support, the campaign was very successful as a result of its public support. This achievement allowed us to accomplish many goals in a holistic fashion. We were able to shed light on the violent homophobia in Jamaica and educate the public on the widespread sale of such music in Canada.

The campaign has allowed us to educate the public about the emergent trend of violent homophobia in the Caribbean and address the flawed notion that the region has always been so violently homophobic. In addition, the campaign has allowed racialized queers to be visible and vocal within the predominantly white gay community in Canada because it helps us to say that we are queer, we are here, and our concerns need to be addressed.

The reach and success of the Canadian campaign have provided us with national media coverage, venue cancellations, the opportunity to host two panel discussions called the Sound of Hate, the successful removal of homophobic violent lyrics online by iTunes North America, the production of a "murder music" dictionary postcard during Pride, and most recently, the opportunity to partner with unions to distribute a postcard called "Queering Black History." This postcard recognizes the creative dedication and achievements of Black, African, and Caribbean queers in Canada.

The SMMC campaign has not been without controversy, however, as editors of *Xtra!* and *Xtra West!* (Canadian Queer Press) have been skeptical about this being a priority for Egale and question why Canada's national LGBT organization spends so much of its energy helping Jamaican gays and lesbians. Unbeknownst to many, *Xtra!* dispatched its chief editor, Matt Mills, to investigate whether or not Jamaica is indeed the most homophobic place on earth. After spending an entire three days there, Mills managed to gather enough information to produce two pages' worth of material in what could be considered a rather biased, eroticized, and racist editorial, which not only fails to mention issues affecting lesbians or trans-identified people in Jamaica, but also neglects to reference lesbians or transpeople at all.

Over the last year, the global Stop Murder Music campaign could be considered to be reaching the end of its life. It has had tremendous impact and much of its scope and outreach has been accomplished in the eyes of many Caribbean activists. Although, as with many other campaigns, the end of the road may be near, the fight will continue in the Canadian context. This might require some changes in the way we work, but as long as violent homophobic music remains for sale in Canada, artists sing violent homophobic

lyrics, and words like “battybwoy” and “battyman” can be heard in the hallways of our schools, the fight will go on here in Canada. Even if it is not done under the name of the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign, Egale will continue this fight. But, it may be time for all voices in this global movement to ask whether Stop Murder Music is doing more harm to the discourse on sexual citizenship in Jamaica and by extension the Caribbean.

Colin Robinson

I have never been clear that those of us in various locations in the international “murder music” movement have been all fighting for the same thing.

“Murder music” protest has undergone considerable critique, both knee-jerk and reasoned, cant and compelling, in scholarship, popular media and the political arena. This includes minimiztion of violence against GLBT people in Jamaica, whether it’s incidence, causation, or in comparison to the endemicity of violence; the construction of a mythic “international gay rights lobby” that has singled out Jamaica because of its convenience, economic vulnerability or national pride, or because of its interest in making same-sex sex tourism safer; or more nuanced challenges as to why “murder music” activism prioritizes certain kinds of visibly queer subjects over other Jamaican victims of state and economic violence and denial of citizenship. My own critique, based on telling a history of my roles and locations within this largely uncoordinated and decentralized movement over the past 17 years, reflects on how “murder music” protest shapes the politics and values of human rights advocacy for and by queer Caribbean subjects.

GLAAD & Boom Bye Bye, 1992

When it all began, the idea of protesting against violently homophobic music seemed pretty straightforward. New York City Mayor David Dinkins publicly called Buju Banton’s lyrics in “Boom Bye Bye” “absolutely, unequivocally reprehensible” (Parascandola 1992). The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), a newly emergent advocacy nonprofit in the US powered by gays and lesbians in the entertainment industry, which had initially focused its work on television representations, had now begun to take on the popular music industry. My Jamaican roommate, Fabian Thomas, provided them with a rendering into standard English of the patois lyrics to Buju’s tune, then enjoying a second wind in the North American music market. GLAAD’s media advocacy savvy produced a slew of coverage in mainstream newspapers[i] and broadcast television. The approach was simple enough—prejudicial representations of GLBT people in popular culture could be fought through bad publicity, which meant not only shame, but also economic consequences. It was not a campaign targeted specifically at Jamaica or at dancehall. But historically, it was the birth of the international “murder music” protest movement.

GLAAD’s public affairs director, Donald Suggs, an African American, worried that the mainstream media would only too readily seize on the music as yet another illustration of the pathology of Blackness. For me there was another issue: why weren’t we having this

conversation not just in the mainstream news and entertainment media, but with New York's Caribbean communities? Using GLAAD's materials, I penned a letter to the City's three Caribbean weeklies. "No leader in the West Indian community said a word" as "radio stations and dancehalls in New York were playing a reggae hit that encouraged its listeners to blow away battymen," it read. In response, *Caribbean Daylight's* editor said she was sorry, they just didn't "take sides"[ii] on these things. But *Caribbean Life* published the letter (Robinson 1992); and then in its following edition a scathing article in response titled "Open Letter to Colin Robinson on Boom Bye Bye" (Gordon 1992). The paper's rejoinder followed on a phone call I received at home from the leading Caribbean-American elected official, to tell me I would never be worked with again, and that nothing I was involved with would ever be supported. For both the councillor and the Jamaicans who made up the majority of the publication's small newsroom, my letter was a treacherous breaking of ranks.

No More Murder Music, 2004

A decade later, I became involved in shared leadership of a New York City intervention calling itself No More Murder Music. NMMM emerged from a meeting at Human Rights Watch with visiting GLBT Jamaicans from J-FLAG in 2004, shortly after Stop Murder Music had achieved the first concert cancellations in the UK, which had triggered a seeming backlash of violence in Jamaica (Younge 2004). After we had solicited the Jamaicans about the desirability of continued protest, an Irish American Lesbian from ACT-UP asked the room with some measure of urgency why concert protests similar to those in the UK weren't also happening in New York. As I remember it—because it made me cringe politically—she ended by saying she would lead such action if others wouldn't. But the statement had its intended effect of mobilizing Caribbean leadership, including mine; and Emmaia Gelman brought to the campaign not just drive and organizing savvy, but a sophisticated political understanding of identity and representation. She accepted the leadership of Jamaican and other Caribbean GLBT folks in creating a vision for what "murder music" protest should look like, a vision she also shared in crafting and owning:

- that our protests should highlight the impact of the music on Jamaica and Jamaicans
- that advocacy should foreground Jamaican and Caribbean voices, even when they are in the minority of protestors
- that protests should aim to win some outcome to the benefit of GLBT Jamaicans
- that protests should favor changing fans', presenters' and promoters' hearts and minds and spurring them to voluntary action—over censoring fans from hearing music that imagines violence
- that racism and stereotyping of Caribbean culture should have no place in the movement.

We applied these not only to our own work (Gelman 2004), but dreamed they would become the principles that an international "murder music" movement should embody, in no small measure to address our growing concern that, as the dominant voice of "murder music" advocacy, with ready access to mainstream media, representations of the

Caribbean by Stop Murder Music's Peter Tatchell (2004)[iii] were hurting and polarizing the work of the campaign.

NMMM was short lived, completing just one decent protest of a big radio station's concert in a central part of the city (Boston 2004, Gelman 2004, Sanneh 2004), and stimulating some additional discussion in the media in response to other appearances by offending artists in the New York region.

We were challenged by how to position our efforts in relation to an entrenched "First Amendment" tradition among US progressives of fierce commitment to free speech, which rejects censorship and asserts a principle that offensive speech should be responded to with more speech, not less. This was a notably different approach from the European protests, which relied on an accepted European tradition of legal prohibition of hate speech. Despite our efforts, and no matter how much we articulated that their bodies were doing something else—whether embarrassing corporate interests in the entertainment industry and media for profiting off of bigotry and violence; seeking to counter dancehall DJs' speech with robust speech from marginalized minorities; educating music fans and concert patrons about the harm that homophobia does and the violent form it often assumes in Jamaica; or humanizing GLBT Caribbean people—the average NMMM protestor was in fact using his own body to call for homophobic music to be censored, artists banned, and concerts cancelled.

I was often troubled that among a number of people with whom I was making common cause, the "murder music" protests were not so much a campaign about Jamaica or GLBT people over there, but one to keep hateful foreign music and its singers out of the metropole, or at the very least to punish their homophobia. Their energies seemed fuelled by a vision of Jamaican/Caribbean homophobia, the people and culture producing it as primitive and backward. This kind of response laid bare the cosmology that underlies a "murder music" iconography that has employed the most unkempt pictures of Buju to mock him as a monkey, and persistently used superlatives and sensation to flatten all nuance in Jamaican homophobia; that enables Larry Kramer (2007) to imagine thugs lurking at the end of the jetways of Jamaican airports to attack gay travellers. For me, the "murder music" picket line in New York was a place of a profoundly ambivalent alliance with racists and people who despised Caribbean culture. And across the US in the following months, as I witnessed SMM-inspired "murder music" protests catch fire on campuses and in cities, I heard the same limited theme: stop the music; stop these artists. And I saw the derision for Jamaica not too far beneath the surface.

Lifebeat, 2006

African American leadership of "murder music" protest has been even more fraught—and painful—framed as it is by complicated relationships of disrespect and resentment between Caribbean immigrants and US-rooted blacks, and the particular ways in which these dynamics play themselves out in intimate relationships between gay men or lesbians who are already struggling for affirmation. What has been quite striking in comments among gay African Americans about "murder music" in popular online fora[iv] is how deeply disdain for Caribbean culture runs, and how entrenched is the notion of Caribbean homophobia as superlative, even within a group that continues to be held up

themselves as "more homophobic" than other US ethnic groups. What is also noteworthy in African American leadership on "murder music" is how, not unlike the 1991 Crown Heights riots, the Caribbeanness of key stakeholders gets elided and deemed inessential, as gay African American leaders engage with dancehall as black people entitled to engage with *black* music.

Gay African American bloggers mobilized in 2006 to shut down a major AIDS fundraising and awareness concert targeting Caribbean communities organized by Lifebeat, because the New York City event was scheduled to feature both Beenie Man and TOK (Bagby 2006a, 2006b). The rapid, must-win, Internet-driven campaign saw no initial need to include or consult Caribbean American leadership, or to craft advocacy goals related to Jamaica; and the concert's cancellation was seen as a celebration of the power of Black gay organizing. "Black Gay Bloggers Win Victory…after a 48 hour protest," their press release read. But this approach would enable concert organizers to play wedge politics in response, blaming the African Americans' protest for creating a risk of violence to concertgoers and the resulting cancellation for depriving Caribbean communities of HIV funding and education. Caribbean Americans' insertion of our voices into leadership and messaging mid-campaign helped defuse this, and refocused attention on the harm that "murder music" does in Jamaica and other Caribbean communities (McShane 2006).

I have been deeply troubled by how Caribbean GLBT people (in both the North and the South) who have played roles in "murder music" campaigns have seemed to display gratitude that others with media access and institutional capacity would choose to use these to our benefit. What has maddened me most is the way I have seen lone Jamaicans in the diaspora play the indispensable role of translator for campaigns that do not see them as strategists and whose leaders do not see themselves as accountable to them. Once the music's lyrics have been decoded to unmask their intent, those who have little understanding, not merely of their context but of the words themselves, feel entitled to have their own, enabled outrage become the centre of focus. Words that have violent significance in Jamaica and in wider Caribbean communities (both home and abroad) become the subject of protests focused not on the spheres where they have powerful meaning but on others where they might easily pass without meaning. And it is this very sense of the words' occult nature that helps buttress the cosmology that "murder music" is this scarily primitive thing.

My consistent focus on these sorts of representational politics in "murder music" activism, and my blunt critique of what seemed similarly troubling race politics and questionable accountability in Peter Tatchell's UK branch of the international campaign, have strained my relationships with many of my brilliant friends in Jamaica—who were clear that in the violent realities of their lives such nuances were North American luxuries Jamaicans could ill-afford to parse—a viewpoint I still tried to frame faithfully in my own media work (Younge 2006). Nonetheless, I have ended up being seen by leading Jamaican organizers as "obsessed with racism which comes from spending too much time in the US," as one of their most recent rejoinders in an Internet forum discussion with White "murder music" activists put it. With boots on their necks and mobs at their backs,

my Jamaican friends preferred to turn to a masculinist use of economic muscle by those in the North as a much more straightforward defence against their musical attackers. And my inability to overlook the representational and power politics of "murder music" or the longer-term consequences of those alliances has felt like yet another painful breaking of ranks, resonant of the reprimand of the 1992 headline.

I became engaged with "murder music" activism because I care deeply about the safety and dignity and agency of Caribbean GLBT people; and because I fell in a jealous love with the inspirational resistance to homophobia I continue to witness in Jamaica. On my very first visit to Kingston in 2000, I expected a place of the unrelenting homophobia that is at the core of "murder music's" deliberate symbology. Instead, I was awed to discover a "brighter side of black"[v]: men, women and transgenders carving out spaces for community and love and celebration amidst oppression in breathtakingly creative ways (Robinson 2006). In contrast, in many places in the protest of "murder music" I have seen a frightening energy that would seek to destroy Jamaica. And I firmly believe, as I told Gary Younge (2006) at the *Hated to Death* forum, that you have to love Jamaica in order to change it.

The Trinidad & Tobago Anti-Violence Project, 2007

I left New York for Trinidad and Tobago in 2007.

Shortly after my return, a handful of Christian pastors would make the country an international laughing stock by protesting the participation of Elton John as a headliner for a multi-million-dollar jazz festival, on the basis of their offense at his "self-confessed" homosexuality and gay marriage (Ramnarine 2007). Then one evening in the Friends for Life "chatroom," a gay men's discussion group in Port of Spain, someone shared that the media was advertising appearances over the coming Easter weekend by artists such as Buju, Beenie Man, Elephant Man, Sizzla and Vybz Kartel in Tobago and Trinidad—as had happened on countless other occasions before. Now, however, thanks to the European and North American actions, protesting "murder music" concerts had become "the gay thing" to do. A group of us, including Joel Simpson, a Guyanese CSME worker who has organized similar protests at home, struggled, disagreed but landed on a simple response: raise the issue in the media by writing the Elton John pastors publicly and urging them to protest "murder music." Our letter would invite them to unite with us, regardless of our differences, on matters of manifest principle, and to protest those who offend Christ's teaching by singing death and violence against individuals as if they were not God's children—especially their choice to do so on the holiest weekend of Easter, when Christ's violent crucifixion and triumph over death are commemorated. The exercise quickly also became one of capacity-building, with the local GLBT community practicing new lessons about collaborative organizing and media advocacy—managing race and identity to make space for darker, less educated voices not to be crowded out in group dynamics by those at the apex of the pintocracy who "know it all"; and prioritizing in media representations indigenous, less experienced voices over those like mine.

No demonstrations happened, no concerts were cancelled; but each of the three dailies published an opinion piece, an article or our letter; (Mohammed 2007, Allard 2007, Trinidad & Tobago Anti-Violence Project 2007, Trinidad & Tobago *Newsday* 2007a); radio stations called; a TV station did a magazine show and an evening news segment;

and coverage was picked up in the Jamaican media (Radio Jamaica 2007). The Trinidad & Tobago AntiViolence Project, as we called ourselves, in a clear effort to encompass dancehall's violence against women, claimed success.

Months later, a news report of the buggery of two young boys in Gasparillo would break through the national election newscycle (Charan 2007). Birthed for a "murder music" protest, TTAVP would now provide not just a framework for addressing musical violence, but a strategic platform to achieve social inclusion (Robinson et al. 2008) and to reshape a public imagination of homosexuality as predatory. Gay men would tell the media we were seizing leadership in mobilizing others to strengthen protections for boys from sexual abuse and its stigma (Trinidad and Tobago *Newsday* 2007b, 2007c). A year after that, following a pattern of rapes and robberies of gay men seeking sex through a very popular Internet site, efforts would get underway to build a multi-stakeholder coalition under the same umbrella to include the University of the West Indies, the YMCA, the Family Planning Association and the Rape Crisis Society. A draft mission statement would read: "TTAVP is guided by the vision of a child's right to healthy sexual development, free of sexual and spiritual violence, into an adult free to express and practice gender and sexual identity in ways of his/her choosing. We are a framework to bring together diverse stakeholders to: mobilize gender-sensitive approaches to sexual violence against children and adults; sharpen understanding of the gender-based nature of homophobic violence; support survivors of violence and their families, partners and friends in individual and collective healing, mobilization and restituitive justice; encourage gay communities to take leadership in protecting minors from sexual exploitation; and work on other intersectional issues related to sexual, gender-based and social violence."

An undeniable product of the past 17 years of "murder music" protest has been new imagination and practices of affiliation and advocacy with regard to sexuality and sexual rights in the Caribbean. An open-minded critique of Jamaica and the wider Caribbean diaspora's complicated relationships to the "murder music" movement—and an honest political analysis of both the achievements and damage that the protests have produced—afford the opportunity to prospectively build more thoughtful and values-based approaches to transnational human rights advocacy and alliance building with regard to sexuality and gender in the region. I hope that my reflections here help advance that goal. My own vision is that those lessons generate a movement that effectively mobilizes power and technology, but is also grounded in values such as empowerment, autonomy and self-definition of Caribbean GLBT people, a shared love for the amazing place this region is, and a celebration and cultivation of the brilliant ways in which Caribbean GLBT people continue to claim citizenship. Hopefully, too, just as the Jamaican councillor who called my home on Thanksgiving weekend 17 years ago and I are back on speaking, joking terms, I will find myself in new partnerships with others with whom I have struggled and broken ranks over "murder music".

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Partners in "murder music" activism and analysis made invaluable contributions to the development of this essay. Andil Gosine provided the important opportunity to explore these experiences and questions in a Caribbean forum, in addition to the support of a gentle editorial hand. Joel Simpson and Emmaia Gelman's political challenges, factual corrections, historical memories and editorial critiques are as deeply appreciated as their comradeship as organizers. Donald Suggs, my earliest "murder music" comrade, helped nuance the cultural context of our 1992 New York City media advocacy.

NOTES

[i] The *New York Post* tabloid made it into one of its signature three-inch front-page headlines: "HATE MUSIC", accompanied by the tag "New reggae hit urges violence against gays" and an image, captioned with some of the tune's lyrics, of a record cover featuring a grinning, 17-year-old Buju. Inside, a ¾-page story included a sidebar with the tune's full lyrics (Pierson 1992).

[ii] A phrase I would hear again 12 years later when I asked the Jamaican group hosting a Brooklyn forum on *Hated to Death* (the explosive 2004 Human Rights Watch report on Jamaican homophobia) whether my nonprofit could use the event to distribute a job announcement for a capacity-building initiative focused on Caribbean GLBT people that was funded by the New York City Council

[iii] In an op-ed piece that appeared in the UK at the height of the New York City activity, Tatchell described Jamaica's Christians as suffering from "massive guilt and self-hatred" and its Prime Minister as a "servile defender" of anti-gay laws because his mind remained "colonised by the…values of 19th century British imperialism".

[iv] A review of ongoing exchanges about Jamaica by posters on keithboykin.com and jasmynecannick.com, blogs of two lead organizers of the 2006 concert (among the most popular sites of their kind at that time) will reveal clear, though by no means uniform, examples of this imagination of Jamaica and the Caribbean.

[v] A reference to Issac Julien's 2003 film, *The Darker Side of Black*, which so troubled me for its erasure of all that I had seen in Jamaica.

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http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/index.asp

Director/Writer/Producer: Michelle Mohabeer (Canada/Tobago, 2008, 50 MINS)

BLU IN YOU is a poetic-essayist rumination mediated through the lens of a female observer, who watches the staged conversations between a writer (Nalo Hopkinson) and a visual arts curator (Andrea Fatona). The aesthetics and conversations in Blu In You employs a visual/aural poetics to politically challenge early ethnographic tropes of the colonist gaze and spectacularization; to engage a cultural history of the black female body, subjectivity and sexuality marked by violence, but also celebrated in art and culture. The conversations bridge historical and contemporary art and cultural figures such as the “Hottentot Venus,” Jeanne Duval, and cultural icons Josephine Baker and Dorothy Dandridge.

EVOCATION **c. 2006 (featured in BLU IN YOU) Michelle Mohabeer**

Taken from your home with the lure of false promises and the hope of fame and fortune, your genital apron, buttocks and skin the commodity that allowed you to be sold twice over.

Offered up as a primitive spectacle and freak for all of white Europe to jeer, scrutinize, guffaw, and even pity. Their pity was worse of all. You, caged like an animal, head adorned with the plumage of a peacock. Skin buffed and polished -- all the more to exhibit you alongside the other exotic animal specimen.

You were no animal, and neither did they liked being caged and prodded.
You were a young woman violated time over with their gazes and slurs, your body scarred with their bigotry and fascination, with their lust and repulsion.
No animal endured this; it was you my sister,
Naked and often cold from the damp climate, a respiratory problem was not far behind --But dying was not your salvation.
The worse was yet to come –public dissection in life and again in death –plucking your genitalia and brain from your person –the prize of conquest.

Your brain, pickled in a jar stood as the measure of inferiority consigned for study and research, displayed for all posterity in their curio-museums of hate and disrepute.

Commodified, Fetishized –you became their spectacular vision of the primitive other, conferring upon them the safety and assurance of their normality and pedigree.

There you lay dismembered and dislocated, did your brain still
Remember and note these atrocities?
Did it shudder now, bare and exposed in the fluids of your despair, as you watched your own genitalia nearby.

What a dear price you paid my sister, a body violated by history and science --plucked and pillaged, looted of all dignity and humanity.

Your sexuality and sex did you no favour!

EVOCATION c. Michelle Mohabeer (2006)

COCONUT /CANE & CUTLASS (Director/Writer/Producer: Michelle Mohabeer, Guyana/Canada, 32 mins (1994)

(Film still of Actors from Coconut/Cane & Cutlass: S. Lewis, and S. Dhillon, courtesy of filmmaker)

Coconut/Cane & Cutlass weaves a rich lyrical tapestry of imagery shot on location in Guyana melded with dramatic scenes shot in Toronto to communicate a complex, lyrical and touching rumination on exile and displacement. Narrated from the point of view of a mixed race Indo-Caribbean lesbian, "the exile" (and filmmaker) who immigrated to Canada as a young girl, this beautiful film explores personal experiences of identity as they relate to colonial and sexual oppression.

The Return HOME

(c. Michelle Mohabeer, 1993) Voice-over poem from **Coconut/Cane & Cutlass**)

I have felt your absence for the past twenty years. Parts of you have dissolved in my memory but yet I long for some connection with you, intangible as that may seem.

I want to still claim you as home but how can I when I no longer feel your embrace for all that I am. Living away from here for so long has dislocated my psyche into fragmentary romantic longings for that space where memory and reality blur **....**

I am a foreigner of sorts in what used to be my homeland
We have both changed you and I, you are at once a welcome respite in some of the familiar memories you evoke.

The scent of early morning, the succulent fruit and brilliant hues of the bougenvillas, lilies and orchids mesmerize my senses and fill me with a deep awe of the simplicity of what I once over looked.

Tracing the journeys of my ancestors who came before, from there to here, India to Guyana and the Caribbean, like nomads carving out a space and time in a hostile landscape, a landscape marred by the legacies of colonial brutality and haunted by the spirits of the martyred and enslaved ones, who resisted the constant barrage to their psyche, mind and physical bodies.

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SPECIMEN INSOLITE

VERSE 1

DÉSOLÉÉ
JE SUIS TENUE AU SECRET
JE N'PEUX RÉVÉLER

CE QUI M' A GUARDÉE
SI PURE DE TOUTE IDÉE
DE CONFORMITÉ

PAS D' ETIQUETTE POUR MOI JE VEUX RESTER

CHORUS

INSOLITE
J'UTILISE TOUS LES STRATAGEMES
EN SPECIMEN
INSOLITE
J'ŒUVRE POUR RESTER
QUOI QU'IL ADVIENNE
UN SPECIMEN

VERSE 2

PARANORMAL
MA RÉVOLTE EST TACITE
MES DESSEINS AVOUÉS

PARADOXALE
JE VEUX PLAIRE A QUI ME PLAIT
SANS ARRIÈRES PENSÉES

SI NOS JOURS SONT COMPTÉS
JE VEUX RESTER

CHORUS

RAP
AMBIDEXTRE EXPERTE JE SUIS UN ANGE ALERTE
PHALLOIDE QUAND LE CŒUR ME GUIDE ANDROIDE
KALEIDOSCOPIQUE
J' INVITE LE PLAISIR OU QU' IL ME PORTE`
MES AILES M' EMPORTENT ET JE M' EXPORTE
HYBRIDE CHRISALIDE
PAS DE CHRISANTHÈMES
POUR MA BOHEME JE LA CULTIVE
DÉLICES EXTRÊME DE NOS SALIVES
AMAZONE EQUIVOQUE MON AME
RÉVOQUE L' AMALGAME
ET JE L'INTERPELLE, ET JE L'INTERPELLE, ET JE L'INTERPELLE

CHORUS

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CARIBBEAN SEXUALITY: MAPPING THE FIELD[1]

Kamala Kempadoo

Abstract

Caribbean sexuality is both hypervisible and obscured. That is, it is celebrated in popular culture as an important ingredient in Caribbean social life and flaunted to attract tourists to the region, yet is shrouded in double entendre, secrecy and shame. In this article, I present a review of the main trends in studies of Caribbean sexuality, arguing that while there are few exclusive studies on the subject there is much we can draw upon for insights into Caribbean sexual relations, sexual expressions and sexual identities. Drawing from published as well as "grey" materials, this article points out that Caribbean sexuality is often perceived and analysed as linked to force and (domestic) violence against women and children, sexually transmitted infections (i.e. HIV and AIDS), and economic imperatives. It is also widely accepted as attached to heterosexuality and gendered imbalances of power, as well as to men's sexual agency. Studies of same-sex relations, transactional sex, prostitution and sex tourism suggest, however, a far greater complexity, which demands more elaborate and complicated understandings of sexuality. Moreover, given the range of sexual practices and relations that appear in the studies, we argue here for a conceptualization of sexuality as semi-autonomous from gender, and begin to map the contours of a specific area that can be designated as Caribbean sexuality studies.

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[1] This is an updated version of an article published in *OSO:Tijdschrift voor Surinamistiek en het Caraïbisch Gebied* (April 2008), 28-51.

Introduction

This article is part of the outcome of a study that was aimed to assist UNIFEM and its partners to "better understand and therefore address how gender and sexuality are related to risk and vulnerability" in the Caribbean.[2]

A primary focus here is on how sexuality is expressed or practised, not the way in which sexed bodies or sexualities are constituted or determined. *Sexual praxis* is used here then to capture the way in which sexuality is made visible through behaviours, activities and interactions between people, in relations, and in the ways in which desires are actualized. The focus on praxis rather than identity is for two main reasons: a) sexuality does not form a primary basis for social identification in the Caribbean, consequently sexual behaviours, activities and relations have become the central focus for analyses of sexuality in the region; and b) the specification of sexual identity groups often elides the very varied sexual arrangements in the region, and can work to hinder broader understandings of how Caribbean peoples relate sexually.

Trends in sexual praxis

Despite the mountain of *grey* documents that include some mention of sexual praxis (reports, conference papers, theses, and policy briefings) and the growing number of more accessible documents (published journal articles, electronic articles, chapters in books, media reports and books), there is little consistency in existing studies, thus little basis for comparison cross-ethnically, cross-nationally, or regionally. Repetition of ideas through multiple reviews of studies and several small-scale qualitative research efforts that are not replicable is also apparent. Yet, while many of the studies tend to repeat broad generalities, they also contain specific details and important nuggets of information about localized, class and ethnic-specific sexual expressions. [3]

The most common aspects of sexual praxis we identified in the literature are elaborated below. These involve violence against women, sexual-economic exchange, same-sex relations, adolescent sexual activity, population mobility, and multiple partnering. Incest, women's sexual agency and expressions of sexual desire, and bisexual behaviour are repeatedly signalled yet are not well-researched themes in this body of literature. And while male (hetero)sexual pleasure and agency is taken in many instances to be a natural state of affairs and appears as an underlying assumption in many studies, the significance of notions of virility, fertility, sexual prowess and violence to constructions of masculinity remains under-interrogated and obscured.

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[2] The study was commissioned by UNIFEM-Caribbean Office, the Barbados National HIV/AIDS Commission, and the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC). See Kempadoo with Taitt (2006) at: http://www.unifemcar.org/pr_.cfm?ID=10&Sec_=Programmes.

[3] The review of Caribbean sexuality literature published in the U.S. women's journal *SIGNS* by Jenny Sharpe and Samantha Pinto takes up studies that are published and available internationally. The authors however miss much of the research that has been produced locally and regionally, thus privileging the work of researchers who have access to the global academic publishing industry.

Violence against women

The issue of sex-as-violence to women is a main theme in the literature, related primarily to the lives of adult women. It is reflected in a large number of reports on, laws against, shelters for, and public discussions about domestic and gender-based violence. One of the first exclusive studies on domestic violence in the region was undertaken in Guyana in the 1980s by Basmati Shiw Parsad (1989; Danns and Shiw Parsad 1989). In the two decades since then, a number of other significant studies on domestic and gender-based violence have been conducted.[4] A recently published annotated bibliography on gender-based violence in the Caribbean lists 388 reports, articles and studies that deal with the subject (Quamina-Aiyejina and Brathwaite 2005).

While these studies document violence against women, it is not always easy to discern the extent of sexual violence as there is little distinction made between sexual and other types of domestic or gender-based violence and few explorations into meanings of the violence. From research in the 1990s it is also claimed that there is little difference in rates of violence in intimate or domestic settings between Indian and African ethnic groups, or for women in different classes (Gopaul and Cain 1996; Peake and Trotz 1999), although a more recent or sustained comparison has not been made. The concept of sexual violence, especially within domestic violence studies, remains then, vague and obscured, and is barely specified by ethnicity/race, or class.

Nevertheless, data from 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean show rates of physical abuse by a partner ranging up to 69% of all women, with 47% of all women reporting being victims of sexual assault during their lifetime (Morrisson, Ellsberg and Bott 2005). Such data support the argument that even though the statistics on rape are unreliable indicators of the incidence of gender violence, they demonstrate the pervasiveness and social acceptability of violence against women throughout the region (Clarke 1998). The general conclusion in such studies is that the problem of gender-based violence, which includes sexual violence, "is serious, growing, and probably quite widespread" (LeFranc and Rock 2002).

Violence to women is continually raised as a way in which Caribbean men seek to maintain patriarchal power, and sex becomes a primary means available to Caribbean men to exert control over and to inflict physical harm on women, Indian and African alike. "Stabbing", "nailing", and "slamming" are common metaphors for male sexual acts, seen to represent acts of violence (Chevannes 2001). The issue of forced sex stresses men's actions upon the bodies and psyches of Caribbean women, and women are overwhelmingly positioned as victims in the studies. Sexuality in this way is revealed as a site of conflict and harm, firmly attached to abusive gendered relations of power. Violence is considered a regular or normal part of male sexual expressions and identity. However, the embeddedness of sexual violence in masculinity, as well as the coupling of sexual violence to everyday social and political violence or to the normalized expressions of affection and love by both men and women, is underexplored in the literature.

Sexual-economic exchanges

[4] See, for example, Haniff (1995), Gopaul and Cain (1996), Clarke (1998), Red Thread and Peake (1999), Robinson (2000), LeFranc (2001), Arscott-Mills (2001), Lazarus-Black (2003).

Sexual praxis is also highlighted in studies of the exchange of sexual acts or services for money, material goods, or security. This involves arrangements that have been described in three main ways.

i) Prostitution, sex work or "commercial sex work". This is the most immediately identifiable form of sexual-economic exchange, and includes the sale of sexual labour from the street, brothels, bars, clubs, hotels, mining camps, and so on, as well as exotic dancing, stripping, and escorting.[5]

ii) "Romance" with tourists, or "tourist-oriented prostitution". Here Caribbean men and women are engaged in sexual-economic/material exchanges with vacationers predominantly from North America and Europe—both men and women—that cover a range of practices from brief "sex on the sand" encounters, to steady, longer-term partnerships.[6]

iii) "Transactional sex". This refers to relationships that involve a deliberate exchange of sex for some form of "betterment"—material goods, clothes, accommodation, social status, and so forth—but are not viewed by the people involved as prostitution, and are not typically based on notions of romance or love. These usually involve young women with older men, but include teenage boys with older women. [7]

The extent and range of sexual-economic relations in the region are not easily determined, for they encompass a wide variety of activities and exchanges and, due to their illegal and stigmatized character, are not widely acknowledged. Despite the lack of visibility of the arrangements, they are most commonly identified as heterosexual although they are also signalled in studies of same-sex relations. In such studies, a notion of sexual intercourse as "work" appears regularly, leading to conceptualizations of the exploitation, trade, or sale of sexual labour. It is also here that female (hetero)sexual agency appears, most commonly coupled to poor women's strategies to "make do." However, Amalia L.Cabezas, in a study of Cuba and the Dominican Republic, argues that "the exchange of goods and money for sexual services is not an unambiguous commercial endeavor but a discursive construction that is contested and in motion, changing across time and space" (2009, 4). Amongst hospitality workers in all-inclusive resorts in Cuba, she found that there is a "use of affect and sexuality to cultivate friendships, romance, and other exchanges" which ultimately benefits and improves the workers' lives (2009, 109). Amongst women without connections to the tourist economy and who lacked relatives abroad who could remit money "relationships with foreigners,

[5] See, for example, studies by O'Carroll-Barahona et al. (1994), Kempadoo (1996, 2004), de Moya and Garcia (1999), Campbell and Campbell (2001), Red Thread (2002), CAREC/PAHO and Maxi Linder (2006), Adomakoh (2007), Bombereau and Allen (2008), Braithwaite and Team (2008), Schmeitz et al. (2009).

[6] See for example Pruitt and LaFont (1995), O'Connell Davidson (1996), de Alburquerque (1999, 2000), Kempadoo (1999), Phillips (2002), Sanchez Taylor (2001, 2002), Brennan (2004a, 2004b), Padilla (2007) Padilla et al., (2006), Cabezas (2004, 2006).

[7] See de Zalduondo and Bernard (1995), Chevannes (2001), Dunn (2001), Kempadoo and Dunn (2001), Ahmed (2003), Kempadoo (2004), Barrow (2005, 2009), Figueroa (2006), Hawkins et al. (2007), Rolfe et al. (2007), Cabezas (2009).

whether they include sex or not, often provide unmatched economic returns. Monetary considerations are important, but...so are affective and spiritual ones" (2009, 117). *Tactical sex* is the concept Cabezas opts for to capture this complexity of affective-sexual relations that allows for the heterogeneity of relationships that can be found today in the Caribbean tourism industry. The notion of tactical sex closely approximates what has been described above as transactional sex, even while the definitions of both remain fuzzy.

Sexual-(affective)-economic activities are lodged in needs and desires for comfort and security— such as material things, some of which may be "basic" (groceries, housing, electricity, clothes) or immediate needs such as lunch-money—while others are related to long-term residential, educational, economic, or emotional security. Yet, due to gendered asymmetries in social and economic benefits, women and girls most commonly hold the weaker negotiating positions. Moreover, notions of "prostitution", "transactional sex" or "sexual-economic relations" carry a sense of moral opprobrium, particularly for young women, as it is associated with "promiscuity" or undisciplined sexuality ("looseness" or "slackness") in hegemonic discourse. The stigmas, moral disapproval and discrimination against persons—particularly women—who are engaged in sex work and other forms of sexual economic exchange, are maintained in most Caribbean countries by legislation that criminalizes the commercialization of sex (i.e. prostitution) and by policies and international campaigns to combat the trafficking of persons, and are subject to ongoing scrutiny.

Same-sex relations

Despite the claim that homosexuality is unnatural to the Caribbean, same-sex relations have been noted in anthropological studies since the 1930s. In the past two decades a number of studies have appeared that foreground these relations. For "women-who-love-women" the main studies are by M. Jaqui Alexander (1991, 1997 2005), Makeda Silvera (1992), Gloria Wekker (1993, 1994,1999, 2006), Joan French and Michelle Cave (1995), Joceline Clemencia (1996), Rosamund Elwin (1997), and Rosamund King (2008). [8] About men, the prominent work on the Caribbean is by E. Antonio de Moya and Rafael Garcia (1996, 1999), David Murray (2000, 2009), Thomas Glave (2000, 2005, 2008), Robert Carr (2003, 2005), Wesley Crichlow (2004), Andil Gosine (2005, 2009a, 2009b), and Mark Padilla (2006, 2007).

Aside from establishing that same-sex relations exist in Suriname, Jamaica, Trinidad, Curacao, Martinique, the Dominican Republic, and Barbados, these studies note a flexibility in the naming of these relations in the region. The range of terms represents in turn a great heterogeneity in the practices, desires, self-identifications and external views of people who have sexual intercourse with, or who sexually desire, persons of the same sex or gender. In many of these studies same-sex relations are not in the first instance claimed as identity but rather as activity, as people disclose information about their practice without identifying or viewing themselves as homosexual, queer, gay, lesbian, or transgender. The studies have also brought to the fore a commonality of bisexual behaviour. According to most of the research on Caribbean men-who-have-sex-with-

[8] For reviews of many of these studies, see Kempadoo (2004), Calixte (2005), Sharpe and Pinto (2006).

men, many also have sex with women. Wekker makes similar claims for Mati in Suriname—that women-who-love-women often engage in heterosexual relations through marriage, for childbearing purposes, or to avoid attention or stigma.
An important focus in the literature on same-sex relations is on ideologies (heterosexism and homophobia) and discriminations and violence against groups of people whose sexual practices transgress the dominant norm of heterosexuality. While religion may be offered as a main basis for the intense expressions of homophobia that have been recorded in the Caribbean, other factors are seen to underpin the intense homophobia found in the region, such as definitions of masculinity that "emphasize sexual prowess with women and eschew 'softness' in a man" (White and Carr 2005, 8). Due to the silencing, stigma, and discriminations that same-sex relations and behaviours face, public self-identification as "gay", "lesbian" or "queer" is not common, although this has not prevented the emergence of organizations such as the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), the United Gay and Lesbian Association of Barbados (UGLAB) and the Society Against Sexual Discrimination in Guyana (SASOD). Moreover, despite the ongoing public assaults on gay, lesbian and transgender persons, there is some acknowledgement of positive shifts in attitudes, thought to be the result of increased exposure to gay images on television, and the frequency of reporting on homosexual behaviour in the media (White and Carr 2005).

The issue of homosexuality has been taken up in studies for HIV and AIDS prevention and programming, which by and large tend to highlight the behavioural aspect of men's lives, under the banner of "Men who have Sex with Men" (MSM). [9] The general assumption in this literature is that this group poses a particular health risk to the rest of the population, and acts as a "bridge" in transmitting the disease since the men who fall into this category are believed to be basically heterosexuals who have sex with homosexual men at times. Mark Padilla (2007) argues that this approach is faulty in that it assumes that bisexual behaviour is incidental and episodic—thus not a structural part of social behaviour—and implies that men who "deviate" from normal heterosexuality are responsible for spreading disease into the rest of the population. Moreover, in this discourse, as Andil Gosine argues, "MSM" often becomes a euphemism for "gay", which works to neglect the large number of men who do not identify as such (2005). Gosine also notes, "in dominant HIV and AIDS analyses and policies in the Anglo-Caribbean, MSM is primarily intended to facilitate, rather than challenge, heteronationalism…[it] constructs men engaged in homosexual acts as infecting agents who threaten the welfare of communities, states, peoples" (2009a, 97).[10] The focus in such studies is commonly on behaviour change among the MSM community, emphasizing condom use, single partners and other safe sex practices. Far less attention is paid to stigma and discrimination that the men face and which prevent them from accessing services. Unlike the men, "women who have sex with women" do not appear prominently in studies or interventions with an epidemiological or medical approach, due to a perception that they are a "low risk" population (Gosine 2005). Nevertheless, stigmas and discriminations against all homosexual acts, gays, lesbians, transgenders and "all sexuals" in Caribbean

[9] See also the reports on MSM and HIV by Russell-Brown and Sealy (1998/2000), Royes (2003), CAREC/PAHO and Maxi Linder Foundation (2005).
[10] See also Murray (2009).

societies are propped up by legislation that outlaws "sodomy" and other forms of same-sex intercourse (Robinson 2007, 2009). Efforts to decriminalize same-sex relations are often met with vehement public opposition, and to date no part of CARICOM has been successful in removing the laws. Instead, "there remains an insistence on unnaturalness, on discourses of 'we' versus 'them' that preserve the myth of a stable and authentic society" (Smith 2000, viii).

Adolescent sexuality

With the incidence of HIV and AIDS through heterosexual transmission on the increase since the 1980s and settling primarily among the 15–45 age group, concerns have arisen over the sexuality of young people. Sexual expressions as well as the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents, youth, and children have therefore become an area for public scrutiny.[11] The studies primarily concern young African Caribbean people in low-income and poor communities. In particular, first ages of sexual activity, condom use and young people's knowledge about sexually transmitted infections and safe sex practices are highlighted. Christine Barrow's in-depth study amongst "at-risk" adolescent girls—young women "whose lifestyles, sub-cultural norms and socio-economic environments are neither safe nor secure"—confirms earlier arguments about young women and transactional sexual relations in the region and again places adolescent sexuality in an HIV/public health context (2005, 17). Aside from the studies of HIV and AIDS, adolescent sexual expressions are also taken up in the studies of prostitution or transactional sex amongst young people under the age of 18, with a focus on girls. In a few studies of child labour, sexuality is also examined, mostly in the context of prostitution or transactional sex.[12] In such studies, the majority of the incidences of sexual activity involve some form of transactional sex, with young women partnering with older men for a variety of reasons, including school fees, money, and to acquire sneakers.

The overriding trend in studies of adolescent sex is the uncritical problematization of young people's sexual praxis, accompanied by a search for methods to curb or end youthful sexual expressions though ABC campaigns and religious, parental, or school instruction. Nevertheless, sexual rights have been a focus of various reports regarding adolescent or youth sexuality and health, and children's rights; it is in this body of literature that a conception of young people's sexual agency begins to emerge.[13]

Population mobility

Activities of persons who move around the world and within the Caribbean also contribute to an understanding of Caribbean sexual praxis. Studies of sex tourism, for example, illuminate sexual practices of tourists while in the Caribbean.[14] The international tourism industry brings an estimated 10 million visitors a year to the region,

[11] See Eggleton, Jackson and Hardee (1999), Chevannes and Gayle (2000), Christie et al. (2001), de Bruin (2001, 2004), LeFranc and Lord (2004), Barrow (2005, 2009).
[12] Dunn (2002a, 2002b, 2002c), Danns (2002), Hunte and Lewis (2002), and Young (2003).
[13] See UNFPA (1999), Barrow (2001), Kempadoo & Dunn (2001), Clarke (2004), LeFranc & Lord (2004), Barrow (2009).
[14] See also O'Connell Davidson (1996), Kempadoo (1999), Sanchez Taylor (2001), Brennan (2004a, 2004b), Padilla (2007), Cabezas (2009).

and is seen to provide "opportunities for new sexual encounters including casual sex" (Figueroa 2006, 2). It is also in the context of sex tourism that the intersection of race and sexuality is analysed. Julia O'Connell Davidson and Jaqueline Sanchez Taylor (1999), for example, argue that Caribbean men and women are constructed in tourist imaginations as racialized-sexual subjects/objects—the hypersexual "black male stud" and the "hot" mulatto or black woman—whose main roles are to serve and please the visitor. Global and local tourism industries and governments feed this imagination by marketing the Caribbean as a sexual paradise, exoticizing the region and its people in the search for profit.[15]

The majority of the studies of sex tourism concern North American and Western European vacationers. Sexual practices of persons who travel to the Caribbean in other capacities, especially as visitors from Caribbean diasporas in Europe and North America, as well as of Caribbean persons who travel internationally for business, pleasure, or for family reasons, have not been the focus of attention, although a large body of literature on Caribbean migration exists, as well as a growing number of studies on return migration. While sex tourism is commonly believed to corrupt and debase local populations, particularly Caribbean womanhood, a counter-trend in the studies is to situate the arrangements within the context of a dependency of the Caribbean region on tourism within the larger global economy, making sexuality a resource that is, on the one hand exploited by national governments, the international tourism industry and tourists for their own benefit and profit, and on the other, is used by local populations in order to participate in g/local development and transnational flows.

Apart from people who move around for leisure and pleasure, sexual praxis is also highlighted in discussions of regional labour migration. As Caroline Allen remarks:

> Population mobility…increases the number of sexual partnerships as well as contacts with high-risk groups such as sex workers. Loneliness, insecurity, and freedom from social norms provide an impetus to risky sexual behaviour; these are compounded by economic hardship that may force people to trade sex for money or favours (Allen 2004,1).

In the context of studies of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, mobile labour populations are commonly identified as vectors of disease. Migrant sex workers who work in territories other than their own have traditionally been analysed as such, or more recently as "bridges" of sexually transmitted disease, likewise their sexual practices.[16] Analyses of sexual relations of other types of labour migrants, such as Haitians who work in the sugar-cane plantations in the Dominican Republic, are not as common but also exist (Brewer, Hasburn et al. 1998). Nonetheless, the larger story of the impact of population mobility—whether in the form of tourism, labour and return migration, or annual family visiting—on Caribbean sexual praxis, is still to be fully explored.

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[15] See also Sheller (2003).

[16] See, for example, Persaud (1998), Samiel (2001), Adomakoh (2007), Joseph and Faura (2008), COIN (2008).

Multiple partnering and sexual networks

Informal polygamy and multiple partnering are commonly signalled in studies of family, masculinity, and HIV and AIDS. Such arrangements are usually associated with men and considered to be an accepted part of (African) Caribbean masculine social life. For example, Barrington Chevannes concludes that "becoming an African Caribbean man privileges one to engage in all…forms of sexual relations, from the promiscuous and casual to multiple partnerships (which in effect is unrecognized polygamy)...A man is not a real man unless he is sexually active" (2001, 217). Others concur. Masculinity "is often viewed by men in terms of how many women or baby mothers they have. It is clear that the practice of men having an 'outside woman,' that is one outside his main partnership, is a deeply ingrained cultural practice" (Figueroa 2006, 3). Although not as frequently mentioned, multiple partnering for women occurs, particularly amongst young women. For Barbados, it is observed that "the contemporary literature reports patterns of aggressive sexual initiation, infidelity and concurrent multiple partnering among adolescent girls" (Barrow 2005, 14), while in Jamaica "30–40 percent of [young] women may be having multiple sexual partners in the past year" (Figueroa 2006, 3). While not considered appropriate conduct for a woman, multiple partnering is culturally accepted if it is believed to be for economic reasons (Senior 1991, Chevannes 2001).

When multiple partnering crosses into same-sex relations and presents itself as bisexual behaviour, it is more likely discussed as deviant or abnormal behaviour. The wide-scale practice of multiple partnering, along with the condemnation of same-sex relations has, moreover, focussed attention on the "wrong" behaviour of "some" men (and women), and removes attention from the more socially accepted practice amongst the wider population. Thus, it is homosexuals, prostitutes, migrant workers and "promiscuous" adolescents who are linked to sexual networks or to multiple sexual partners, and in HIV and AIDS discourses, are then blamed for transmitting disease into the general population.

Heteronormativity

Common to many of the studies is that sexual practices and arrangements are held to be operational around a gender binary that firmly attaches the biological to the social, and where heterosexuality is seen as the only form of legitimate sexuality. The collapse of sex and gender in everyday and academic discourse often elides the existence of persons whose social identities, sexual practices or physical bodies do not adhere or conform to these categories. Caribbean sexuality then regularly appears as rigidly heterosexual and intolerant of sexual difference. Sex folds into gender, and masculinity and femininity are viewed as complements to each other: two parts of a whole. Moreover, heterosexual gender identities are rigidly defined. The common characterization of men in Caribbean social studies literature and fiction is of someone who is "powerful, exceedingly promiscuous, derelict in his parental duties, often absent from the household, and, if present, unwilling to undertake his share of domestic responsibilities" (Lewis 2003, 107). "Promiscuity" with multiple women is often emphasized, and links between sex and male virility or fertility commonly made. Deriving pleasure, power and freedom from sexual performance appears critical to Caribbean masculinity, and is sometimes assumed to be biologically determined.

Regarding women, studies continue to find that heterosexual activity is a common signifier of maturity, which is still often perceived by girls and women as attached to fertility, through which one becomes a "real" Caribbean woman. [17] (Young) women continue to face many social pressures to have children, to confirm their identity as women, and to prove they are "not a mule (Eggleton, Jackson and Hardee 1999, 82). Sexual activity is thus attached not only to biology, but to social identity: sex and gender are deeply intertwined. And despite the claim that ethnicity is believed to be important in shaping sexual behaviours, it has been found to not significantly alter the idea that "the majority of young women think that children satisfy the most important goal of womanhood and are women's greatest (and lasting) contribution" (Hosein 2004, 552).
The dominant, almost unquestioned, links between sexuality and gender are lodged in a norm of heterosexuality as natural. As Jacqui Alexander pointed out in the early 1990s, heterosexuality is paramount in the region, and as described above, the dominance of a heterosexual orientation for African Caribbean men and women is repeatedly corroborated. Likewise, for Indian Caribbean men it has been noted that "the Indo-Caribbean subject of jahaji bhai culture is not only always-already gendered, but also always-already sexualized…the Indo-Caribbean masculine subject is indeed heterosexual" (Lokaisingh-Meighoo 2000, 86). Heterosexuality is reinforced by education, social studies, and the media, or as "the norm as ordained by God" (Holder 2003; Genrich and Braithwaite 2005).

Conceptions of heterosexuality as "the norm" in Caribbean societies have, nevertheless, been rigorously interrogated and critiqued in recent years. Such critiques acknowledge complexities in masculinity and changes in femininity that also trouble hegemonic constructions of sex and gender.[18] And even though much of the literature concerns African Caribbean people, studies of Indian women's cultural practices in the *matikor* tradition and *chutney* music contribute to the critique.[19] It is in these studies that femininity is linked to sexual agency and freedom, as well as to the contestation of heteropatriarchy. Questioning normative heterosexuality in Caribbean social and gender studies becomes critical not just for acknowledging same-sex relations and changes in definitions of masculinity and femininity, but also for conceptualizing sexuality itself. Wekker, for example, argues for a distinction between concepts of gender and sexuality. Women who express desire and passion through sexual relationships with other women and who transgress boundaries of existing gendered categories thus require a separate conceptual category. Likewise, Alexander argues that the impetus to distinguish between sexuality and gender does not simply rest in everyday social practice, but is deeply embedded in state discourses and laws, visible through the criminalization of particular types of sexual expressions. People who engage in same-sex relations and those who sell

[17] See for example, Mohammed and Perkins (1999), Peake and Trotz (1999), Clarke (2004), Barrow (2009).
[18] In two recent collections on Caribbean gender, sexuality and HIV, several of the authors explore constructions of heteronormativity. See Barrow, de Bruin and Carr (2009), Roberts et al. (2009)
[19] The terms "maticore" (or matikor) and "chutney" (or chatney) refer respectively to "the female celebration of female sexuality which takes place on the eve of a Hindu wedding" and the "grassroots Indo-Caribbean singing and dancing with topical lyrics and sensuous rhythm" that originates in the wedding celebration" (Kanhai 1999, Introduction and Glossary). See also Niranjana (1997), Baksh-Soodeen (1999), Puri (2004), and Mehta (2004).

sex are two categories that are defined and treated differently in many Caribbean laws, on the basis of sexual practice. National governments therefore codify sexual behaviour, and expressions of erotic desire, differently from gender. Indeed, as studies in Cuba and the Dominican Republic demonstrate, while many men who have sex with men socially identify as masculine, it is their sexual activities and desires, not their gender identification that sets them apart from other men in state policies, laws, and everyday practices. Discrimination on the basis of gender is codified in most national laws as unjust and a violation of civil or human rights, yet discrimination on the basis of sexual expressions and identities is still possible in many countries due to laws that criminalize anal sex, prostitution and same-sex activities. Sexual difference is thus firmly etched into Caribbean society as semiautonomous and distinct from gender.

Sexual agency, pleasure and desire

The review of literature found that the expression of female sexual desire and sexual agency is not a prominent theme: the studies are primarily male-centred in this respect. As one author notes about the silence on the subject in Caribbean discourses: "how men manage to explore their sexuality while women remain marginally involved remains a perennial mystery to the casual observer" (Lewis 2003, 7). The silence may well have to do with the general difficulty of broaching the subject in Caribbean societies and communities, particularly for and by women, as "cultural and moral taboos about sex are very deep…young girls are not provided the information, services, skills and resources necessary for safer sex…no one talks to them about sex and sexuality except in religious/moral terms of disapproval or, at the most extreme, disparagingly, with lewd overtones" (CARICOM 1999, 7). In literature on gender-based and domestic violence, sexual desire is elided for women and girls, and female agency appears mainly in the context of self-defence, including the battering or killing of husbands or children by women.[20] The silence about sex within families and communities in the Caribbean also combines with reductionist biases in HIV and AIDS work which foreground sexual behaviour for purposes of survival, reproduction and fulfilment of needs, relegating "complex negotiations about matters of heart and body" to invisibility (Gosine 2005, 62). Studies of prostitution, sex work and transactional sex that highlight sexual agency for women and girls lend support to ideas that women's sexual agency is tied to economic concerns. Love, sexual desire and sexual passion are rarely broached in these studies, although increasingly, the importance of emotions that accompany sexual expressions, such as feelings of intimacy, trust, sharing and respect, is being recognized by researchers in the field. The studies by Sobo (1993), Chevannes (2001), Murray (2002) and Wekker (2006) are some of the few recent ethnographic accounts where African-Caribbean sexual desire and agency are explored in any depth. In studies of Indian-Caribbean populations, the majority of the focus is on history, when indentureship produced new sexual freedoms for women, with colonialism and patriarchy working to curb and confine their expressions of sexual desire (Shepherd 2002; Mohammed 2002). Overwhelmingly, discussions of female sexual agency and desire—Indian- and African-Caribbean—appear in analyses of music, dance and performance. [21] Here, for example, the coupling of sex with violence may be questioned. "Stabbing" in dancehall songs is then read as a referent

[20] Shiw Parsad (1989), Binda (2001), Robinson (2000).
[21] See for example, Cooper (1995), Ramnarine (2001), Hope (2006).

to "the intense pleasure of vigorous, not violent sex", whereby the penis becomes "a metaphorical dagger stabbing pleasure into and out of the woman" (Cooper 2004, 13). Alternatively, sexuality is taken as a simultaneous site of pleasure and danger for women. The double entendre found in chutney-soca performed by women allows lyrics to be read as depicting both the pleasures of oral sex for women and sexual violence against women (Puri 2004). Importantly, such cultural studies create possibilities for more complicated analyses of women's sexuality.

The domain of Caribbean sexuality studies

The studies reviewed indicate that Caribbean sexual praxis is produced by and through a variety of factors, although it is clear that not all factors are fully captured or explored in the literature, nor of equal significance. However, the recurring aspects in the literature draw the general contours of Caribbean sexuality. It is characterized by patriarchal heteronormativity yet includes bisexual and same-sex relations. It is powerful or violent, frequently acts as an economic resource, sustains polygamy, multiple partnering and polyamory, and is mediated by constructions of race, ethnicity and racism.

The conceptual and legal distinction between sexuality and gender that is made in some studies, and which we highlight here—of sexuality as semi-autonomous from gender—is important to this mapping and allows us to capture the specificities and variety of Caribbean sexual praxis. Taking sexuality and gender as overlapping yet distinct terrains means that we can examine sexuality not simply as a derivative of gender relations and identities but as constituting a distinct culture and set of social relations and identities that interact with, yet can be studied separately from, gender. The focus enables an examination of the ways in which sexual arrangements are attached to racialized relations of power, particularly within tourism-oriented prostitution and transactional sex settings, where constructions of race and ethnicity structure possibilities for young women and men in different ways, and mediate and transform traditional gender relations of power. It allows for studies of the ways in which sexuality is reconfigured through new technological innovations and new imperialisms, and for examinations of the production of new identities, expressions and transactions, and new sexual arrangements that may or may not be attached to a gendered binary. The focus on sexuality also supports continuing explorations into the commodification and exploitation of Caribbean sex within local and global economies, and into questions about ways in which the economic infuses specific meaning into racialized gendered constructions of sexuality. The significance of sexuality to development policies and strategies for the region is also of significance. [22]

However, for sexuality to be a vantage point for Caribbean research and study, the current complexities need to be acknowledged, and the intricacies of a range of sexual arrangements and practices appreciated. And it is perhaps through untangling the knot of power and violence, pleasure and desire, and intersections of gender, race and economics,

[22] See Adams and Pigg (2005), Gosine (2005) and the March 2009 issue of the *Journal of Development* that focuses exclusively on sexuality: http://www.palgrave-journals.com/development/journal/v52/n1/index.html#)

in the context of 21st century global development, that the map can be filled in or redrawn. Caribbean sexuality might then find the space and respect it deserves.

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Review: *Sex, Power and Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and Beyond*

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Patricia Mohammed

Everyone knows that sex sells. This is the cliché and the verity that is used by all advertisers, filmmakers and book publishers, academic and non- academic alike. But what happens when sex and death have become bedfellows that are too close for comfort. The editors of the book, ***Sex, Power and Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and Beyond***, point not only to the global problem that the spread of HIV and AIDS has wrought on sexual pleasure and reproduction of human life, but to the specific ways in which they affect the populations of the Caribbean. It is estimated that 27,000 people in the Caribbean became infected with HIV in 2006, that youth comprises the fastest growing population to be infected, and that 51% of the adult population living with AIDS are women.

The spread of this disease globally has evoked the conventional medical and social responses among health and welfare workers. There is an almost exclusive focus on *epidemiology*—a concern not so much with the "factors that shape human sexual intercourse and prescribe human sexual relations, but with a policing of the boundaries for curbing the spread of the disease." Thus, the search for a solution to the problem of HIV/AIDS leads to the search for a high-risk group, who in the process become labeled and stigmatized. When gay sexual practices in the US and other northern countries could

be cited as the truant source for a very high-risk population and for the spread of the disease, other countries, including those in the Caribbean, could dismiss the complexity of the disease and the reasons for its spread in the safe othering of a high-risk group and of countries that present populations and cultures which condone sexual behavior that leads to infection. With its wider spread among a heterosexual population, the focus on the disease and its epidemiology has shifted from north to south, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, giving rise to other hemispheric scapegoats in the process. The poorer societies and the ones where codes of conduct perceived as sexual promiscuity are less likely to be condoned, along with the increasing liberalization of attitudes toward homosexuality as contemporary modernization proceeds, have now been placed under greater scrutiny, and understandably so, as the statistics of infections and people living with HIV/AIDS support some of the theories about the reasons for its spread.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of the book ***Sex, Power and Taboo***, however, is first that it confronts HIV from a specifically gendered viewpoint, and second that it focuses on the Caribbean, but from the vantage point of seeking a more profound understanding of the social, political and cultural mechanisms that influence human sexuality and sexual expression and thus the reasons why sexual behavior is difficult, if not impossible to circumscribe. The thirteen essays in the book, written by scholars and practitioners in the fields of law, gender studies, sociology, literature, media studies, medicine, clinical psychology, nursing, and psychiatry, are rich and varied in style and content. Many of the scholars work or have worked in the Caribbean, although some essays do not focus exclusively on the region and offer scope for comparative analyses, as for instance, Shanti Parikhs's "Love letters, youth romance and the paradoxes of condoms in Uganda" or Ida Tafari's and Louis Marcelin's who deal with diasporic Caribbean Haitian youth in Miami. One finds in this publication the sense of a commitment beyond the scholarship of publish or perish; rather, collectively, there is commitment to making an impact on the perception and attitudes of those who live with this disease and those who will become potential carriers of it. The treatment is contemporary, direct, hard-hitting and deliberate—as it must be. Typical of the book's approach is the essay by Lisa Croom, which looks at hyperheterosexuality's impact on prison culture in Jamaica and its perpetuation of a regime of discipline and punishment that endorses the cycle of violence among inmates and between warders and their captive populations.

Paula Morgan, in an interesting twist examines two literary texts, Jamaica Kincaid's *My Brother* and Powell's *A Small Gathering of Bones*, both of which render up for scrutiny and demystification the metaphors that have come to be associated with HIV and AIDS, such as the disease being a visitation of divine judgment on vice, or a virus that attacks the defenseless, sleeping, innocent—those who persist in remaining convinced of their immunity and invincibility. Kamala Kempadoo's aptly titled essay, "Dying for sex," names the dilemma that the sex worker in tourist-ridden islands is faced with in the transactions that have long dichotomized pleasure and economic need, a double standard which most states dependent on the tourist dollar have not wished to confront openly.

I personally welcome this collection of essays: for too long the medicalization of the discourse and its focus on risk populations have failed to deal with the fundamental issue

which papal admonitions will not arrest, that to be human is to be a sexual being. Human expressions of sexuality are instinctual, emotionally charged and psychologically bound up with questions of gender identity, cultural ways of living out bodily pleasures, and systems of production and reproduction of ethnicity itself. Insights from the Caribbean in this continuing debate are of particular value precisely because they emanate from a region that has never been reticent in admitting these realities in its dance, music and culture of everyday life.

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