The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness

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integration was in sharp contrast to the virulent racist diatribes that were offered in some quarters, the justifications given for actions taken reveal the differences among the various white groups to be more in the vehemence of language and the sophistication of the resistance than in fundamental assumptions.

Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 171–72.

20 Any discussion of charges of "racist" would be remiss without acknowledging its certain status as an epithet with distinct classed inscriptions. As Ronald Formisano relates, "[T]he epithet 'racist' springs easily to the lips of middle-class persons who live in suburbs or college towns, or who if they live in urban retreats possess the resources enabling them to avoid sending their children to schools that are populated with the poor, working-class, or black." Formisano, *Boston against Busing*, xiv.

21 Virginia Dominguez, "Invoking Racism in the Public Sphere: Two Takes on National Self-Criticism," *Identities* 1, no. 4 (1995): 325–46.

22 This is hardly a trivial matter, given the great lengths whites will go to claim or prove they are not prejudiced. As Michael Billig observes, even fascists strive to avoid being depicted as racists; "The Notion of 'Prejudice': Some Rhetorical and Ideological Aspects," *Text* 8, nos. 1–2 (1988): 91–110.

23 Alastair Bonnett, "Constructions of Whiteness in European and American Anti-Racism," in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London: Zed Books, 1997), 179–80.

24 Afrocentrism was never a fixed and ratified object in this controversy. When opponents made reference to it, and when they suggested readings for me, they stressed a panoply of authors, including Maulana Karenga, Asa Hilliard, Molief Asante, and Cheikh Diop.

25 Bonnett, "Constructions of Whiteness," 177.

26 Ibid., 177.

27 Ibid., 174.

28 Begona Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 24.

29 Here I paraphrase comments by Aretxaga in *Shattering Silence*.

30 Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 142–49.

Jasbir Kaur Puar

Transnational Configurations of Desire: The Nation and its White Closets

I begin this exploration of sexualities in a transnational context with a story about "Sophia," who recently returned to the Caribbean for her Immigration and Naturalization Service interview at the American Embassy in Barbados after being undocumented in the United States since 1986. Knowing that lesbians were not allowed to have migrated to the United States before 1990 and that her application betrayed her prior so-called illegal residence in the States, she femmed up for the interview as much as conceivable to the contours of her psychic body, wearing lipstick, a different hairstyle, and ditching the ever-present baseball cap. This staging reflects a performativity of exchanges and concurrent blurrings between masculinity and femininity to present a heterosexual model of desirable and acceptable "good citizenship material." It was necessary in spite of her claim, as she puts it, that she "became a lesbian in the U.S." The irony of having to prove her pre-1990 nonlesbian status to the bureaucracy of the nation-state that is indeed the geopolitical landscape for the productive site of this very disallowed identity—namely, her postmigration lesbian identification—should not be lost here. While I want to emphasize the multivalent and often contradictory discourses that inform these processes, in this particular narrative, which claims very clear splits between heterosexuality and homosexuality, the American state attempts to contain if not erase the very identity it has enabled.[1]

Immediately after receiving her green card number and entering the United States, Sophia shaved her shoulder-length hair off, effacing any femme pretensions and viscerally replicating what would probably be called a white butch aesthetic. This moment of lesbian assertion is a "fuck you" act of defiance against a state that policed a racialized

"alien" body for eleven years, demanding the invisibility of queerness in the face of her visibility as raced. At the same time, it is an act complicitous with white butch-femme aesthetics that produce and sustain figures through intersections of the nation, whiteness, and modernity,[2] producing a "most complicitous–most resistant" circuit of performativity captured by one audience: the nation. If one understands Judith Butler's "performativity of gender" as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names, Sophia, through an imperfect repetition of the "authentic lesbian body," is at once facing both the impossibility of reproducing the original while also, and perhaps pleasurably, destabilizing it.[3]

In the face of proliferating debates about the globalization of queerness, the travels of discursive sexual regimes, and the rapid emergence of gay and lesbian organizations in the so-called Third World, what does one do with a narrative that claims "I became a lesbian after I migrated to the U.S."? (Does "becoming" signal a kind of "coming out," or a rejection of it?) It is a trajectory that absolutely refuses recourse to girlhood crushes on gym teachers, strange aunties, and other queer theory–type lesbian role models. It rejects any understood alternative sexual landscapes and may well reiterate lesbianism as solidly Western and white. And yet, the body that accompanies this narrative now, upon her return to the Caribbean, attempts to seek out other women like her, women called "Zami."[4] In this case the U.S. nation indicates the place of the "authentic" lesbian body; situating this paradigm within notions of modernity and movement, the white lesbian body; indeed, to reference the above story, the white masculine butch lesbian body. Here lesbianism and masculinity as whiteness converge at the site of the nation to produce and privilege certain narratives of desire over others.

"Circuits of Desire"[5]

This essay uses "whiteness" as a conceptual category of modernity that references yet exceeds discrete ethnic categories or markers.[6] The links between sexualities, modernity, and whiteness are particularly evident in the case of "traveling" transnational queer bodies that are interpellated through institutional discourses of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, tourism, gay and lesbian marriages, asylum laws, human rights organizations, queer liberation movements, and

conceptualizations of queer diasporas.[7] This essay attempts to theorize methodological possibilities for talking about transnational sexualities and is a response to the relative marginalization of gender and sexuality in the literature on transnationalism, as well as to the whiteness of queer theory, which relies heavily on psychoanalytic models that presume the primacy of sexual difference.[8] In seeking a language that enables one to read locations across sexualities and sexualities across locations, I am attempting to negotiate the politics of desiring subjects with social theories of material analyses, interrogating different relationships between politics and pleasures, or what I call the "materialities of desire." I argue for an alternative framework of fluid sexualities that addresses hegemonic hierarchies of nameable identifiable sexualities while at the same time critiquing the privileged episteme of those identities.

Theorists of transnationalism have noted that the fundamental paradox of rapid and increased economic globalization is that as the nation-state is destabilized and national boundaries become economically porous, it must reassert hegemonies of its imagined cohesiveness and geographic boundaries in social terms. Jacqui Alexander, one of the few theorists who has examined this process in terms of sexuality, argues 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."[9] In their coedited volume *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures,* Chandra Mohanty and Alexander effectively lay out the terms within which this recuperation happens.[10] This collection is stunning if only for the mere fact that it places sexuality and its relations to gender at the *very core* of the processes that situate the demand for sameness at the nation's boundaries, challenging claims that sexuality is a bourgeois issue belonging at the bottom of a hierarchy of oppressions. Stuart Hall, however, reminded us some time ago that the nation mobilizes to recoup itself not only through sameness but within and through postmodern capitalist manipulations of "difference."[11] In this case, one may apply "difference" to mean both sexual difference and differentiation within/through sexual difference, noting that any terms of sexual citizenship are racialized, gendered, and class-inflected as well.

Thus while it is crucial to examine how, as Alexander notes, the nation "disallows the queer body,"[12] it may well be necessary to ask

which nation and which queer bodies and to interrogate how nations not only produce but also sanction certain queer subjectivities over others.[13] Resituating discourses of the nation in ways that complicate a repressive-versus-productive binary can show how "sexual political subjects" use, appropriate, reject, rely on, and are even produced through, rather than simply oppose, discourses of the nation.[14] Immediate examples, ones that differ tremendously in terms of political impetus and impact, are Queer Nation's reclamation of a "queer counterpublic," Cherríe Moraga's use of national landscapes in "Queer Aztlan" and Gloria Anzaldúa's in *Borderlands*.[15] Feminist theorist Katherine Sugg asserts that in Chicana writings "lesbianism works in part to return the narrator to a complex cultural authenticity that resists white liberal feminist discourses of identity and substantiates in new ways the narrator's connection to her community and history."[16] Paula Moya among others has noted the ways in which concepts of whiteness as "contaminated privilege" function in these reclamations of lesbianism through nationhood and vice versa.[17]

Queer Diasporas

"Whiteness as contamination" is well entrenched in a historical regime of discursive belonging. Every out-and-about dyke of color in San Francisco knows that the latest hot spot for those who are "family" or "in the circle" has "gone bad" when the white dykes start showing up.[18] Along with alternative linguistic codes to signify lesbian belonging, there is an interesting originary status being claimed here, a reversal of the usual "who's invading whom" rhetoric. Whiteness functions as betrayal; particularly through politicality, feminism, and sex, whiteness is a betrayal of male "community" leadership. These paradigms of a sell-out to whiteness speak to nationalism/feminism oppositions discussed by Lisa Lowe and Inderpal Grewal.[19] But as Gloria Anzaldúa writes, "for the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion against her native culture is through her sexual behavior."[20]

These accusations of whiteness, contamination, and sexual betrayal of the "motherland" as well as of "culture" may result in strengthened recourses to origins, roots, and sexual "homes" that depend on, rather than reject, the nation/s. Cases in point are South Asian queer diasporic discourses that use Hindu mythology as evidence of same-sex eroticism as indigenous to Indian culture, a tactic that mobilizes ancient Hindu temple carvings, the *Kamasutra*, and other avenues of historical proof. This resistance to the whiteness of queerness through "reterritorializations" of Indian homo/sexual origins in diasporic locales are an example of what Aihwa Ong refers to as "transnational localisms," a response to a threatened or already completed violence of erasure.[21] These creations of "scenarios of origins" result in a mobilization of the Hindu Indian Nation to enter the Queer Nation.[22]

However, for many in South Asia, indeed in India itself, and those in the diaspora (due to religion, region, caste, and generational differences), Hindu India is not available as a sexual home. Hindu Indian identity is fixed into a relationship between homosexuality, whiteness, and modernity (ironically through the use of Hindu "traditions"), such that non-Hindu South Asians could never use such genealogies to claim queerness.[23] In fact, these reclamations are instead often mobilized as ammunition in reverse by Sikh and Muslim fundamentalists, and the logic goes like this: "Homosexuality is Hindu, modern, and white, not to mention Indian, and that is what we are resisting." These responses to the "demand for evidence" and accusations of betrayal parallel the links between whiteness and queerness. They privilege certain forms of queer identity, visibility, and a modernist telos of evolution captured by "coming out" and are heavily dependent on the closet as a metaphor of repression.[24]

Queer (In)visibilities?

The continuing hegemonic potential of modernist teleologies of evolution should not be underestimated. An example is a recurring scenario at the Pride Parade in San Francisco. The South Asian Gay and Lesbian organization, Trikone, marches every summer, at the back of the procession of course (the joke is that all the colored folk get stuck at the end). Inevitably, a group of ostensibly white queers will come up to our contingent and ask if there really are gays and lesbians in India. They might marvel at how we've flown all the way from India so that we can be "out and proud." Often they will ask where South Asia is. In many instances we may be subjected to a rambling combination of all three comments. All of these result from as well as produce specific erasures; of same-sex sexualities in South Asia (particularly non-Indian ones), of diasporic queers, and of visibility as a mandated function of queerness in the West, replicating discourses similar to Homi

Bhabha's "white but not quite" equation of mimicry: here, but not quite queer.

The invisibility of queers of color is reiterated through demands for evidence as predicated by strategies of visibility and other queer counterpublic spaces. One example are the tactics of Queer Nation as described by Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman.[25] Absent in this account are questions of relations to the state vis-à-vis who can and cannot afford to participate in such public visibilities, based on an "uninterrogated assumption of queer citizenship."[26] Queer Nation's strategy of reclaiming "national icons" effectively becomes a call for whiteness that reproduces the white episteme of queerness at the nation's boundaries. The irony of Queer Nation is that it is precipitated by the process that Alexander discusses: a reassertion of a heterosexual state that is due in some part to immigrant bodies that threaten the boundaries/borders of the nation. Queer Nation as an ideology will remain eternally bound to its whiteness if it cannot address how immigration functions to keep the nation-state in crisis. This crisis legitimates the rhetorical strategy of reclaiming the nation through queerness, noting that immigrants actually produce, in some part, the spaces of resistance that Queer Nation occupies.[27]

The demand to be visible, according to David Halperin, is created by a "modern regime of sexuality which says we can now choose how to be sexually free, but cannot choose whether to be sexually free."[28] Rosemary Henessy's excellent critique of queer visibility as a function of overdetermined fetishization of class consumption also needs to be thought of within a framework of modernity and whiteness.[29] A critique of the epistemologies of queer visibility leaves the paradox of visibility intact, as demonstrated by the parade example. How does one know queers of color exist if they are not visible? If I am critiquing the demand to be visible, why am I complaining about the invisibility of queers of color? An apparent push toward visibility from predominantly middle-class South Asian diasporic as well as subcontinent queers contrasts sharply with Martin Manalansan's observation regarding working-class Filipino immigrants, for whom "visibility is dangerous."[30] (And this recalls the story of Sophia's haircut.) In such cases perhaps coming out is a narrative eclipsed by ones of immigration (for example, receiving a green card after waiting for eleven years). This is not just about immigrant/ethnic queers but also very specifically linked to class. Privileging such concerns about racialized

state belongings is directly contradictory to coming out narratives that posit "out and proud" paradigms as the main prerequisite to queer liberation. Here visibility as a hegemonic discourse of queer cosmopolitanism is also linked to the role of capitalism and urban spaces in the emergence of gay identities, a process elaborated by John D'Emilio.[31]

In the ultimate quest to be free of sexuality as a space marking psychosis, neurosis, and deviance, the commodification and globalization of everything about queerness, from dildos, lipstick lesbians,[32] and sex clubs, entails that the nation is not innocent or absent in its collusion with multinational capital in the production of (elite) "queer cosmopolitan citizens." Whiteness is thus defined through inclusion in the global economy. As Anthony Burgess flippantly comments, "The best homosexuality is in America, like the best everything else, and [specifically in] California where all national tendencies achieve their most hyperbolic expression."[33] Ruth Vanita has stated that most queers in India live with "one foot in the west," further noting the regulating of global queerness through the nation.[34]

Queer Mobility?

Certain venues of Queer Studies have offered up powerful internal critiques, noting that the category "queer" is a privileged white one and that visibility and linked discourses of coming out contribute to hegemonic queernesses. The response to the whiteness of Queer Studies and its erasure of questions of the nation, race, and ethnicity has been, it seems, to both expand what queer includes, as well as to mobilize queerness. In essence there has been a call to queer queerness, stressing its fluidity and liminality, but this is itself another framework of race and class privilege. Fluidity as mobility is a privilege. This kind of oversight is not just about exclusions but more precisely about assumed inclusions. Lisa Duggan calls for a "No Promo Hetero" campaign and other political activist strategies that do not force "us" to declare "who we are."[35] These approaches become impossible when the state dictates its very offerings of belonging through determining whether one is or isn't one, in this case, gay or lesbian. The heterosexual/heterosexist nation, in its need to secure its social and geographic boundaries vis-à-vis unwelcome Others, is productive of certain "queer cosmopolitan citizens" in relation to other configurations of desire that may fall outside whiteness.

An example of this is asylum based on sexual orientation. While such asylum provides immigrants with yet another way to access residency, subjects of this legislation must be interpellated into a "citational practice."[36] As Judith Butler describes it, this is a process that "names" and also produces and privileges the effects of that naming. This practice may well flatten discursively displaced subjects into the linear subjectivity of the law, erasing, for example, bisexuality. Based on discourses of gay and lesbian human rights, asylum laws are predicated upon an erroneous modernist notion of the United States as a place free of violence for queers. Additionally, these laws mystify an often arbitrary distinction between asylees and those who are undocumented. This version of queer democracy colludes with liberal Euro-American feminism in its desire to mark a unitary, singular subject, one that can produce "evidence" of persecution in one's "native" country. This frees queers of the nation, in the ways Duggan would like, who are thus not subject to demands of disclosure of sexual identity. At the same time, it produces a double Othering of asylum seekers. Resident status becomes contingent on one's queer status. How decisions are made in these cases needs to be examined in relation to U.S. foreign policy stances; for one example, it seems that a demonized, homogenized "Islamic subject" is in particular need of salvation, whereas applicants from Mexico may have more difficulty proving a "legitimate" case. The new immigration law that went into effect on 1 April 1997 puts a one-year filing limit on these cases. In other words, immigrants now have only one year to figure out if they are gay or lesbian, if they haven't done so already, and to prove that modern queers cannot exist "back home," creating an inducement into white modernity complicit with national discourses. Such evidence assumes that gays and lesbians were "out" in their native countries in a readable way, preventing any privileging of the slippages of queer and demanding a singular, homogenized narrative of sexual activity.[37]

Another example of the national production and privileging of certain queer subjectivities over others is the debate over same-sex marriage. The irony of the same-sex marriage case in Hawaii is that while white middle-class gay men are fighting over the "right" to marry and what this might signify in terms of a supposed binary between assimilationist and progressive queer politics, what is largely overlooked are the implications of this ruling in terms of nationality. Binational couples are looking to this legislation as a subversive alternative to heterosexual marriage to obtain a green card. In a climate where many communities are actively seeking out and creating alternative models for coupling and co-parenting, what will become a somewhat hysterical exercise in futility, should the INS ever recognize such marriages, is how exactly the INS will decide what is a "legitimate" queer marriage. This is something that is still confounding in terms of assessing fraudulent heterosexual marriages and results in claims of "marriage gridlock." Again, racial and class politics will play themselves out in terms of this policing—that is, European immigrants are not suspected of "fraudulent marriages" in the same ways as nonwhite immigrants. Similar is the case with "domestic partnerships" in San Francisco. Trinity Ordona asks which immigrant queers wanting to register their domestic partnerships are going to own up to their "undesirable" immigrant status?[38] But the point is more that the INS will probably never, or at least not anytime soon, recognize gay marriages as an avenue to a green card, thus limiting this option to "national queers." In this case gay marriages, as a mandate of the nation/national belonging, approximates most closely what the nation wants, separating the good queers from the bad. Some queers *are* better than others. This easily replicates familiar national and racialized moralizing binaries of the body: the body as a sacred site of love, intimacy, and commitment versus the body as unworthy, exploited, and the site of degeneracy.[39]

Notes on the Closet

The metaphor of the closet, which Eve Sedgwick has theorized as the "regime of the open secret,"[40] reflects Western epistemologies of public/private and secret/disclosure divides, as well as sex and desire as discourses of modernity, and presumes linear and commensurable narratives of sexuality across social spaces. The closet in its modernist form equates desire with speech, with agency, with consciousness. As a confessional space and an instrument of subjectivization, it is linked to freedom from repression, entrenched in power/knowledge relations.[41]

The closet as applied to the nation and other locational problematics that attempt to contest the nation is not any of these things. If strained, this metaphor implodes through the betrayal of the mate-

rial underpinnings of its own assumptions. Gracepoore, an undocumented South Asian lesbian activist, claims that by necessity, there are "multiple possibilities for creative resistance by being simultaneously out of and inside the closet."[42] The closet here is a paradox of agency through the withholding of knowledge; and a paradox of censorship, which produces the subject it seeks to erase, speaking to the problem of the unknowability of sexuality. How does one attempt to elaborate on subject formation when objects of study are unknown, indeed unknowable, when the demand for "evidence" contradicts what José Muñoz denotes as the "ephemeral" of queerness?[43] Should one attempt to qualify the silences of closeted subalterns? Foucault's "technologies of sex" describes a process by which discourse turns sex acts into sex identities and associates those identities with corporalities.[44] This "act to identity" telos functions in vertical as well as horizontal modernities, that is, in a linear developmental historical model through time but also horizontally across geopolitical spaces. In attempting to disrupt the "queer as Western imperialism" versus "queer as liberation" binary, "indigenous" sexualities often wind up standing in for "sex acts" in a hierarchy of modernity. This configuration is one that privileges identity as consciousness, while also effacing the presence of postcolonial queers and gay and lesbian organizations in the "peripheries." Qualifying same-sex eroticism as that which signifies differently is a poststructuralist, culturally relativistic move that must be countered by carefully situated analyses of power, noting how and where an "act versus identity" split is mobilized in various globalizing discourses. These difficulties do not just exist in the so-called peripheries, but also in the metropole, as demonstrated to me in my own queer outreach work with South Asian diasporic populations, which I cannot expand upon here. If a move into queerness is indeed a "move into modernity," how does the subject exist prior to this move, or does it? Can one even speak of a "prior"? And what subject dis/formations are necessary for the "free" modern subject of modernity to sustain itself?

In closing I want to again remember Sophia, who has had her green card for six months now. These days she is talking about going to the Caribbean to do work with emerging gay and lesbian organizations, an idea that sends my own modernist trappings into horror and confused convulsions. Why would she go back after waiting so long to stay here? Or is this "return home" not quite the return I think of? My initial refusal to read her agency is complicated by her active rejection of queer modernity even as she is an agent of it. The struggles with the Derridean pharmakons of modernity and the conditional fluidities of postmodernity continue. This essay is a tribute to Sophia and the constant vexations she poses to both.

Notes

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1 I present the example of Sophia as neither fact nor fiction. My intent here is to pose the problematics of how the INS regulates gender and sexuality and decides who is gay and/or lesbian, as well as to note the process of apprehending identities that cannot be contained by the narration of the law. This scenario also perhaps marks an avenue of situating and examining the debates around the readings of Judith Butler's notion of performativity, often critiqued as a problematic version of voluntaristic performance. For important discussions see Ki Namaste, "Tragic Misreadings," in *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Anthology*, ed. Brett Breemyn and Mickey Eliason (New York: New York University Press, 1996), and Kath Weston, "Do Clothes Make the Woman?: Gender, Performance Theory, and Lesbian Eroticism," *Genders* 17 (1993): 1–21.

2 I want to keep the definitions of the term "modernity" in this paper in tension with each other. At some points I am predominantly referencing a temporality or periodization common to this term, and at others I am gesturing to a political condition that is understood in relation to a linear telos of progress and development. Most important, however, are the ways in which these two conceptualizations of modernity reinforce and sustain the production of certain subjects of globalization.

3 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 25. These are the relationships being suggested here: while white femmeness can be rescued from its "sell-out" assumptions, the response to femmes of color is still quite often that they are being duped by their oppressive culture. In this formulation, (white) butch continues to function as the privileged marker of queerness and as such as

a form of assimilation for dykes of color. For Sophia it marks a double assimilation—into the queer butch aesthetic as well as the arrival into the U.S. nation-state.

4 While this word seems most obviously a reference to Audre Lorde's biomythography, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), I use it here more in association with the vernacular of the Caribbean, which Lorde's work popularized outside of Caribbean diasporic communities.

5 I am borrowing this phrase from the title of a special edition of *Positions* (2, no. 1 [1994]) that Yukiko Hanawa edited (1994). She uses desire to suggest the "uneasy absence of a common subject" (ix), that defies capture in the circuits of a sexual political economy defined as "both local and global at the same time" (viii).

6 Whiteness functions to mark concluding impulses of a linear modernist telos of progress and development characterized by the "arrival" of the subject often through class, educational, and income-level status. There are many examples of this; in liberal multicultural discourses, arrival is signaled by the notion of inclusion in the national body, curriculum, or canon; the model-minority discourse associated with Asian Americans is another example of the ways in which approximating "whiteness" is understood through acquiring the status of the "ideal" immigrant. (Note the ways in which Asian Americans are, for example in California, considered more "white" than Latinos and Chicanos by virtue of this discourse. South Asians have also been termed "honorary" whites and in fact were not so long ago categorized as Caucasian.) I am not suggesting that an immigrant of color is repeating whiteness simply through class aspirations but rather that, in collusion with the state, an ideal productive model citizen of the nation is understood as a white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male. Similarly, queer visibility also functions as marking a moment of "real" and definitive queer sexual subjectivity.

7 A word on the term "transnational" and how it is being used in this work. While I have started out with an example of a particular transnational act or moment, that of migration, I want to situate the transnational as a "condition," as Jean Walton has called it, one that foregrounds not only boundary crossings but also the effect of neocolonial capitalism, tourism, and globalization of material and ideological capital. I take my lead on theorizing the transnational from the introduction to *Scattered Hegemonies* by Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal (1994).

8 The whiteness of queer theory could be loosely characterized as referring to the following tendencies: the Euro-American bias of queer theory, much of which lacks an analysis of ethnicity, race, nationalism, and citizenship issues while simultaneously effacing "Third World" contexts; the emergence of queer theory from literary and psychoanalytic epistemologies,

supposedly lending to a lack of "material" analyses and global relations; the positing of subjects that utilize queer sexuality as the only axis of subordination, excluding other interpellations of identity. Earlier writers intervening in similar problems in gay and lesbian scholarship include Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Tomás Almaguer, Cheryl Clarke, and Barbara Smith, among others. More recent critiques have been generated by Yukiko Hanawa, Martin Manalansan, Nayan Shah, and Jee Yeun Lee.

9 M. Jacqui Alexander, "Not Just (Any) *Body* Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," *Feminist Review* 48 (autumn 1994): 9.

10 Chandra Mohanty and M. Jacqui Alexander, eds., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

11 Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in *Culture, Globalization, and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity,* ed. Anthony King (London: Macmillan, 1991), 29.

12 Alexander, "Not Just," 5.

13 There are many complex knots to unravel in the contemplation of what the nation, as a representational force, and the state, as a legislative apparatus convened to substantiate that force, are willing to condone and contain. On one hand, the state does not sanction visible queer identities, as in the case of the U.S. military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, and yet, at the same time, anticipates that explicit queer subjects will avail themselves of queer asylum offerings that ultimately require assimilation into national myths of democracy and freedom. While the October 1998 killing of gay-bashing victim Matthew Shepard has generated national outrage and sorrow, referendums to allow gay marriages in Hawaii and Alaska were defeated in November. The proliferation of queer representations is not commensurate with legislative policings, and yet what is acceptable within those representations mimics certain attributes of ideal citizens of the state: white middle- and upper-class producers and consumers.

14 Yukiko Hanawa, "Introduction," *Positions: Circuits of Desire,* 2, no. 1 (1994): vii.

15 Cherríe Moraga, *The Last Generation* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), and Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

16 Katherine Sugg, " 'The Ultimate Rebellion': Sexuality and Community in Contemporary Writing," American Studies Association paper, Kansas City, November 1996.

17 Paula Moya, "Postmodernism, 'Realism,' and the Politics of Identity: Cherríe Moraga and Chicana Feminism," in *Feminist Genealogies,* ed. Mohanty and Alexander.

18 See the film directed by Cianna Stewart and Ming-Yeun S. Ma, *There Is No Name for This* (1997).

19 Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," *Diasporas* 1, no. 1 (spring 1991): 24–44; and Inderpal Grewal, "Reading and Writing the South Asian Diaspora: Feminism and Nationalism in North America," in *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora,* ed. Women of South Asian Descent Collective (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1993), 226–36.

20 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* 19.

21 Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6–23.

22 Norma Alarcón, "Anzaldúa's Frontera: Inscribing Genetics," in *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity,* ed. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenbeurg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 45.

23 And, in fact, the reverse often happens, in that Hindu forms of situating queerness blanket over any attempts at destabilizing such genealogies. Gayatri Gopinath, in her reading of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1995), notes that despite the novel's Sri Lankan context the cultural appropriations that occur in New York around the figure of the "funny boy" often use Hindi language instead of Tamil or Sinhala. See Gayatri Gopinath, "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion," *positions* 5, no. 2 (1997). This example, to me, speaks volumes about the problems of situating queer readings. Without wanting to resurrect a binary between the "truth" of the context of this text and the falsity of the representation of it, and rather seeing this as a symptom of relevance rather than a problem per se, I think there is something to be said for the processes of queered displacement that are profoundly enabling in some instances and yet equally troublesome in other cases, raising questions about defining diasporic contexts.

24 This pessimistic reading would suggest that all attempts to renarrativize sexual genealogies are inevitably resignified through heterosexual nationalism as white and Western. In reference to India, Geeta Patel has argued that any recourse to evidence of the "past" must navigate its containment through colonial archives (Geeta Patel, Roundtable Discussion at the South Asian Studies Annual conference, Madison, WI, October, 1997). Yukiko Hanawa has similarly noted that the reach for origins through indigenous structures is already framed by colonial mythologies (Yukiko Hanawa, "The World of Suzie Wong and M. Butterfly: Race and Gender in Asian America"). *Radical History Review,* 64: (1996): 12–18. For some examples of this problem in South Asian queer diasporic contexts, see Gita Thadani, *Sakhiyani: Lesbian Desire in Ancient and Modern India.* New York: Cassell, 1996 and Rakesh Ratti, ed., *A Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience.* Boston: Alyson, 1993. There

are, however, moments of hope. In July 1997 at Desh Pardesh, the South Asian festival held annually in Toronto, I was surprised by my intense pleasure at watching a performance piece by Himmat Shinhat that suggested Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was "queer," in the sense that Guru Nanak wrote his devotional love poetry as female to his male traveling companion. Through a combination of spoken word, song, and metal guitar, Shinhat performed the scriptures in an intensely moving yet camp way. There is obviously more to be said about why this recuperation seemed exciting to me; what struck me most during this piece is how I, as a Sikh queer, had assumed the complete foreclosure of such strategies given the hegemonic formations of both Sikh nationalist discourses and queer Hindu discourses.

25 Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, "Queer Nationality," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory,* ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1993), 193–229.

26 Gayatri Gopinath, "Nostalgia," 455–77.

27 This point bears more in-depth treatment than I can give it here. The ways in which the nation tends to "shore up" its physical as well as ideological boundaries in response to labor crises blamed on the outsourcing of production processes as well as in response to a fear of a disintegrating national character due to immigration tends to focus on heteronormative discourses of "family values" and the notion of limited access to public resources and jobs. In response, queer activist strategies such as Queer Nation respond to the heterosexualizing imperatives and impulses fueling such discourses without addressing the fact of other multiple and overlapping audiences to which the state addresses its disciplinary tactics. In other words, there may be mandates for the state to carry out that actually go beyond simply maintaining sexual difference. The nation-state may well intentionally or unintentionally kill two birds with one stone—on the one hand, continually projecting immigration as well as globalization as a crisis that threatens the character of American life and, on the other, promoting heterosexual family values as a way of protecting the national body. But without linking the genealogies of these two discourses, queer activists are merely responding to symptoms and not sicknesses of the nation.

28 David Halperin, *Saint Foucault* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 20.

29 Rosemary Hennessey, "Queer Visibility and Commodity Culture," *Cultural Critique* 29 (winter) (1994–95), 31–76.

30 Martin Manalansan, "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 4 (1995): 434.

31 John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader,* ed. Henry Abelove et al. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 467–78.

32 Danae Clark, "Commodity Lesbianism," in *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader,* ed. Abelove et al., 186–201.

33 Anthony Burgess, "Notes from the Blue Coast," Saturday Review, 28 April 1979.

34 Ruth Vanita, "Do Clothes Make the Woman?: Gender, Performance Theory, and Lesbian Eroticism," *Genders* 17 (1993): 1–21.

35 Lisa Duggan, "Queering the State," *Social Text* 39 (summer 1994): 8–9.

36 Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 12.

37 While I feel these critiques are important to make in the face of relentless neoliberal globalizing forces, I also am aware that many practitioners involved in queer asylum cases are constantly faced with the problems of negotiating legal cultural hegemonies, so once again this is an ambivalent space, producing both possibilities and closures. I would like to thank Chris Nugent for pointing this out to me. Nevertheless, asylum has always been a narrative that demands difference even as it negates it. It is disturbing, for example, that so few women in comparison to men have received asylum. (See Clint Steib, "Experts Warn Time Running out for Gay Refugees," Washington Blade 20 February 1998.) This speaks not only to questions of resources, access and outreach but, I suspect, also to an erasure of female same-sex *sex* that suggests its innocuous, nonthreatening, or perhaps even assimilatable features in relation to discourses of buggery, anal sex, phallocentrism, and HIV/AIDS. It is also the case, as Heather McClure has pointed out, that women often marry for economic security and thus cannot participate "properly" in the legal definitions of queer asylum (Steib, 1998). Now with the one-year filing limit on these cases placing a temporal element to queer modernity, the question of how outreach to potential queer asylees is envisioned becomes even more important, as areas like the Chicano/Latino Mission district in San Francisco, which is populated with numerous undocumented drag queens and transgenders, are often inadvertently overlooked in favor of more "accessible" (and often wealthier) immigrants. In addition, there need to be more nuanced readings of notions of persecution in terms of bisexual and transgendered subjects, especially in how the legislation handles transsexuality. See also Heather McClure, Christopher Nugent, and Lavi Soloway, *Preparing Sexual Orientation-Based Asylum Claims.*

38 Trinity Ordona et al., 93. "In Our Own Way: A Roundtable Discussion," in *Asian American Sexualities,* ed. Russel Leong (New York: Routledge, 1996), 91–100.

39 Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader,* ed. Abelove et al., 3–45.

40 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet," in *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader,* ed. Abelove et al., 45.

41 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

42 Gracepoore, "Three Movements in a Minor," *Trikone Magazine* 12, no. 1 (1997): 10.

43 José Muñoz, "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (1996), 10.

44 Foucault, *History of Sexuality.*