

Queer Lovers and Hateful Others

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Regenerating Violent Times
and Places

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INTRODUCTION: QUEER REGENERATIONS

Now, it is important for us to strengthen our very own structures and you know what? We do not want to be bothered by you. Do not enter our communities to destroy them. Our realities are not your realities! Part of our structures are the districts in which we live, our neighborhoods, in which we feel protected from racist attacks. You cannot even imagine that you might be part of the danger. You keep talking about fears concerning the move of Schwuz [a long-standing gay-male oriented venue] to Neukölln, but have you ever considered what Blacks and PoC [People of Colour] in Neukölln are afraid of? Rents are rising, police presence is increasing, drunk party guests pee in house entrances. And the neonazis are not far – whether they're bald or not. Our spaces get converted into your garbage dumps and become your fantasies of unmanned land with cheap rents. You consider yourself and your bourgeois squats to be 'pioneers' and you don't even realize how colonial your language is, you do not see the civilizing mission you are part of and that you prepare the ground for other white settlers to come. What do you think [Berlin-]Kreuzberg looked like 30 years ago? It was poor, run-down and at the margin of Westberlin. That is exactly why landlords allowed Blacks and PoC to live there. Have you ever noticed that there aren't any neighbours of color in your organic food stores and your queer bars? Do you prefer it this way? Stop investing money into anti-homophobia projects in [Berlin-]Wedding, [Berlin-]Schöneberg and [Berlin-]Neukölln that target us, the 'dangerous brown mass', and start dealing with homo-, and transphobia within the white society. (From the *Khalass!!! We're vex!* manifesto)

On Pride day in summer 2013, flyers rained down from a window onto a majority-white queer parade marching through the Berlin inner-city districts of Kreuzberg and Neukölln. The parade was part of the alternative Kreuzberg Pride or TCSD (Transgenial Christopher Street Day). The TCSD, which separated from the mainstream commercial Pride or CSD (Christopher Street Day) in 1997, gained currency in 2010, when Judith Butler mentioned it in her speech that would make 'homonationalism' a household term. She highlighted the TCSD as an alternative to the mainstream CSD, whose civil courage award she was refusing in protest against the CSD's complicities in racism (Crasshole 2010; SUSPECT 2010a). Ironically, three years later similar allegations are being



Figure 1 Hermannplatz Berlin-Neukölln, 22 June 2013: Banner with the writing 'CSD [Christopher Street Day] – [raised middle finger] – T*CSD [Transgenial Christopher Street Day]: SPOT THE DIFFERENCE: RAINING FROM THE WINDOW, FLYERS WITH THE *Khalass!!!* manifesto

Source: Photo by *Khalass!!!*

made against the TCSD itself, which identifies itself as anti-fascist, anti-racist and 'alternative', but to many queers of colour appears no less white.¹ As stated on the banner hanging from the window that rained flyers that day: 'CSD – [raised middle finger] – T*CSD: SPOT THE DIFFERENCE'.

The *Khalass!!!* manifesto, written by anonymous authors who identify as 'queer_trans*_inter*_Black_Muslim*_Arab_Rromni*_ja_mixedrace_Mizrahi_Refugee_Native_Kurdish_Armenian', and thereby already part of a coalition shot through with power and privilege, raises important questions, which have been the subject of queer of colour kitchen-table conversations in Berlin for years but have rarely reached a bigger public. This book engages these and other critical voices, which attest to a new critical mass of queers of colour who are ready to oppose racism and gentrification but as yet face a lack of real-life spaces where they could materialise into an outwardly visible community. These nascent queer of colour narratives challenge a colonial account of violence, space and safety that works to territorialise a singular notion of gay (or even queer) 'community'. Indeed, they gesture towards alternative goals and methods of placemaking that do not rely on privatisation, securitisation and eviction.

The 15 queers of colour whom I interviewed for this book echo the *Khalass!!!* manifesto's assessment that queer gentrification leaves imprints on the urban environment that deserve further inquiry (see also Decolonize Queer 2011; Hanhardt 2008; Manalansan 2005). In a context where 'queer space' is publicly carved out in ways that mark an area's recovery, and the displacement and

policing of communities once confined to it, the kitchen table emerges as a key site of mobilising that is often unacknowledged in social movements. It is what and where remains in the wake of the racist backlash – and where most of the interviews conducted for this book took place. Interviewees described a shrinkage of environments where queers of colour can sustain themselves and build community that is not predicated on social death: from the neighbourhood, to ‘queer’ space that is accessible (enough), to the gendered and racialised body. I propose that we think of this as *queer regeneration*, a process that at once describes symbolic shifts in who or what is valued and vitalised, and inscribes actual places where people ‘live, work, play and worship’, in Bullard’s (1994) famous formulation of environmental justice (see also Stein 2004; Teelucksingh 2002). Following McKittrick, I treat the queer and trans people of colour who participated in the interviews as ‘geographic subjects’, whose cognitive maps tell stories that are meaningful, in that they ‘incite new, or different, and perhaps not just, more just, geographic stories’ (McKittrick 2006: xix; see also Ingram et al. 1997; Jameson 1988). It is precisely because the queer of colour kitchen table does not reach the status of a social movement that it has lessons to impart to wider struggles against incarceration, dispossession and displacement.

Like the *Khalass!!!* manifesto, this book takes critical issue with figures of racialised homophobia and transphobia, which have become the defining drive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), queer and trans organising transnationally. *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* tracks the birth of the ‘homophobic Muslim’ as a new folk devil who joins an older archive of crime, violence, patriarchy, integration and segregation, in areas marked by racism, gentrification and neoliberal restructuring. It draws attention to what Povinelli (2008), commenting on the concurrency of ‘state killing’ and ‘letting die’ in Australia, describes as the *uneventful* occurrences that accompany the production of events: from a drunken traffic altercation between drag kings and putatively racialised² people in Kreuzberg that arrives in the newspaper as ‘Turks beating up lesbians’, to the huge mobilisations over Proposition 8, the (now reversed) marriage ban in California, which was immediately ascribed to Black and Latino voters (see chapter 2 of this book). This book, in contrast, asks what happens if we enter via the unremarkable processes of policing, gentrification and social death that accompany these events.

I propose the term *queer regenerations* to describe the sometimes spectacular and often banal encounters, co-habitations, hauntings, mobilisations and reverberations that occur when formerly degenerate bodies, times and places come to life. To inquire about queer regenerations often means to foreground the uneventful. It involves asking, for instance, what else is going on, and who else is on the scene, as certain queer bodies become a lovely sight in the shadow of racialised Others; as transgender bodies, whose dehumanisation rarely gains the status of injustice, gain visibility as colourful subjects in revitalised areas that

have let go of people of colour; and as assimilated rights-bearing subjects re/turn towards murderous times and places with queer nostalgia. It further involves asking who or what becomes legible as gay, queer and trans, and who gets run over on the intersections. To think of these processes as queer regeneration enables us to make sense of ascendancies that are uneven and contradictory, and leave scores behind.

Queer Lovers and Hateful Others traces these shifts in how gendered and racialised bodies are carved out, new populations are moulded, and older ones re-cast. For example, I ask how trans subjects, long excessive to 'LGB-fake-T' coalitions (Spade 2004), are becoming recognisable in an environment marked by gentrification, economic restructuring and racist backlash. These are the classic biopolitical and necropolitical questions over who gets to live, who must die, and who is let die (Foucault 2004 [1978]; Mbembe 2003). While Foucault highlights that it is often in the name of maximising life that 'improper' life gets taken, Mbembe draws our attention to the increasingly unabashed centrality of death in contemporary socialities. As Kuntsman, Posocco and I (Haritaworn et al. 2013, 2014) argue in the introductions to our collections *Queer Necropolitics* and 'Murderous Inclusions', the innocent and respectable queer subject who is worthy of intimacy, protection and safe space is born in 'topographies of cruelty' and against the backdrop of war, imperial rescue, violent borders, criminalisation, aid tying, urban regeneration, and other death-worlds (Mbembe 2003: 40). Queer ascendancies thus tend to bolster hegemonies of the state, the global North, the market, and the military, carceral and biomedical methodologies that bolster them through the punishment and reform of surplus populations, now with the help of LGBT experts.

At the same, queer regeneration often occurs in the spaces between and beyond, where life and death are symbiotic. In our introduction to *Queer Necropolitics*, we highlighted both literal and social death and graduated states of living and dying. *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* adds to this attention to ambivalent and ambiguous times and spaces that are haunted by past and future deaths, while also being fertile grounds of revitalisation (see Ferreday and Kuntsman 2011). The queer regenerations examined here tend to stay close to what, following Sherene Razack (2002a, 2002b), I term 'degenerate' spaces associated with crime, disorder and dysfunction, such as the inner city, the prison and the asylum, which are segregated from 'respectable' spaces of 'proper' white middle-class life. Discussing colonial contexts, Razack describes the 'journey of transgression' between 'respectable' spaces where white settlers live, and 'degenerate' spaces where Indigenous people live, as foundational to the constitution of normative masculinities and femininities. In contrast, the transgressive mobilities of queers with race and class privileges into formerly degenerate areas do not perform straightforwardly respectable gender and sexual identities. They are nevertheless legitimated as transitional phenomena

in transitioning areas that were hitherto considered ungentrifiable. Queer regeneration – whose echoes with urban regeneration I highlight on purpose – here takes the shape of encounters of formerly undesirable subjects with formerly undesirable spaces and the bodies that linger there.

Thus, it is telling that the drama of queer lovers and hateful Others has found its most fertile terrain in the former ‘guest worker’ district of Berlin Kreuzberg. If the authors of *Khalass!!! We're vex!* highlight Kreuzberg as a site of queer gentrification, it is important to note that the district has served as an exemplary setting for racialised pathology and criminality in German imaginaries of race and space. It was long a site of segregation for labour migrants, whose presence was planned to be just as temporary as the crumbling buildings containing them. In the 1960s and 1970s, the district was targeted for large-scale demolition. As a result of urban protest and changing planning fashions, the buildings stayed and underwent significant restoration, often led by queer and other ‘alternative’ collective living projects. Now objects of nostalgia, it is important to note that these counter-cultures never fully rid themselves of the trappings of their whiteness (see MacDougall 2011). At the juncture of ‘re’-unification and neoliberalism, the race and class divisions that have underlain the mythos Kreuzberg from the start were if anything intensified. While many of the former squatters have been able to buy houses or formalise their housing situation, racialised bodies, as degenerate residues in a regenerating space, are increasingly displaced as a result of rising rents and shrinking incomes. During the Cold War, West Berlin was relatively cheap to live in, not least as a result of federal subsidies for housing and industry that stemmed population decline in a city surrounded by the other, socialist, Germany. In the post-unification era, the city has become an ever harder place for poor people to remain in. Rents have risen most in inner-city areas like Kreuzberg, which moved from the ‘shadow of the wall’, as Jennifer Petzen (2008) puts it, to the heart of the city (see also Holm 2011). The removal of subsidies for housing and industry, the dismantling of services and benefits, and the marketing of the city and its ‘neighbourhoods’ to tourists and investors under an increasingly entrepreneurial city regime, have each made the inner city increasingly unaffordable (Ha 2013).

The ascendant queer subject thus stays close to deathly places, as well as times. These further include the Nazi past, the AIDS crisis, and the ‘homophobic’ geographies of the global South. To think of these proximities in terms of queer regenerations means to inquire into differential processes of valuation and devaluation. Thus, if gay, queer and transgender activists have stayed close to the prison and the asylum, these ‘intimate investments’ (Agathangelou et al. 2008) nevertheless produce real returns. Queer and trans prison abolitionists have sometimes assumed an inherent contradiction in fighting for hate crime laws that consolidate carceral and biomedical regimes that long criminalised and pathologised homosexuality and transgender. However, while the penal

state remains one of the biggest perpetrators for (queer and straight) people of colour, especially those who are poor, gender non-conforming or disabled, the swift rise of a newly professionalising class of LGBT experts, who invest in institutions that expand white middle-class entitlement, demands that we acknowledge these contradictions as systemic rather than surprising (see chapter 3 of this book).

The pages ahead follow queer regenerations across various further sites, including the Nazi past, whose recovery has become a prolific source for queer art and activism, and the inner city, where the drama of queer lovers and hateful Others finds its evocative setting. They trace the displacement and dispossession of degenerate bodies alongside the arrival of transgressive subjects who, while not necessarily respectable, are tolerated as early-wave gentrifiers. Indeed, as gentrification theorists have long shown, it is in the regenerating inner city that capital is accumulated the fastest. Drawing on Neil Smith's (1979) theory of the rent gap, which accounts for the difference in a site's actual and potential value and is often used to explain how the poorest areas yield the highest investment returns, we can locate queer regeneration – a process that creates symbolic and material worth – in spaces where the value–pathology gap is especially large. People of colour communities, rendered disposable on account of both their 'inferior and deficient' cultural values and their decreased labour value in a post-Fordist regime of capital flight and restructuring, are nevertheless not without value. Indeed, they are raw material through which all kinds of valuations occur.

CORE VALUES, MORAL PANICS AND INVENTED TRADITIONS

I am an atheist who is friendly to religion. I don't believe in a god, but Christianity, Judaism or Buddhism do not bother me.

Except Islam disturbs me more and more. I'm disturbed by the highly disproportionate criminality of youth with Muslim origins. I'm disturbed by Islam's murderous contempt of women and homosexuals. I'm bothered by forced marriages, 'peace judges', 'honour crimes.' And anti-Semitic pogroms bother me more than half civilised words can tell.

Now I'm asking myself: Is religion a barrier to integration? My impression: not always. But with Islam, yes. This should explicitly be taken into account with asylum and immigration!

I don't need imported racism, and what Islam represents otherwise, I don't need either. (Fest 2014, my translation, bold in original)

Queer Lovers and Hateful Others argues that 'Muslim homophobia' has joined an older chain of criminalising and pathologising signifiers that must be

understood within a longer history of racism and colonialism, which precedes the arrival of labour migrants from Turkey and North Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. Entitled 'Islam as barrier to integration', this lead commentary in *Bild*, the conservative German tabloid, places homophobia alongside crime, sexism, anti-Semitism, mal-integration and racism. This list of deficiencies is stabilised through repetition, even if the 'what' and the 'how far' it calls for are left open to personal and political preference. There is now a growing arsenal for how to deal with poor people of colour constructed as 'Muslim', regardless of how they identify themselves. On the soft end, this arsenal includes sexuality awareness, Holocaust awareness, anger management, and youth and social work; on the hardening end it includes psychiatric treatment and confinement, prison, border control, nationality law restrictions specifically for Muslims, and outright calls for deportation. Much of this focuses on young male-assigned people: the first generation of German-born individuals who officially have access to German nationality after the belated reform of the infamous *jus sanguinis* (law of the blood) in 2001, which restricted citizenship to those with German parentage. At the same time, never-ending moral panics about 'mal-integration' in apparently self-segregated Muslim 'parallel societies', measured in affective propensities to terror, crime and religion, as well as in failed genders and (hetero-)sexualities, have reversed these fragile claims to belonging on a substantive level.

One argument made by this book is that racism cannot be reduced to the work of isolated extremists or far-right movements. As many have pointed out, there is a dramatic increase in overt racism all across Europe and the settler colonies, which crosses political, gender, sexual and national identities (e.g. Lentin and Tittle 2011; Fekete 2014). The transnational qualities of this surge became clear in January 2015 after the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, the French satirical magazine specialising in making fun of Islam, which was quickly ascribed to Muslims. The global circulation of the attack through hashtags such as #jesuischarlie and through the magazine's cartoons serves to perform a West that comes into coherence through shared core values. Besides freedom of speech, these also include sexual freedom, as illustrated by a queer-themed cover of the magazine that encoded the bravery and innocence of the killed journalists (e.g. Fisher 2015). The cover, entitled 'L'Amour Plus Fort Que La Haine' (love is stronger than hate) features the kiss between a brown man stereotyped as Muslim and a white man with a 'Charlie Hebdo' caption on his T-shirt, glasses and a pencil behind his ear. The pencil, the 'more powerful weapon', has been a regular icon in the *Charlie Hebdo* debate, whose innocent connotation obfuscates the ideological work done by opinion makers. This is brought home by the increasing consent for globalised anti-Muslim racism, reflected in the simultaneous adoption of anti-'terror' policing and surveillance in countries ranging from Spain to the US, as well as the attacks by firebombs, gunfire, pig heads and grenades on 26 mosques in France, in the week following the attack alone (Stone 2015). They

further include the pogrom-like anti-Muslim mobilisations that have raged across Europe in the same period. In Germany on 12 January 2015, the same day that an estimated 100,000 demonstrated across the country in solidarity with 'Charlie', 25,000 took to the streets in the East-German city of Dresden to 'defend' the country from immigrants. The demonstration was organised by Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West), a new organisation founded in Dresden in 2014, whose name ironically references the transnational rather than national. Pegida is but the latest in a series of anti-Muslim movements and parties that have mushroomed across Europe in recent years (Paterson 2015). While mainstream politicians, progressives and LGBT organisations have condemned Pegida as an extremist movement, many Pegida followers describe themselves as regular citizens rather than neo-Nazis (Panorama 2014). Both Pegida and its 'mainstream' critics, meanwhile, share an orientation towards Islam as the constitutive outside of a Germany, Europe and West that are in danger and must be defended. When, on the evening of 12 January, Khaled Idris Bahray, an asylum seeker from Eritrea, was killed in Dresden, police ignored evidence connecting his death to the demonstration (Paterson 2015). To many observers, this recalled the recent scandal around another racist organisation, the National Socialist Underground (NSU), which enacted two bombings and nine murders in the 2000s, which again mostly targeted people racialised as Muslim. Not only were police and secret service complicit in ignoring and covering up evidence that the acts were perpetrated by NSU, they also actively criminalised the victims and their families themselves (Migrationsrat 2014a). While here, too, hate crime legislation was proposed as a solution to the violence, anti-racist activists have warned that, in a context that evades and naturalises racism and criminalises people of colour rather than white racists, such legislation would further punish the victims rather than the perpetrators. Indeed, this forecast is supported by the new discourse on reverse racism or 'hostility against Germans' – a moral panic that shares many ingredients of the 'Muslim homophobia' panic (see chapter 3, 'Hate').

Queer theorists have been slow to pick up on these confluences and complicities. If moral panics surrounding queer genders and sexualities, from sodomy to AIDS, might be considered the natural remit of queer theory, theorists of sexuality have barely begun to adjust their lenses to the queerly expanding borders of what constitutes a 'morality' that is worthy of protection (e.g. Herdt 2009; Weeks 2014). Indeed, theories of racism are more helpful in making sense of the figurative shift from the dangerous to the endangered queer. *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* joins the renewed engagements with *Policing the Crisis*, the seminal text on neoliberalism and criminalisation by Stuart Hall and colleagues (1978). The authors sought to make sense of the birth of a new folk devil, the Black mugger, at the height of Thatcherism. They argued that the moral panic over the supposed increase in Black muggers served to manufacture consent for increasingly coercive state measures (1978: 221):

The ‘mugger’ was such a Folk Devil; his form and shape accurately reflected the content of the fears and anxieties of those who first imagined, and then actually discovered him: young, black, bred in, or arising from the ‘breakdown of social order’ in the city; threatening the traditional peace of the streets, the security of movement of the ordinary respectable citizen; motivated by naked gain, a reward he would come by, if possible, without a day’s honest toil; his crime, the outcome of a thousand occasions when adults and parents had failed to correct, civilize and tutor his wilder impulses; impelled by an even more frightening need for ‘gratuitous violence’, an inevitable result of the weakening of moral fibre in family and society, and the general collapse of respect for discipline and authority. (Hall et al. 1978: 161–62)

The basic, long globalised, ingredients of the moral panic investigated in *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* – failed heterosexuality, a disordered family tree, failed impulse control, and proneness to violence – are as hauntingly similar as the punitive paradigms and techniques that this panic ideologically justifies.

What has changed is that the ‘morality’ to be protected has expanded from a heteronormative vision of the family to queer intimacies that remain assimilable to it. In this new regime of diversity racism – which speaks the language of life while paving the way for death – homosexuality and transgender emerge as important, albeit not the only, symbols.³ Women’s rights, animal rights, and appreciation of racial mixing have each become features of a cosmopolitan, diversity-loving community whose Others are profiled by their patriarchal, homophobic, irrational, monocultural, backward or criminal dispositions (Grosfoguel et al. 2014; Haritaworn 2015; Jackson 2013; Melamed 2011). While these racial formations have long and brutal histories that predate the current encounter, the border is redrawn around ‘core values’ of women-and-gay-friendliness, philo-Semitism, post-Christian secularism, tolerance, and a care for peace and non-violence. This process nevertheless continues to follow the logics of racism, which Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines as ‘the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death’ (2007: 28).

In the never-ending repetitions of multiculturalism in crisis, the exceptional qualities in the above list are held up as core values that must be protected from Others. In contrast, I propose that we treat them as ‘invented traditions’, a term coined by Hobsbawm, the late theorist of the nation:

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. (Hobsbawm 1983: 1–2)

Indeed, as queer of colour intellectual Koray Yılmaz-Günay comments, the author of the *Bild* editorial does not have a reputation of being ‘a friend to gays or women’ (Jakob 2014). Bodies and populations constructed as ‘Muslim’ become repositories for sexism, homophobia and anti-Semitism in ways that absolve white citizen subjects from responsibility for their violence and pave the way for more violence, now normalised as a social good.

I draw on the post-colonial notion of the constitutive outside to describe the process by which gender oppression is turned into an undesirable trait that is alienated and contained in racialised bodies (see Said 1978). It is against these constitutive Others that gays, queers and trans people are recruited as ‘symbolic border guards’ (Yuval-Davis 1997) for entities – from neighbourhood to nation to West – that are themselves undergoing rapid transformation. Such a view differs from a multicultural model that attempts to accommodate minoritised cultures while fixing ‘their’ values in a deficient and inferior position (Thobani 2007a). Indeed, as Yılmaz-Günay suggests, the claim that homophobia is imported reifies a biologicistic understanding of Germanness as unhyphenable and white (Jakob 2014).

Queer Lovers and Hateful Others follows the spectacular and banal ways in which the alienation of gender oppression, and of the bodies that must bear it, occurs. For the purposes of this introduction, I will flag up two major landmarks: the Muslim Test and the Drag Festival. The so-called Muslim Test of German nationality was an administrative guideline introduced in 2006 by the German *land* of Baden-Württemberg, not long after the national reform of the *jus sanguinis*. As implied by the name, it was only applied to applicants whose prior nationality is with a so-called ‘Muslim’ country – which, in Germany, interpellates the majority of people of colour. Of 30 questions, half tested applicants’ women-and-gay-friendliness, the other half their proneness to terrorism and ‘undemocratic’ beliefs and practices. Repeating globalised tropes of visibility and coming out (see Decena 2011), one question asked: ‘Imagine your full-grown son comes to you and declares that he is homosexual and would like to live with another man. How do you react?’ Another asked: ‘In Germany various politicians have made themselves publicly known as homosexuals. What do you think about the fact that there are homosexuals in public office in Germany?’ (see Courant 2006). Following public critique, the test was withdrawn in its blatantly discriminatory version. Nevertheless, the test’s nationwide media career served to cement views of ‘Muslims’, then a relatively new racial formation, as intrinsically violent and homophobic and morally disentitled to citizenship and its benefits (Haritaworn and Petzen 2011).

By that time, the globalised terminology of religion had partially replaced earlier nationality-based terms such as ‘foreigner’, later replaced by the more polite ‘migrants’.⁴ As Yasemin Yıldız (2009) persuasively shows with regard to the shift from the ‘abused Turkish woman’ to the ‘abused Muslim woman’ in