

Edited by OmiSoore H. Dryden
and Suzanne Lenon

DISRUPTING QUEER INCLUSION

**Canadian Homonationalisms and
the Politics of Belonging**



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Foreword

The Homosexuals Have Arrived!

RINALDO WALCOTT

The essays in this book are more than an intervention. They require, without a strident call, that the grounds of homosexual arrival, or rights, be fundamentally rethought. The necessity of such action – that is, of rethinking homo-rights – is that rights bestowed by the nation throw up into stark sight the problem of incorporation at the expense of excision, regulation, and, in the most egregious cases, death. Let me be clear, homo-rights follow in a long tradition of national containment, wherein more peoples and their practices are brought into the national body who then come to perform more expertly the brutal forgetting of the post-Enlightenment, modernist organization of human life, which can otherwise go by the name “global colonialism.” These insightful essays ask at every turn that other considerations, beyond the modernist normative ones, animate the conversation, that new considerations fuel the imaginary for those whose lives modernity seems to regard only with contempt. Indeed, the essays strike a particularly ethical call for ways of organizing life and belonging beyond capitalist modernity.

I have used the term “homosexual” here as a distinctive move to signal that the long *durée* of modernity now provides a set of parameters that suggests we now understand exactly what the homosexual is, and therefore can adjust or renovate its ideas of freedom and rights to accommodate the homosexual within its sphere. Indeed, this shift in practices as a means to reincorporate the homosexual into a specific body politic takes its mandate from an ongoing reformist tradition that is a part of the post-Enlightenment, modernist, colonial practices of containment that have provided this tradition with cover over the past five

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hundred years or more. However, in every instance of reform, what has remained stable and unbroken is white supremacist organization of all of human life. Therefore, it is not just any homosexual who is now accorded rights in Canada and beyond. Indeed, the “queer-homo” (to suggest such a phrase) remains outside such political imaginaries, by which I mean those nonheterosexual and heterosexual beings who refuse the normative modes of the modernist imaginary of and for state recognition of their sexual beings.

There can be no doubt that the project of homosexual arrival benefits the ongoing global colonial project, referred to in this book as “settler colonialism” and illustrated using the borders of Canada as one example of a phenomenon that is quickly becoming global. However, it might be useful to note that these dynamics, although nation-bound, are never simply just that. For example, Canada is deeply involved in exporting its homosexual rights agenda elsewhere, and even within its borders, its homosexual rights agenda differentiates across race, sexual practices, and place of “origin.” Thus, even though it remains useful to read how these practices play out in a national context, it is always necessary to remember that the national – despite the various violences that it enacts in order to appear singular and contained – is never just singular. The national always leaks elsewhere.

Significantly, these essays pose and recall a moment of queer politics in which, because of their messiness, non-normative sexual desires, practices, and identifications can signify without attachment to a recognizable signified. This politics suggests an imaginary of queer that requires no fixed identity and thus no rights-bearing subjectivity – in other words, one that can lay claim to practices of life without a corresponding identity. To recall such articulations and utterances of queer is to throw state recognition and its rights regimes into chaos and to demand a world where the colonial project might be imagined to reach a potential conclusion. In contrast to such an outcome, these essays clearly demonstrate how homosexuals have been recruited for the sustenance of the late-colonial, capitalist, modernist nation-state. But it is my contention that notions of “queer” could offer other possibilities for new horizons and imaginaries. In particular, such imaginaries might be characterized as a politics of just *be-ing*.

Rights talk tends to reproduce the contemporary ongoing colonial “State” with its multiple violent inequalities. It does so by providing space for elites within (nation) states to self-express while arguably alienating the poor, the black, and those who engage in taboos of all kinds. In the case of sexual minorities, rights talk often works to produce and police sexuality based on singular terms that force sexual minorities into a “one size fits all” model. Rights talk

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and its attendant practices often produce benefits for those who are mobile in this newer version of globalization – for example, by enabling them to enjoy their privileges across different spaces such as queer cruises, metropolitan worldwide Pride events, queer festivals, and so on. In short, the benefits that come from rights talk in no way threaten the hegemony of state organization or force the state to change its fundamental disciplinary apparatus of citizenship. Instead, rights talk most often asks that homosexual citizenship mirror heterosexual citizenship. Heteronormativity and homonormativity then become two sides of the same coin, colluding in policing sexually desiring bodies, practices, and communities in a tacit “sexual contract” with the “State.” What I have termed elsewhere a “homopoetics” of selfhood, or just *be-ing*, is not possible under these terms. The complexities of homopoetic selves and lives are and must be forcibly submerged, discredited, and deemed deviant by the state’s subactors of homo- and heteronormativity.

Citizen practices and their state bestowal of rights call for knowable identities – indeed, this predictability is central to the management of citizenship. However, pursuing sexual practices – which, as we all know, are multiple and varied – does not require a manageable identity. This understanding places sexual practices, behaviours, and desires in suspension by refusing to give them a proper name, even if “queer” sometimes stands in. Thus queer can now find its conceptual and political possibilities only in its originary refusal of all forms of the normative. In refusing the normative at each turn, queer conceptually and politically demands actions that create an opening, a set of acts that one undertakes never knowing what doing so might mean in advance. Queer can now be an opening to a future shaped by the centrality of desirous sex and sexuality to *be-ing*. In such desire, we seek political futures beyond the making of identity boundaries. Contemporary human (sexual) rights are based on a claim to identity – a knowable identity. The ethics of the situation demand a call for rights without identity claims. Sexual practices without attendant identities and a move that advances this claim can pose new and important questions for the remaking of the late-modern state. Refusing homosexual arrival, as these essays do, takes us part of the way toward achieving queer’s potential contribution to our sexual politics and more in the twenty-first century.

Introduction

Interventions, Iterations, and Interrogations That Disturb the (Homo)Nation

SUZANNE LENON AND OMISOORE H. DRYDEN

The question of just how not to do state work at a moment of empire is one of the most crucial questions we must confront in living a transformative politic.

– M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*

And when I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in those assumptions underlining our lives.

– Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

Two events of 2010 were notable for the disparate ways each spoke of and to the nation, signalling a contested terrain of contemporary lesbian-gay-queer-trans politics in Canada: the inauguration of Pride House and the formation of Queers against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA). The creation of Pride House as part of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, which were held in the Coast Salish territory now called “Vancouver” and in the Squamish and Lil’wat territories now called “Whistler,” participated in the figuration of Canada as a “gay haven.” Imagining itself as a “safe” space and place where sexual minorities (both athletes and their allies) from around the world were welcome, Pride House showcased Canadian (sexual) exceptionalism on a world stage. This event rendered invisible the ongoing racializing and settling of the geography called “Canada” while

simultaneously participating in such nation-making practices. In this way, Pride House as a metaphor for sexual modernity traverses the discursive terrain of the phrase “queerly Canadian.”¹ We understand “queerly Canadian,” particularly the juxtaposition of “queerly” with “Canadian,” as assembling both a subject position and a form of politics that seeks to “queer” Canada by narrowly challenging grounds of homophobic exclusions while knitting “queer” into the neoliberal multiculturally imagined fabric of Canadian national identity. “Queerly Canadian,” then, is as much an effect of modernity’s desires as it is productive of them. A few months later, in the spring of 2010, public debates vociferously erupted over the participation of QuAIA in Toronto Pride events, particularly the Dyke March and the main Pride Parade, because of the group’s use of the phrase “Israeli Apartheid.”² Pride Toronto’s own limits on inclusion signalled an instance of rupture in the imagined unity of a “just gay,” “queerly Canadian” sexual politics. In an attempt to contain, correct, and discipline this rupture, the City of Toronto threatened to withhold funding from Pride Toronto.

At first glance, Pride House and QuAIA appear to be distinguished by an uncomplicated political cleavage between the desire of the first for inclusion in a neoliberal, global, corporate sporting event and the insistence of the second on a transgressive, anti-racist, decolonial, transnational queer politic. Pride House, for example, was imagined and positioned as proudly Canadian and proudly gay, the natural outcome of a successful equality rights movement. In this telos, lesbians and gay men are liberated, shining exemplars of how “it gets better”³: they are free to be out, to marry, to serve in the military, to adopt and raise children. Pride House embraced the modernity of a Canada where lesbian and gay citizens stand as civilized global leaders and saviours, providing inspiration, guidance, direction, and refuge to “Other” (i.e., immigrant, foreign, Indigenous, and racialized) gays. QuAIA, on the other hand, was envisioned as an articulation of a radical queer activism that moves beyond the limits of liberal inclusion or political agendas based on equality rights. Advocating for Palestinian liberation, sovereignty, and decolonization, QuAIA’s activist work interrogates how multiple (lesbian-gay-queer-trans) bodies are implicated in the colonization and settling of the nation. The opposition forged against QuAIA has included attempts to position the group’s activism as misguided in its critiques of the Israeli state, as unnecessarily unruly, and as at fault in its rupture with Pride Toronto. In this way, QuAIA has become a catalyst for an unsettling of the (homo)nation.

Pride House and QuAIA are but two examples of the multifarious, multi-scalar cacophony of a lesbian-gay-queer-trans politics in Canada that continues to engender spaces and places of pain, injury, and possibilities. Yet understanding

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these two moments in dichotomous terms – as representative of the “liberal gays” who carry and celebrate the mantle of Canadian nationalism versus the “radical queers” who challenge and criticize the colonial history and imperial becoming of the Canadian nation – conceals the complicated layers, socialities, and materialities in which both exist. This collection seeks to disorder, unsettle, and disturb such facile binaries of the liberal “good gay” and the radical “bad queer” by speaking to the complicated and often uneven relationships between exclusion and belonging, complicity and community. In doing so, it engages uncomfortable places and spaces of flux, fluidity, and instability while grappling with the tenuous nature of inclusion, (un)belonging, (dis)location, and home. Here, we take seriously the opening epigraph by Audre Lorde (1984, 127), who reminds us as co-editors and you as the reader of this book how deeply discomfiting yet potentially radical is the act of reflexivity in order to disturb and unsettle the “assumptions underlining our lives,” including assumptions about sexual politics, nation, home, belonging, solidarity, and community.

One of this book’s central arguments is that contemporary articulations of sexual citizenship are not only complicit with a conservative, neoliberal Canadian nation but also predicated on foundational Canadian national mythologies that inscribe whiteness as the embodiment of legitimate citizenship and belonging (Bannerji 2000; Thobani 2007, 75). Ranging from the tangible spaces of prisons, Pride marches, Pride House, fetish fairs, and feminist porn awards to the material effects emanating from spaces of legal regulation and governance such as marriage law, hate crime laws, citizenship guides, blood donation, and refugee claims, the chapters interrogate the conditions of, and entangled relationships between, exclusion and inclusion. In doing so, they grapple with a range of cultural and political processes occurring in contemporary lesbian-gay-queer-trans politics that interpellate a normatively raced, gendered, sexed, and classed Canadian (homo)sexual subjectivity to uphold the modernity of the white settler nation-state. It is the relational aspects of these processes with which this book is concerned. The conversations contained herein elucidate ways that deployments of dispossession and (un)belonging are the very conditions for inclusion to occur.

Often messy and sometimes incoherent, such processes include the incorporation of lesbian and gay identities into economic and legal registers, where equality becomes linked with individual freedom, access, opportunity, and choice, and where private property not only of objects owned but also of oneself becomes constitutive of self-worth (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xxxiii; Hong 2006). This liberal inclusion of (some) lesbian-gay-queer-trans subjects is as much the consequence of homonormativity – a dominant form of queer

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sexual politics oriented toward privacy, consumption, and domesticity – as it is of a resurgence in nationalism, imperialism, and militarism (Bacchetta and Haritaworn 2011; Eng 2010). A concept made popular by Lisa Duggan (2002), homonormativity sustains dominant heteronormative assumptions of and about social life while fostering a queer sexual politics solidly anchored in the aspirations and dreams of what Lauren Berlant (2011) terms “the good life” fantasy – that is, normative kinship structures, property ownership, self-realization, and domesticity.

In her ground-breaking theoretical work, Jasbir Puar (2007) extends Duggan’s analysis to foreground convergences and collusions between homosexuality and US nationalist projects – what she terms “homonationalism.” Written in the aftermath of 9/11, Puar’s book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* has captured the focus of intellectual and political imaginaries for its erudite theorization of homonationalism as a process whereby the combined ascendancy of whiteness, imperialism, and secularism produces lesbian-gay-queer subjects⁴ as “regulatory” over perversely queered populations, rendered monstrous, feminized, and abnormal (Puar 2007; Puar and Rai 2002). Homonationalism, according to Puar (2013b, 337), is “an assemblage of geopolitical and historical forces, neoliberal interests in capitalist accumulation both cultural and material, biopolitical state practices of population control, and affective investments in discourses of freedom, liberation, and rights.” Centrally, it is an imperial biopolitics that exerts terrorizing control over othered racial and sexual populations marked for death. As a field of power, homonationalism apprehends how the “turn to life” for some lesbian-gay-queer subjects (i.e., their enfoldment within legal, cultural, and consumer arenas) is now possible *because of* the simultaneous curtailing of welfare provisions and immigrant rights, as well as the expansion of state powers to conduct surveillance and to (indefinitely) detain and deport. Thus how queerness and racialization interlock becomes a critical factor in determining whether and how the turn to life is experienced, if it is experienced at all (Puar 2007, xii-xiii; see also Haritaworn, Kuntsman, and Posocco 2014). As a critique of lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses, homonationalism attends to how such discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity that continue to accord some populations access to cultural and legal citizenship at the expense of the delimitation and expulsion of racialized others (Puar 2013b, 337). As Puar (2011, 139) observes, the question “how well do you treat your women?”, serving since colonial times as a determining factor of “a nation’s capacity for sovereignty, has now been appended by the barometer of ‘how well do you treat your homosexuals?’” (139). Homonationalism, then, is both a facet of modernity as well

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as an analytic useful to historicize how and why status as a “gay-friendly” nation-state became desirable in the first place.

How queerness simultaneously folds into settler colonialism further illuminates the biopolitics of homonationalism, where the dreams for, ideals of, and successful incorporation into (sexual) citizenship through freedom from state-sanctioned persecutions are generative of affective and material aspirations of settler citizenship and belonging. Naming this field of power “settler homonationalism,” Scott Morgensen (2010, 2011b) extends Puar’s analytic by centring settler colonialism as a condition of queer theory, queer politics, and sexual modernity in the Americas. Settler homonationalism signals the biopolitics of settler colonialism and its accompanying logic of Indigenous elimination. Understanding settler colonialism as a complex social formation and as continuous over time – “a structure rather than an event” (Wolfe 2008, 105) – suggests that modern queer subjects and politics continue to naturalize settlement of the white supremacist (Canadian) nation-state through desires for and claims to sexual citizenship and belonging (what we are calling the “queerly Canadian”). Morgensen argues that such claims are deeply embedded in the notion of settler sovereignty and in the concomitant legal and political severing of Indigenous relationships to land, language, and community. It is important, however, to distinguish between types of relations of power that constitute queer settler subjects as well as to interrogate the category of “settler” more generally. This category has emerged out of differential yet interlocking racial-sexual histories and encounters, including genocide, slavery, and indentured labour. The insidious prevalence of white supremacy structures ongoing colonial relations with Indigenous and racialized peoples within Canada. Consequently, the subject categories of “settler” and “queer settler” are not equally inhabited and therefore are not commensurate in their interpretation.

Analytic and activist critical uses of homonationalism now extend to geopolitical contexts outside the United States (the country in which Puar’s original project arose) and also coincide with other transnational analyses. These include (but are not limited to) “gay imperialism”⁵ (Haritaworn, Tauqir, and Erdem 2008), which foregrounds the figure of the white gay activist carrying “the white man’s burden” of saving “gay Muslim victims”; “homopatriotism,” in which queer fantasies of militarization and eroticizing warfare function as claims to national belonging (Kuntsman 2008, 114–17); “homonostalgia,” a sentiment that has the performative effect of rendering homosexuality part of a nation’s history, norms, and values in a way that makes racism and white supremacy seem innocent or even absent (i.e., a time when gay liberation could, allegedly, be taken for granted before it was under threat by Islam (Gloria

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Wekker, cited in Bracke 2012, 245); and “pinkwashing,” a term coined by activists to describe the process by which the Israeli state seeks to deflect attention away from the military occupation of Gaza and the settler occupation of the West Bank (see Puar and Mikdashi 2012; and Chapters 3 and 8 of this collection). These overlapping and transnational conceptual frames are not parallel to homonationalism; rather, Puar (2013b) asks us to consider the way that they are possible within and because of homonationalism as a field of power and as a structure of (neo)liberal modernity.

These transnational analyses seek to ascertain the constitutive conditions of race, gender, sexuality, and class in our historical present. They circulate in a number of arenas, including academic conferences such as “Homonationalism and Pinkwashing,” organized by the City University of New York Graduate Centre in April 2013; the solidarity network in Germany for queer and trans people of colour, No Homonationalism, set up to form local and transnational coalitions in the struggle against gay racism, homonationalism, and gay imperialism⁶; the mobilization to oppose the East End Gay Pride in London, England⁷; the opposition of African activists to the neocolonialism of northern activists and their governments with respect to sexual politics in various African countries (e.g., see ActionAid et al. 2011; Aken’Ova et al. 2007; and Ekine 2010); and the emergence of queer anti-apartheid groups such as QuAIA and Pinkwashing Israel.

Disrupting Queer Inclusion seeks to apply, extend, think through, and rework homonationalism in a “Canadian” context as it is articulated through four phenomena: racialization structured by white supremacy; current and ongoing settler colonialism; neoliberalism, which works with white supremacist settler capitalism to constitute the contemporary Canadian nation-state; and the persistence of imperialist mythologies that continue to position Canada as a peacekeeper, a middle power, and a land of freedom. The chapters collectively present a snapshot of these variegated formations of homonationalisms at different temporal and spatial sites. As Puar (2007, 10) states, there is no cohesion among homonationalisms; they are, instead, “partial, fragmentary, uneven formations, implicated in the pendular momentum of inclusion and exclusion, some dissipating as quickly as they appear.” Thus the intentional reference to “homonationalisms” in the plural attends to the multiplicities of analytics and geographies contained within this book.

Although this collection centres analytics of homonationalisms, we understand the book to be in respectful conversation with intellectual and activist histories and genealogies that engage with epistemological and theoretical relationships between nation, capital, empire, self-determination, colonialism,

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race, and sexuality.⁸ This longstanding historical and contemporary theoretical work by Indigenous, racialized, working-class, and lesbian feminist thinkers guides this endeavour to disturb the increasingly frequent practices and processes of homonationalisms in Canada, even though not all authors in this collection take up these intellectual histories. As both a field and an analytics of power, homonationalism is understood here not as a teleology of improvement of this body of theoretical work; rather, these intellectual and activist genealogies are seen as continuing to produce knowledge and to direct theoretical interrogations toward thinking about and extending the analytics of homonationalisms, including in this book.

Theorizations of racialization, diaspora, settler colonialism, and empire have long been integral to intellectual and activist genealogies of women's, gender, and feminist studies, even when such work appears under the sign of token inclusion or disappears from the institutional memory and canonical formulations of women's studies knowledges (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xvi; Brandzel 2011). But such work continues to be at the margins and to be rarely understood as the "proper object" of institutionalized sexuality studies (Butler 1994; Wiegman 2012). Instead, such discussions are often framed as extraneous to the authentic, "real" question of the insider-outsider status of "sexual minorities," where the privileged positioning of injury (re)articulates and further solidifies a heterosexual-homosexual binary (e.g., see FitzGerald and Rayter 2012; and Knecht 2011). This perpetuates a form of homo-innocence that positions gay and lesbian bodies as outside of systems of coercive power and within the confines of a minority-status victimhood that ultimately forecloses any interrogations into its "naturalization."

Disrupting Queer Inclusion provides a complicated reading of the realities of gender, sex, sexuality, and sexual citizenship in the at once settler colonial, racialized, and diasporic region known as "Canada." It is a project motivated by the concern with how bodies and subjectivities are produced by, and taken up in, relational projects of inclusion. The conversations contained within this collection expand the analytic terrain and scholarly field of sexuality studies in Canada. The contributors offer a study of racialized sexuality and racialized queerness that takes to heart the intellectual and political question posed by M. Jacqui Alexander (2006b) in the opening epigraph: the implications of the sometimes too ready convergences between intellectual and activist endeavours at a moment of ongoing empire and colonization.

Persistent and enduring myths surrounding the founding of Canada, what Canada is today, and who Canadians are advance seemingly unceasing narratives of Canadian benevolence and exceptionalism that exist within a bilingual,

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multicultural racelessness (Haque 2012; see also Backhouse 1999b; Brand 1994; and Thobani 2007). Sherene Razack (2004a), for example, reveals the civilizing and imperial racial violences that profoundly shape modern “peacekeeping” enacted in the name of nation. Canada’s imagining of itself as a middle power and peacekeeper affords its national subjects an intimate and innocent sense of self, history, and place. Mythologies, Razack (ibid., 9) argues, “help the nation to forget its bloody past and present” – they effectively erase, or “unwrite,” the violence of the histories of Canadian nation making. The Conservative government’s 2013 “Speech from the Throne” perpetuated this unwriting and disavowal of conquest, genocide, and slavery as foundational to the building of the nation. Prime Minister Harper spoke of the settlers who founded the country, stating, “They dared to seize the moment that history offered. Pioneers ... reached a vast continent. They forged an independent country where none would have otherwise existed” (Government of Canada 2013). This fantasy of Canada as peacefully settled, not violently colonized, was given renewed life. In yet another example, the celebratory representations of Canada as a safe haven for African and African American refugees fleeing the institution of slavery in the United States during the nineteenth century obscures the realities of slavery and the treatment of the enslaved in Canada (see Bakan 2008; Cooper 2006; and Nelson 2004). A vision of Canada predicated on the hopeful fictions of the Underground Railroad provides the conditions for the Canadian nation-state, as well as its citizens themselves, to deny racism’s temporal continuities (see McKittrick 2007).

The Underground Railroad has become a truncated victory that is now used in what are *thought of* as analogous sites of citizenship inclusion, such as the Civil Marriage Trail. On the Valentine’s Day weekend in 2004, same-sex couples from the State of New York travelled to Toronto to marry. The premise of this Civil Marriage Trail event was the mythology of the Underground Railroad and Canada as a safe haven and land of freedom. A more recent example is the advocacy group Rainbow Railroad. Describing itself as working “in the spirit of and with homage to the Underground Railroad,” the Rainbow Railroad (n.d.) is committed to helping LGBT people from around the world (outside of North America) to find a *safe haven* in Canada from “state enabled violence, murder or persecution.”

Predicating the name and focus of the organization upon the imagined racialized benevolence of the Underground Railroad, notably by including a picture in its publicity that features railroad tracks with rainbow-coloured rail ties, situates this activist endeavour within the field of Canadian homo-nationalisms, where racial, imperial and colonial agendas foster conditions of

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inclusion, safety, and sanctuary that are precarious, unstable, and conjectural. The deployment of racial analogies, in which discrimination against same-sex couples is *now* like oppression faced by African Americans *then*, evokes an “earlier” politics of race as the precedent for a “later” gay rights struggle. Such an analogy enables the privilege of forgetting race, with the result that there is little or no accountability to historical and contemporary anti-racist struggles (Grillo and Wildman 1991). In her work on whiteness and the literary imagination, Toni Morrison (1992, 52) offers a compelling way to consider what the Underground Railroad and its Africanist presence *do* in their moments of invocation: they are the vehicle by which one “knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfillment of destiny.”

This book speaks back to such narratives of Canadian benevolence and exceptionalism while actively working to resist the urge to look elsewhere (i.e., “over there,” or outside of the nation, as the Rainbow Railroad does) for horrors of homophobia and to frame Canada as a safe haven where gays are accepted. One such example of this urge was the international outrage directed toward Russia in 2013 for enacting laws “to prevent homosexual propaganda,” which, in turn, prohibited the registration of Sochi Pride House as part of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games (Associated Press 2013).⁹ One response to this outcome was a call to strip Sochi of the games and return them to Vancouver, the host of the previous Winter Olympics (see Change.org 2013). The push to have the 2014 Winter Olympic Games returned to Canada invoked a patriotic image that “loyally repeats the nation” (Haritaworn 2008) as a land of (queer) freedom, “the True North, strong and free.” In such contexts, loyal repetitions of the nation are enriched and sustained through benevolent yet provisional gestures of the nation-state toward (some of) its sexual Others. Canadian sexual exceptionalism has become normatively manifest through the inclusion of lesbians and gay men in the military (1992); the inclusion of sexual orientation in the equality provision (section 15) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1995); the recognition of common law relationships among lesbian and gay couples (1999); the legalization of same-sex marriage (2003–05); and the conditional inclusion of “gay blood” in the national blood supply (2013).¹⁰

Yet as the book’s chapters demonstrate, the idea of Canada as a safe haven is decidedly questionable, relying as it does both on the erasure of violences and on benevolent colonial practices. The book’s chapters expose the interlocking relations of racialization, settler colonialism, neoliberalism, and imperialism to traverse and give shape to the field of power that forges homonationalisms in

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the Canadian context. The opening chapter by Julian Awwad, “Queer Regulation and the Homonational Rhetoric of Canadian Exceptionalism,” elucidates significant shifts within the Canadian political landscape with the election of a majority Conservative government under the leadership of Stephen Harper in 2011. Awwad examines the complexities of the Conservative government’s relationship to queer citizens, shifting the focus away from the perception that the Conservative agenda is “anti-gay” in order to highlight public discursive gestures that *do* take queerness into account. Focusing on government efforts to tighten and reform Canada’s immigration and refugee system, Awwad illustrates how the lexicon of sexual rights and Canadian sexual exceptionalism, in adjudicating the viability of queer refugee claims, corresponds with Canada’s coming-out about its newfound imperial purpose under a Conservative government. This “queer state of imperial becoming,” he contends, is made possible by the subsuming of queerness in order to govern it. His chapter argues that the performative rhetoric of Canadian nationhood and exceptionalism provides the basis for recuperating (white and nonwhite) queer sexuality as a colour-blind modality of neoliberal governance by producing exceptional queer subject-citizens and by asserting Canada’s exceptional status in the world.

In Chapter 2, “Unveiling Fetishnationalism: Bidding for Citizenship in Queer Times,” Amar Wahab explores how queer sexual-erotic others are assembled through the field of homonationalism in spite of their radical political claims to denaturalize normative conceptions of sexuality and erotic life. Writing about fetish counterpublic politics, Wahab contends that although the fetish subject understands itself as transgressive and dissident, neoliberal logics of Western sociality and political life condition its dissident citizenship in ways that feed into the generative force of homonationalism. In an analysis of online debates regarding the rebranding of Toronto’s Fetish Fair to make it more “family friendly,” Wahab considers how the deployment of gendered Islamophobia becomes the foil against which the fetish subject’s bid for citizenship is articulated. It is through the projection of the veiled Muslim woman as a “terrorist” in the online rebranding blogs that the collusion between fetish counterpublic politics and dominant Canadian Islamophobia emerges, staging what Wahab terms “fetishnationalism.” Here, glimpses of the “fetish patriot” emerge through routes of settler citizenship, whose nationalized radicalism is also deeply enmeshed in Canadian imperialism both at home and abroad. So, although the rebranding of Toronto’s Fetish Fair may signal a homonationalist project in the urban context, Wahab’s chapter looks at how the presumed transgressiveness of queer counterpublic politics themselves enlivens and elaborates homonationalism.

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Chapter 3, “Pink Games on Stolen Land: Pride House and (Un)Queer Reterritorializations,” offers a critical examination of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games held in the Coast Salish territory now called “Vancouver” and in the Squamish and Lil’wat territories now called “Whistler”. Here, Sonny Dhoot focuses on the creation of Pride House as both a queer and colonial making of homonational space. Dhoot employs the concept of “pinkwashing” to explore the operations of biopolitics and necropolitics at the heart of Canadian settler society in order to foreground queer complicities in settler colonialism that helped to make Pride House appear as a project of emancipation and inclusion, what he terms “homocolonialism.” The chapter begins with a discussion of Indigenous opposition to hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics on unceded Coast Salish, Squamish, and Lil’wat lands. As Dhoot argues, the colonial violence required to host the games took many forms, including imprisonment of Indigenous activists, continued land theft, as well as ecological and cultural destruction of Indigenous territories. Dhoot then turns to the themes of belonging, settlement, and neoliberal collaborations to make visible the ways that pinkwashing occurred via Pride House, whose figuration as a “safe haven” simultaneously displaced Indigenous claims to sovereignty and self-determination. As he contends, the pinkwashing that made Pride House possible (and successful) will always be useful for the settler colonial project, as it lies at the heart of what must be concealed and denied, namely Canada’s colonial present.

In Chapter 4, “Disruptive Desires: Reframing Sexual Space at the Feminist Porn Awards,” Naomi de Szegheo-Lang explores the Feminist Porn Awards (FPA) as a potential site of resistance to, and unsettling of, (homo)normative conceptions of sexual citizenship. She argues that through their focus on pleasure, desire, and boundary-expanding representations, the FPA reimagine sexual citizenship in ways that blur the lines between public and private spheres that so often demarcate respectable sexuality and sexual desire(s). De Szegheo-Lang suggests that one of the FPA’s most valuable contributions has been their demand for public presence in a way that both disidentifies with mainstream pornography and consciously remakes it. By creating space for critical dialogue and representation, the FPA reframe possibilities for sexual citizenship by unsettling normative constructions of desire, intimacy, and national (un)belonging. In her discussion of desire’s role in feminist porn production, de Szegheo-Lang draws connections between sexual depiction, queer (re)formulations, and homonationalist state-sponsored space so as to explore what is at stake in shifting porn’s terms of engagement. As she contends, both the FPA and the communities they support are a means of challenging the sexual policing of bodies that is so deeply embedded in colonial systems and national histories. As such, the FPA

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have implications that reach beyond the porn industry; they are connected to the disruption of all borders: gendered, raced, classed, colonial, and national.

In Chapter 5, “Monogamy, Marriage, and the Making of Nation,” Suzanne Lenon critically discusses the 2011 BC Supreme Court *Reference* decision that upheld the criminalization of polygamy in Canada. She contends that this decision articulates a homonational critique of polygamy by enfolding lesbian and gay subjects, via same-sex marriage, into its idealization of monogamous marriage as exemplary of Western sexual modernity. Conceptualizing marriage law as a palimpsest – that is, as something whose historical investments in the logics of white nation making are never fully erased but rather persist into the contemporary moment – Lenon illuminates sets of historical relationships that joined across time to enable the *Polygamy Reference*’s homonationalist claims to be made in the first place, namely settler colonialism, racialization, and empire. She discusses how the court’s critique of polygamous marriage as antithetical to Western civilization required a disavowal of settler colonialism that naturalized the Canadian nation-state as a liberal democracy unmoored from its colonial past and present. She also draws attention to the racial, and implicitly imperial, narrative of the *Reference* decision, arguing that it is haunted by the fear of the cultural-racial Other as Muslim. Its homonationalist critique of polygamy, she contends, not only ensconces monogamy as the normative kinship structure but also sutures monogamy to white (homo)nation making.

In Chapter 6, “Homonationalism at the Border and in the Streets: Organizing against Exclusion and Incorporation,” Kathryn Trevenen and Alexa DeGagne examine homonationalist formations at two different sites of racialized state power: immigration control and policing. In the first instance, Trevenen and DeGagne compare the responses of two groups, Egale Canada and No One Is Illegal (NOII), to the proposed exclusions of lesbians and gay men from the revised Canadian citizenship guide *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*. The authors argue that Egale Canada protested such exclusions through a discursive field of nationalism and a “single issue” sexual rights politics, whereas NOII’s response connected the Conservative government’s marginalization of queers in *Discover Canada* with its repressive crackdown on activists, its “tough on crime” agenda, and its focus on safeguarding national borders from “illegitimate” refugees. Moving to an analysis of “homonationalism in the streets,” Trevenen and DeGagne examine the responses of two different lesbian-gay-queer groups in Edmonton to the police handling of a violent assault and briefly discuss debates about a police presence at the Ottawa Dyke March. The authors suggest that disrupting homonational politics of inclusion in all three cases – a government publication, the responses to a violent

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attack, and the challenges of organizing the Dyke March – highlights how different populations are queered and racialized as they circulate through the Canadian imaginary, depending on their national standing and “value.”

In Chapter 7, “A Queer Too Far’: Blackness, ‘Gay Blood,’ and Transgressive Possibilities,” OmiSoore H. Dryden explores the varying analytics of racialized sexuality, specifically the queerness of blackness, through an exploration of “gay blood” and blood donation. Narratives of blackness have been employed in the construction of a “gay” Canadian subject and homonationalist blood. Employing a black queer diasporic analytic to interrogate the homonationalist construction of blood, Dryden traces how national blood narratives, such as blood protection laws, blood quantum, and miscegenation, provide a genealogy for current blood donation practices. As the knowledge produced through the donor questionnaire confirms that black subjects are already both queer and “queer too far” subjects whose blood and bodies are already out of place in “gayness” and in Canada, this chapter seeks to explore potential possibilities for imagining transgressive futures.

Chapter 8, “National Security and Homonationalism: The QuAIA Wars and the Making of the Neoliberal Queer,” discusses the controversy generated by the presence of Queers against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) in Toronto Pride events. Here, Patrizia Gentile and Gary Kinsman situate this terrain of struggle as dramatizing the historical shift, within Canadian nation-state formation, of queers from enemies of the state to defenders of Canadian national security. Their chapter traces how conditions of neoliberalism and Islamophobia have informed this shift. For Gentile and Kinsman, Canadian homonationalism is structured both by settler colonialism and by the Orientalism of empire, and these conditions of nationalism become significant in the important and critical discussions of QuAIA as an example of “rebellion” against this emergent homonation. Although they suggest that the work and effects of QuAIA may recapture forms of activism and liberationist organizing reminiscent of earlier activist histories, Gentile and Kinsman also point toward the need for a stronger and more integrated class analysis and capitalist intervention.

In the closing chapter, “Don’t Be a Stranger Now: Queer Exclusions, Decarceration, and HIV/AIDS,” Marty Fink situates prisons and incarceration at the heart of a reimagined queer politics, expanding the notion of what and who constitutes queer community. Drawing from artistic materials designed by incarcerated trans and queer inmates and circulated by Montreal’s Prisoner Correspondence Project, Fink looks to cultural production as a site of intervention against carceral and national exclusion. Such cultural materials reimagine queer sexuality apart from homonationalist punitive measures and situate those

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locked inside prisons as members of queer communities. As national belonging is often imaged through who is omitted, Fink reminds us that cultural production becomes an important site of intervention both in the nation and in queer agendas. Creating art connects incarcerated queer and trans people with larger queer and trans communities, enabling those inside prison to disrupt the tides of their disappearance by “keeping in touch.” Moving toward a vision of utopic queer futures inspired by José Esteban Muñoz (2009), Fink recentres incarcerated queer and trans people as valuable members whose broader struggles of resistance are necessary for a reimagined queer-sexual politics beyond liberal inclusion.

As this introduction makes clear, this book is unapologetically and overtly political in its interrogation of the various interlocking relations of power that enable practices of homonationalisms. If there is a “queer” impulse underlying this book, we understand it as one that harkens to an older meaning of the word: to make odd, strange, peculiar.¹¹ We have intentionally not organized the book under various thematics, as we believe that doing so might have caused a “break” in the conversations while also forcing and limiting conversations in a particular way. Rather, we see the chapters forming a collective whole, speaking back and forth to each other and across each other in order to “queer” – disturb, unsettle, make strange – Canadian sexuality studies. These chapters provide direction to facilitate such disruptions through not yet imagined enriching sites and approaches. Woven into this undertaking is inspiration drawn from the writing of José Esteban Muñoz (2009, 185, 1), who envisions queerness as a mode of desiring, a longing, and a performative that propels us to vacate the here and now for a then and there, to collectively enact and imagine other ways of being in the world, insisting on the potentiality for or concrete possibility of another world. We present these scholarly interventions not to argue for inclusion, or being “let in,” but to insist on the continual interrogation of the associated complicities, collusions, and *costs* of inclusion in order to unsettle it as a signifier for liberation and justice – that is, to disturb and unsettle the idea(l) and dreams of “inclusion” itself.

Notes

- 1 This is the title of a recent book on sexuality studies in Canada (see FitzGerald and Rayter 2012).
- 2 On its website, QuAIA states, “Queer Palestinians continue to face the challenge of living under occupation and apartheid, subject to Israeli state violence and control, regardless of liberal laws within Israel that allow gays to serve in the military, or recognize same sex